

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE SITE OF ME'ONA IN THE WESTERN GALILEE

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INTRODUCTION

Part of the hill occupied by the archaeological site of Me'ona in the western Galilee (Braun 1996) was chosen to be the location of a modern cemetery serving the Jewish population of the region, at a time when little attention was paid to preservation of antiquities, thus destroying a large part of this Early Bronze Age site (e.g., Braun 1996:2; 1999). As demographic pressures increased, the need for additional burial plots and land for building prompted the present salvage excavation on the southeastern slope (henceforth Area D; map ref. NIG 2253/7688; OIG 1753/2688; Fig. 1).¹ Notably, this is the only level area on the hill; steep terraces either cover the remaining flanks or they are

connected by a low saddle to an adjacent hill, Horbat Roshim. The present report concerns soundings in Area D and a small salvage operation conducted several years earlier at the northern periphery of the site (Areas B and C) (Braun 1999).²

THE EXCAVATION

Area D

Work was carried out for three weeks in November 2002 in Area D.³ In all, a total of 55 sq m were excavated in three soundings. Due to inclement weather, work was continued under shelter in only two of the soundings and bedrock was unearthed in only one of them; neither it, nor virgin soil deposits were reached in the other soundings.

Topographical features dictated the part of the site chosen for the extension of the modern cemetery. At the time of excavation, it was bordered on the west by a massive, rampart-like ridge of bulldozed soil just outside the fence of the cemetery, obviously a dump from work done at the top of the hill (Fig. 2). This steep pile was mostly overgrown with weeds and brambles, but numerous fieldstones and sherds were visible in it. Another massive pile of newly bulldozed *terra rossa*, dumped here from some other, unknown location, covered the extreme southwestern portion of this plot.

A modern paved road, providing access to the cemetery, follows the saddle between the Early Bronze site and H. Roshim to the south, and defines the plot allocated for excavation on the south. The eastern boundary is a vertical bulldozer cut made at some time in the recent

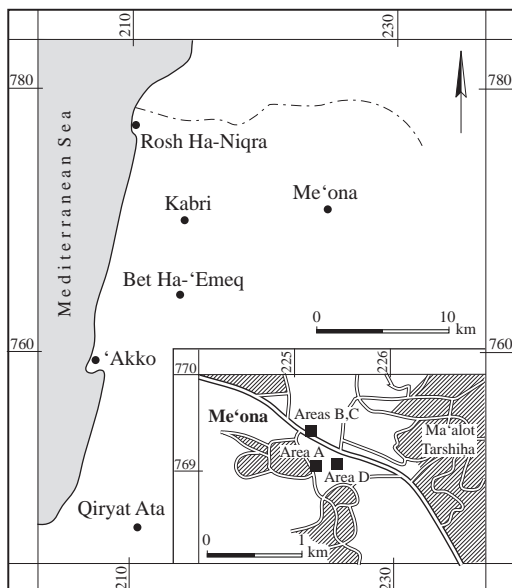


Fig. 1. Location map.



Fig. 2. Clearance of the upper slope below the cemetery, prior to excavation, looking north.

past, which created a level step in the steeply sloping hillside. To the north, the beginning of the terraced slopes that delimit the hill on its eastern and northern flanks marks the end of this allotment.

The surface of the designated plot was littered with small dumps of bulldozed soil and modern rubbish, barbed wire, building refuse and numerous remains of small metal cans that had contained votive candles, discarded by visitors to the cemetery. Old olive trees dotted its steep slope, indicating that this entire plot was not terraced at least during the last centuries. However, sometime in the past, the lower grounds were terraced for agricultural purposes.

Trenches, positioned according to a grid of 5×5 m, were strategically placed so as to reveal a profile of the slope at its extremities and in its center. Olive trees dictated the placement of the lower soundings, just slightly to the north of the uppermost trench. All excavation was done by hand. No sifting was possible, but all sherds, bones and flints were collected. For a list of loci from Area D, see Appendix 2.

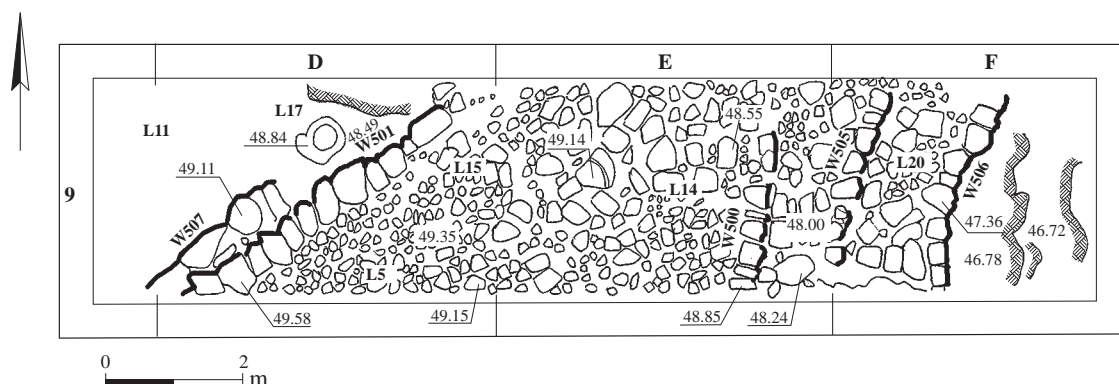
Squares D–F/9 (Plan 1; Figs. 2, 3).— This narrow trench, 2.5 m wide and 12 m long, was placed perpendicular to the bulldozer-created rampart that parallels the cemetery fence

(Fig. 3). The western segment (c. 4 m) of the trench was located on a very gentle slope, more or less parallel to a broad terrace about 10 m to the north. The remainder of the trench sloped more steeply to the east.

Topsoil proved to be *terra rossa* and gravel, replete with modern debris: broken glass, empty votive candle containers and many largish fieldstones. Below topsoil was a series of stone constructions and fills that covered much of the trench. Several lines of stones, labeled ‘walls’, were encountered within this mass. They indicate a relative construction sequence as follows (from late to early).

Wall 501 (Sq D/9) has only a single course, resting on an earthen fill. It is the latest construction and appears to be some sort of border for a broad band of fieldstones placed relatively close together. This wall may be contemporary with a stepped structure (Walls 500, 505 and 506; Sq F/9), not quite parallel to it and located some few meters downhill to the east. This roughly stepped construction is built from largish fieldstones, between which is a mass of large and small fieldstones. Wall 506 rests on soil, probably just above bedrock, outcrops of which were exposed directly to the east.

Wall 507 (Sq D/9) is a short wall segment, parallel to W501 on the west. It is another single-course line of largish fieldstones,



Plan 1. Squares D-F/9.



Fig. 3. Squares D-F/9 with the stone structures, looking west, upslope.

probably near bedrock. It is substantially lower than W501 and it was obviously constructed earlier; a thick layer of fill separates the top of W507 from the bottom of W501. Notably, W507 slopes at the same incline as the hill.

All the structures encountered were found in a matrix of soil that contained only EB I-II and Intermediate Bronze Age pottery (see below). As no surfaces were found in association with the structures, and no information concerning their date is available,

they are tentatively dated to these periods. The preponderance of EB II ceramics suggests that at least the earliest structures should probably date to that period.

Despite the diminutive dimensions of this sounding, a tentative interpretation of these stone structures is offered. Their location on the only non-terraced portion of the hill not bounded by another prominence (i.e., H. Roshim to the south), is noteworthy. If the suggested dating of the earliest structures is correct, then this area appears to have been a non-terraced slope also in EB II. As such, it seems the most likely place for the location of an approach to the walled town, the fortification of which was encountered in earlier excavations (Braun 1996:3-8). Accordingly, it is suggested that several, or perhaps all of these stone constructions are somehow associated with an approach to the town, perhaps a fortified gateway complex, although in what manner can only be determined by further excavation.

Most of the material from these trenches appears to derive from either modern activity (the uppermost layer) or from extensive and long-term erosion of archaeological deposits farther up the hill. Only in two instances (Loci 11 and 17; Plan 1) did there appear to be occupation debris in virtually primary deposition (i.e., remains of collapsed structures more or less near where they originally stood). Notably, these loci are located to the west of (within?) the line formed by the stone structures in this trench. However, this interpretation

is tentative, as no clearly defined surface that might have been associated with the Early Bronze occupations was encountered within the excavated area.

Square H/10 (Plan 2).— This short, narrow trench (2.5×5.0 m) produced evidence for two more or less parallel terrace walls (Walls 503 and 508) constructed of smallish fieldstones. The fill to the west of each wall was replete with very small fieldstones. This type of fill is important for providing drainage for rain and is a well-known technique for agricultural terraces (e.g., Gibson and Edelstein 1985:144). Heavy rains in this region seem to have percolated down, removing most of the soil and leaving deposits of almost exclusively small stones between Walls 508 and 503. The soil above and between the walls contained numerous non-diagnostic ribbed body sherds of orange fabric, tentatively dated to the Roman–Byzantine horizon. Accordingly, the terrace walls are tentatively attributed to this period.

Nowhere in this trench was bedrock reached, nor were the foundations of the walls unearthed, and it is uncertain whether there are any earlier structures below. The mass of largish stones in the southeastern balk of this square (unnumbered on the plan) may belong to another structure, but too little of it was exposed to be certain of this interpretation.

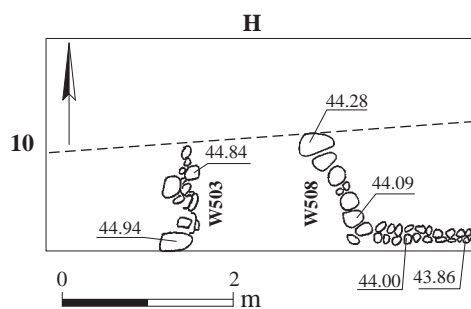
Square M/10 (Plan 3).— A third sounding (2.5×5.0 m) was opened adjacent to the modern bulldozer cut that defined the eastern edge of the plot. The tops of two parallel wall segments

were unearthed; both are assumed to belong to free-standing structures.

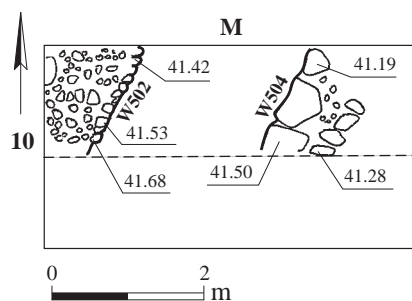
Wall 502 on the west, bounded by a line of smallish fieldstones, is filled with soil and small fieldstones. The balk obscures most of what is assumed to be its western face, but one largish stone may mark its western border. Wall 504, although poorly preserved, has two definitive faces. These two wall segments are tentatively interpreted as either parallel walls of the same building, or of two different buildings separated by a narrow alley or path. No signs of surfaces were encountered in this trench, and the date of these structures remains obscure. Pottery in fills between and above these walls was of two primary periods, Early Bronze and non-diagnostic Roman–Byzantine body sherds.

Despite the limited size of the soundings, they yielded a considerable quantity of artifacts, mostly potsherds, a few flint objects and one bone cylinder. Most of these objects appear to be related to material eroded from the upper slopes, now a modern cemetery. Two principal periods are represented in the assemblage, EB I and EB II; other periods are also noted, with several discussed and illustrated below. They indicate a somewhat expanded archaeological profile of the site, based on material from previous (unpublished) excavations (Table 1).

Because none of the objects was recovered from a place of primary deposition, the chronological division of artifacts discussed and illustrated below is based solely on typological grounds (cf., Braun 1996:12–22). Three sherds of earlier periods (see Fig. 6) and some of later



Plan 2. Square H/10.



Plan 3. Square M/10.

Table 1. Archaeological Profile of Me'ona based on this and previous excavations

| Chrono-Cultural Horizon | Description |
|------------------------------|---|
| Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic | Scattered sherds |
| Early EB I | Scattered sherds |
| EB I | Scattered sherds |
| Late EB I | Scattered sherds |
| EB II | Fortifications, domestic structures |
| Intermediate Bronze Age | Scattered sherds |
| Hellenistic | A stamped amphora handle, ⁱ scattered sherds |
| Roman-Byzantine (?) | Agricultural terraces, scattered sherds |
| Modern | Surface debris |

ⁱSee Appendix 1, below

Fig. 4. The stone walls in Area B, looking south.

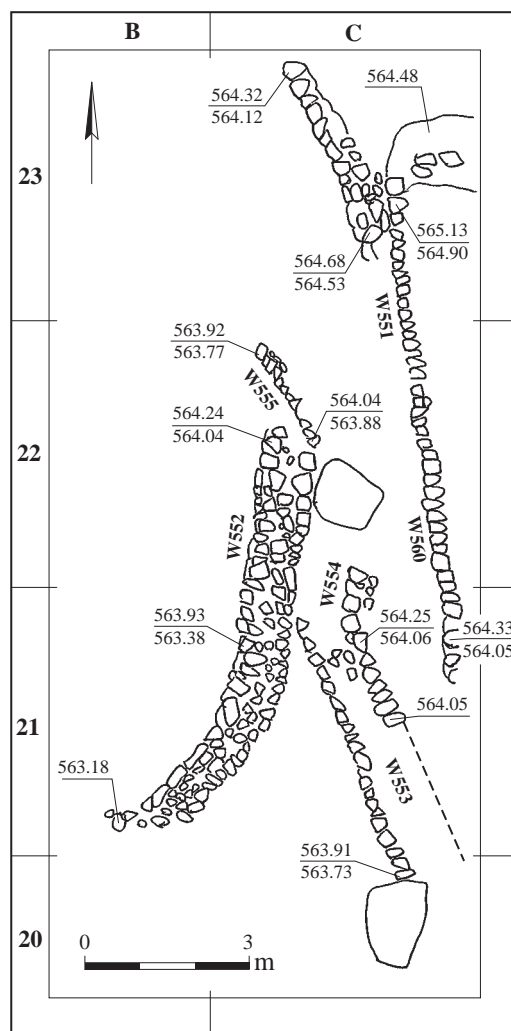


Fig. 5. The stone walls in Area B, looking east.

periods were also encountered; the last were non-diagnostic and therefore are not illustrated.

Areas B and C

In 1996, the Public Works Department began work on a new approach to Moshav Me'ona that included shearing off the northeastern edge of the hill on which the ancient site is located. Work was begun without permission of the IAA, and the project was halted only after initial bulldozing had been completed. All that remained was to clear below the newly bulldozed surface and record stubs of walls that had been sheared off.⁴ In Area B, several wall foundations (Figs. 4, 5; Plan 4) were



Plan 4. Area B.

encountered, with no evidence for occupation surfaces. If such had existed, they were removed prior to the clearance operation. Area C yielded debris and artifacts only. Pottery found in Areas B and C is all from fills of uncertain association and dates to EB I and EB II (see Figs. 7, 10).

THE FINDS

Following is a description of noteworthy finds from Me'ona, from the four excavation areas investigated to date: Areas A–D.⁵ All items bear field numbers that identify them by season and area (i.e., license number = area = season; see Table 2). Objects are designated by license numbers as prefixes, followed by their field numbers, composed of locus/basket⁶ and enumeration within a basket (when applicable). The discussion is organized according to chrono-cultural associations and is intended to present a full picture of the ceramic horizons represented at the site.

Pre-Early Bronze Age I (Fig. 6)

Three sherds from scattered contexts may be related to what is probably a series of pre-EB I occupations at this site. Figure 6:1 is a sherd with a typical crescentic, rope-like decoration that should probably be related to the Chalcolithic horizon (e.g., Epstein 1998: Fig. Pl. XV:1–6). A sherd with raised plastic

Table 2. Excavation Areas and Seasons at Me'ona

| Area | Season | License |
|------|--------|---------|
| A | 1989 | 1579 |
| B | 1996 | 2496 |
| C | 1996 | 2496 |
| D | 2002 | 3774 |

and impressed circles (Fig. 6:2), probably made by a reed, has no parallels in EB I; its fabric suggests it derives from an earlier horizon. It is tentatively assigned to the Wadi Rabah period, a time span in which similar techniques were often employed (Garfinkel 1999:144–145). A third sherd is a strap handle (Fig. 6:3) with splayed ends at the points of attachment. These features indicate this object is either of Late Neolithic or Early Chalcolithic date (e.g., Sadeh and Eisenberg 2001: Fig. 5.8:1, 2, 3, 5; Garfinkel 1999: Fig. 111).

Early Bronze Age (Figs. 7–9)

Included in this report is a selection of objects, mostly pottery, dated to this period on the basis of morphology and likely parallels. In addition to the finds from the present excavation, the discussion includes types that have not been published in an earlier report on excavations at this site (Braun 1996).

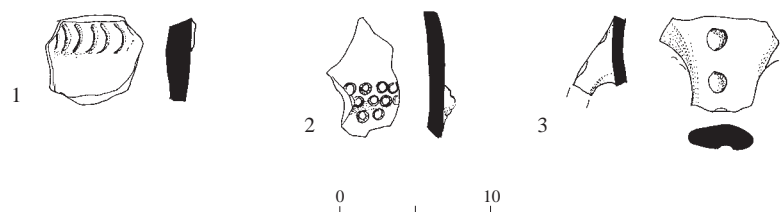


Fig. 6. Pre-EB I pottery.

| No. | Vessel | Reg. No. | Area | Description |
|-----|------------|-------------|------|--|
| 1 | Body sherd | 3774/7/21 | D | Dark buff clay, gray core, rope-like decoration |
| 2 | Body sherd | 2496/118/84 | B/C | Gray-buff clay, red-slipped, impressed reed decoration |
| 3 | Handle | 2496/116/91 | B/C | Buff-pink clay, gray core, red-slipped, impressed decoration |

Pottery

A sizable assemblage of pottery, obviously deriving from an EB I occupation of the site, has been recovered in all areas investigated. Some specimens suggest the settlement was either of some duration, or possibly had several intermittent episodes. Unfortunately, however, too little is known of the ceramic sequence of the western Galilee in EB I to enable one to determine precisely which phase or phases may be represented in the recovered assemblage from Me'ona. The notes below are a tentative attempt at suggesting a relative sequence based solely on typological considerations. Types in this assemblage suggest that the western Galilee is a region with distinct ceramic styles in EB I.

The three bowls represented here (Fig. 7:1–3) show variations of typical EB I types. Figure 7:1 is a small lamp-bowl, notable for the base, slightly raised in the center, probably to ensure that all the oil was pooled in the trough and was absorbed by a wick. Two carinated bowls with straight sides (Fig. 7:2, 3) seem to presage EB II bowl- and platter-types; notably, they are both nicely burnished. A wide-mouthed jug or jar (Fig. 7:4) is a generic EB I type, notable for its high loop handles. Two holemouth vessels (Figs. 7:5, 6) are reminiscent of types found at 'En Shaddud (e.g., Braun 1985:99–100, Fig. 14), identified with a somewhat early, but post-Yiftah'el II phase of EB I (Braun 1997). A holemouth jar with a cut-off or sharply

Fig. 7 ▶

| No. | Vessel | Reg. No. | Area | Description |
|-----|---------------|------------------|------|---|
| 1 | Lamp-bowl | 2496/sur/116/54 | B/C | Pink and buff clay, traces of soot on rim |
| 2 | Bowl | 2496/118/84 | B/C | Orange-slipped and burnished, gray-buff clay, gray core, rim probably finished on a tournette |
| 3 | Bowl | 1579/122/117/210 | A | Red-slipped with patch of black, horizontal burnish, buff clay, gray core |
| 4 | Jar | 2496/sur | B/C | Red-slipped, pinkish gray clay, gray core |
| 5 | Holemouth jar | 2496/sur/134 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core |
| 6 | Holemouth jar | 2496/116/91 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core, impressed decoration |
| 7 | Holemouth jar | 2496/sur/108/37 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core |
| 8 | Holemouth jar | 2496/sur/118/117 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff-orange clay, gray core, impressed decoration |
| 9 | Holemouth jar | 2496/101/109 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff-orange clay, gray core, impressed decoration |
| 10 | Holemouth jar | 2496/116/91 | B/C | Red-slipped, pale buff clay, gray core, impressed decoration |
| 11 | Holemouth jar | 2496/107/17 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff-orange clay, gray core |
| 12 | Holemouth jar | 2496/122/86 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core, impressed decoration |
| 13 | Storage jar | 2496/110/14 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core |
| 14 | Pithos | 2496/124/86 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff clay, gray core |
| 15 | Strap handle | 2496/116/91 | B/C | Red-slipped, buff-pink clay, gray core, incised potter's mark |
| 16 | Strap handle | 2496/sur/124 | B/C | Red-slipped, orange-buff clay, gray core, oval impression |
| 17 | Ledge handle | 2496/sur/116/112 | B/C | Brown-pink clay, gray core |
| 18 | Ledge handle | 3774/7/28 | B/C | Buff-orange clay, buff core |
| 19 | Ledge handle | 2496/sur/1 | B/C | Brown-pink clay, brown core |
| 20 | Ledge handle | 2496/sur/115/94 | B/C | Buff-pink clay, gray core |
| 21 | Ledge handle | 1579/107/208 | A | Brown clay outside, orange to gray clay inside, gray core |
| 22 | Ledge handle | 3774/11/62 | D | Orange to gray clay, gray core |
| 23 | Ledge handle | 3774/11/80 | D | Orange clay outside, buff-yellow clay inside, gray core |

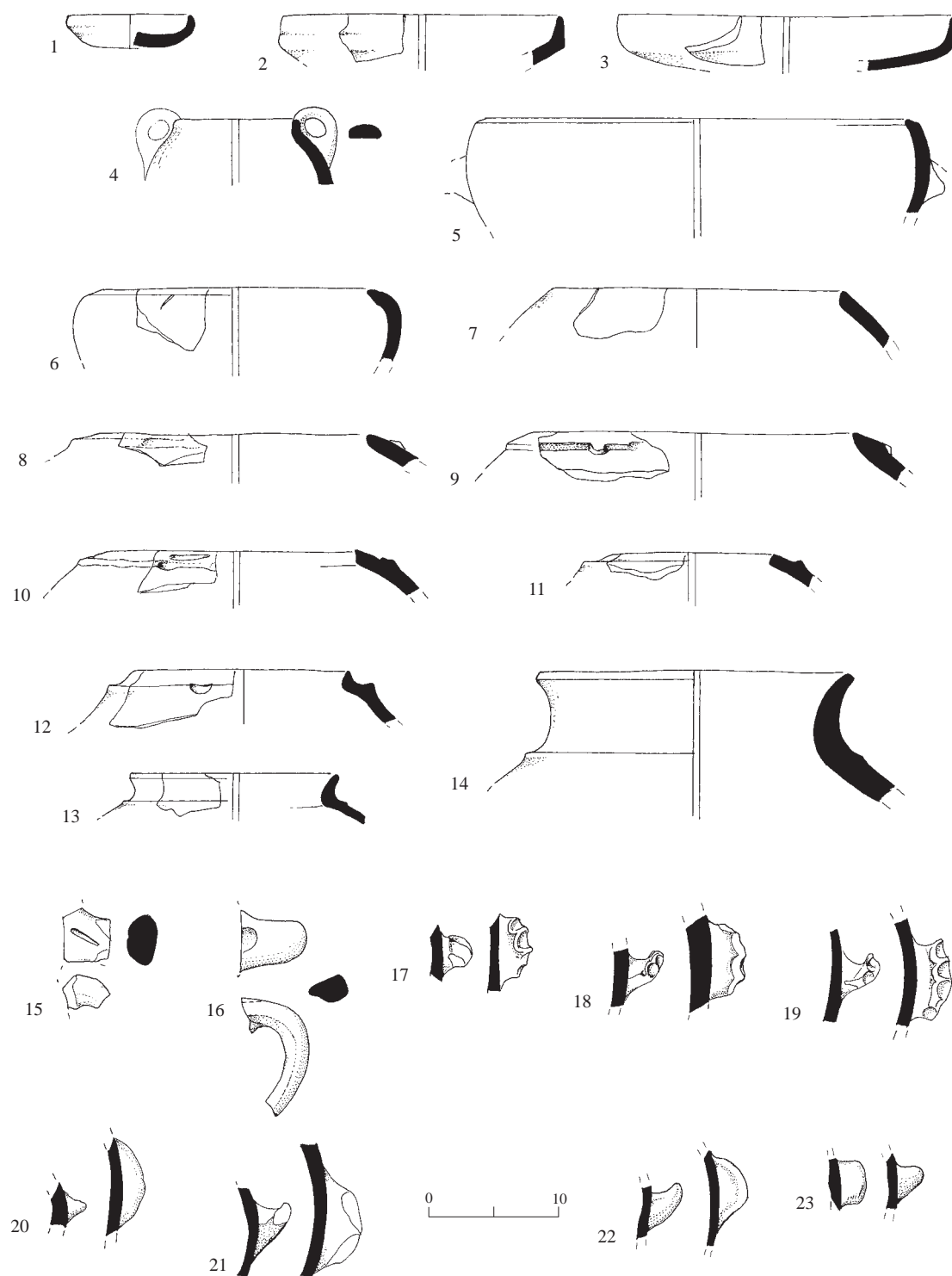


Fig. 7. EB I pottery.

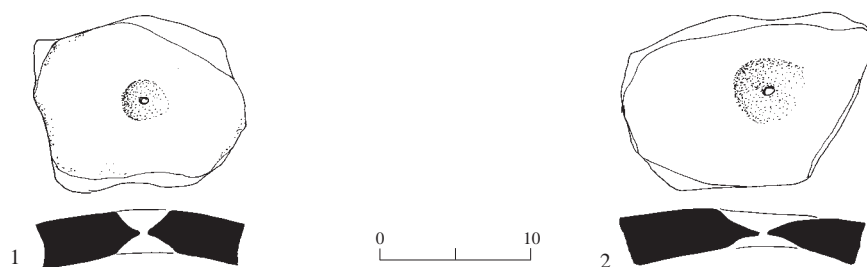


Fig. 8. Perforated sherds.

| No. | Reg. No. | Area | Description | Weight (g) |
|-----|----------------|------|--|------------|
| 1 | 1579/111/131 | A | Red-slipped outside, orange-buff clay, gray core, coarse | 46.2 |
| 2 | 1579/106/132/2 | A | Red-slipped outside, orange clay, gray core, coarse | 51.6 |

beveled rim (Fig. 7:7) could be an early EB I type or, alternately, may derive from an earlier (Chalcolithic?) horizon. Several holemouths (Fig. 7:8–12) with rope-like or pie-crust decoration on their raised rims, appear to be related to early EB I types (e.g., Braun 1997: Figs. 9.8–9.12). Despite the size differences between the jar and pithos rims (Fig. 7:13, 14 respectively), the two are morphologically quite similar. Notably, they have larger and more splayed rims than other examples of this type noted in an earlier report on pottery from Me'ona (Braun 1996: Fig. 11:3, 4, 8). The type appears to be limited to EB I of the western Galilee, but its relative chronology within the sequence remains obscure.

Noteworthy are the incised potter's mark on a fragment of a strap handle (Fig. 7:15) and the (finger?) impressed oval mark on a large strap handle (Fig. 7:16). The wavy-edged ledge handles (Figs. 7:17–19) are another hallmark of EB I pottery from the western Galilee. They are relatively long and narrow with pushed up ends, and their sides near the juncture with the body of the vessel are deliberately not folded. All these handles have similar fabrics and appear to be related to a particular vessel type, although what type it may be remains obscure. Their relative chronological association also remains obscure, but they are tentatively assigned to EB I on the basis of their somewhat coarse

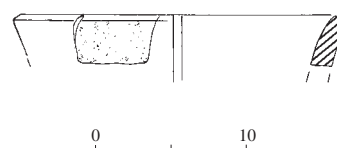


Fig. 9. Stone bowl fragment.

| No. | Reg. No. | Area | Description |
|-----|----------|------|-----------------|
| 1 | 3774/3/1 | D | Basalt bowl rim |

fabrics, generally not found in EB II contexts. The four smooth, ledge/lug handles (Figs. 7:20–23) are fashioned of similar fabrics and may also be related to each other in the manner of the wavy line handles discussed above. Again, their relative dating at Me'ona remains obscure. Similar handles found at Jordan Valley sites and further east (e.g., Helms 1987: Fig. 6:8, 10, 11), in somewhat advanced EB I contexts, may hint at the dating of these examples.

Two small irregular sherds (Fig. 8), perforated after firing by drilling from both sides with a pointed object, were found in Area A. Although no parallels are known for these objects in EB I, their fabrics favor an EB I date.

A Basalt Bowl Fragment (Fig. 9)

A diminutive fragment of a flat-rim basalt bowl is typical of EB I stone vessel production (e.g., Braun 1990: Fig. 2:4, 6, 9).

The decorated holemouth vessels of EB I suggest a relatively early date, while the bowls may indicate a much later phase within that period. Accordingly, the assemblage of EB I artifacts, especially the pottery, points to two possible interpretations for human activity at the site. On the one hand, it may indicate the site was occupied for some considerable span of time, perhaps continually, while on the other, it may indicate some serially episodic occupation during EB I. Only further systematic exploration of the site is likely to indicate the accuracy or inaccuracy of these observations.

Late Early Bronze Age I–Early Bronze Age II

Pottery (Fig. 10)

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between late EB I and EB II ceramic types. Two bowls (Fig. 10:1, 2) exhibit this trait, as they are of types known from both late EB I and EB II assemblages. Notably, their fabrics are quite different from those positively identified as EB I. By far, the bulk of ceramic objects recovered from Area D derive from the EB II occupation. The EB II sherds presented here (Fig. 10:3–11) enlarge the typological range of this period illustrated in the report on

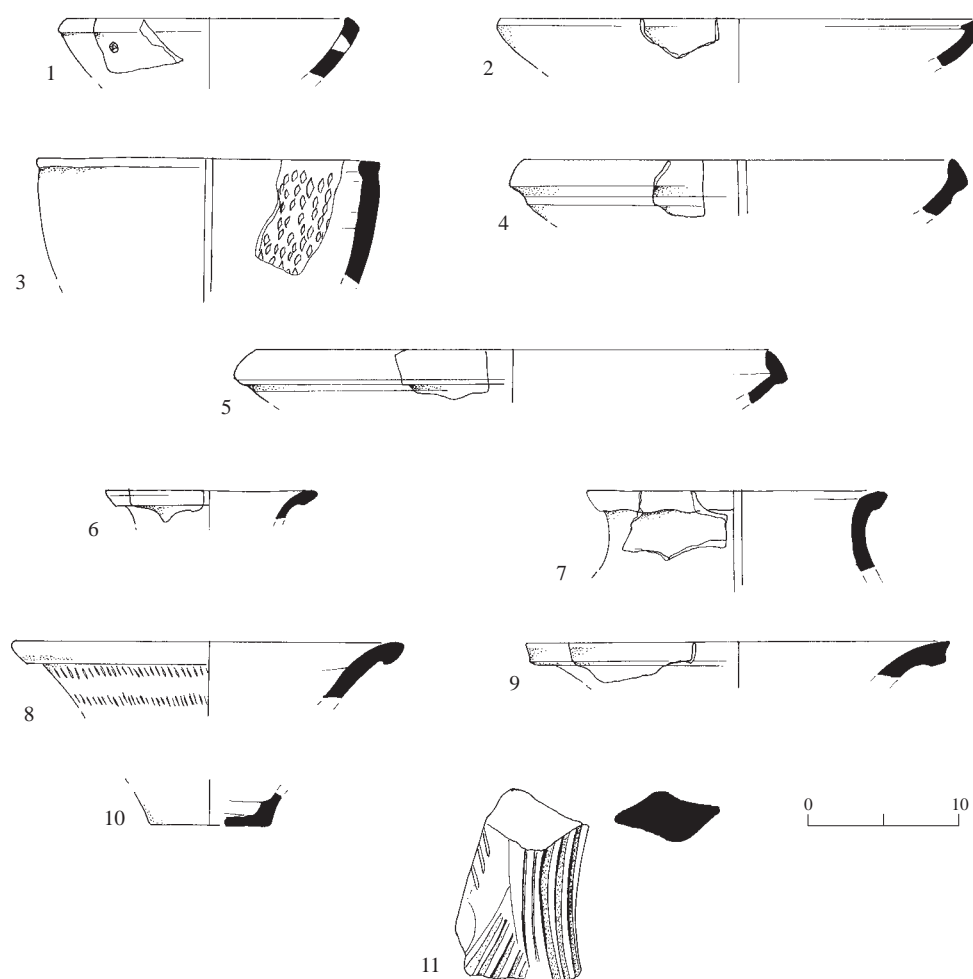


Fig. 10. Late EB I and EB II pottery.

Area A (Braun 1996: Fig. 10). These types are discussed below.

Figure 10:1 is a small bowl, nicely slipped in dark red, but its gray fabric is rather soft, indicating it was probably low-fired or fired for a short time. The quality of slip suggests that this bowl belongs to an EB II tradition, but it could also be dated to late EB I. A shallow bowl with a flattened, widened rim was finely fashioned, perhaps on a wheel (Fig. 10:2). It is reminiscent of EB I bowls, but the manner in which it was produced, as well as its fine fabric, suggest a late EB I or EB II date. A bowl with an unusual interior surface of dense impressions (Fig. 10:3) appears to be of a fabric consistently found in EB II types. These impressions apparently have some special function; their position on the interior of the vessel precludes them being decorative. The fact that this particular piece was charred suggests such a function might be related to baking. Notably, this vessel may be analogous to a sherd from a much earlier period (Braun 1996: Fig. 12:15), although the fabrics are considerably different.

Remaining types are clearly dated to EB II. Two platters (Fig. 10:4, 5) are notable for indentations or grooves below the rim on the vessel exterior. Jar and pithos rims of this period are finely fashioned vessels with clean-cut lines

(i.e., Fig. 10:6, 8–10). The base of the small vessel in Fig. 10:10 shows evidence that it was fashioned on a wheel. A unique fragment of a handle (Fig. 10:11), perhaps made in a mold, shows considerable skill in its manufacture.

Glyptics (Fig. 11)

The incised cylinder found in Area D was previously published (Braun 2004: Fig. 8:1).⁷ Obviously, this diminutive object was not intended for impressing in clay, but rather is a bead or a pendant imitating a cylinder seal

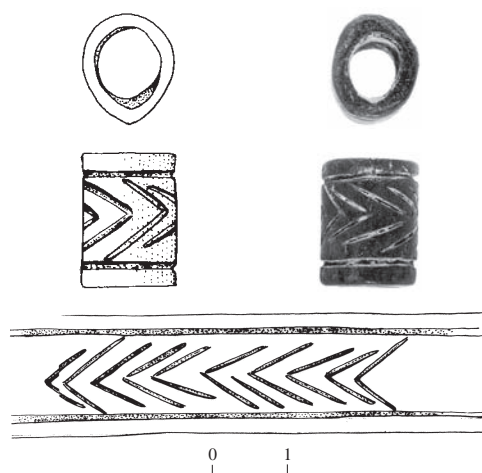


Fig. 11. Bone cylinder (Reg. No. 3774/11/67).

◀ Fig. 10

| No. | Vessel | Reg. No. | Area | Description |
|-----|------------|-------------|------|---|
| 1 | Bowl | 3774/11/53 | D | Red-slipped, gray clay, repair hole |
| 3 | Bowl | 2496/111/41 | B/C | Gray-brown clay, burnt to black and gray outside |
| 2 | Bowl | 3774/5/30 | D | Brown-red clay, gray core, polished |
| 4 | Platter | 3774/4/57 | D | Red-slipped and burnished on inside and outside of rim, pink clay |
| 5 | Platter | 3774/5/34 | D | Buff clay, buff-gray core, horizontal scrape/polish marks inside |
| 6 | Jar | 3774/11/53 | D | Pink-buff clay, gray core |
| 7 | Pithos | 3774/11/82 | D | Pink-buff clay, gray core, coarse |
| 8 | Pithos | 3774/5/24 | D | Orange clay, gray core, combing |
| 9 | Pithos | 3774/5/31 | D | Red-slipped, buff clay, buff-gray core |
| 10 | Jar or jug | 3774/13/43 | D | Orange clay, polished outside, wheel-made |
| 11 | Handle | 3774/3/11 | D | Red clay, gray core, raised decoration |

(for a discussion of this interpretation, see Braun 1985:78). It was found in a deep fill that is chronologically unindicative. Artifacts of this type are known from EB I through EB III contexts (Braun 1985:77–78, Fig. 32:1, Pl. X:A), and it thus may be dated anytime within the span of the Early Bronze Age settlement at Me'ona.

The Intermediate Bronze Age (Fig. 12)

Five sherds in the assemblage from Area B appear to be dated to the Intermediate Bronze Age. One, an 'envelope' ledge handle (Fig. 12:2), is most typical of that period, while the fabrics and morphology of the remaining four jar rim and neck sherds point to the same chrono-cultural horizon.

Undated Objects

Two objects recovered in the excavations are of uncertain chrono-cultural associations.

Stone Stopper (Fig. 13:1)

A small piece of soft, chalky, white limestone, fashioned into an object with a flattened, wide head and slightly tapering shaft is interpreted as a stopper for a narrow-necked vessel. There is no indication of its dating.

Head of a Zoomorphic Figurine (Fig. 13:2)

This head of a pottery figurine with eyes, nostrils and mouth depicted, bears a modicum of similarity to the head of a zoomorphic figurine from Qiryat Ata (Golani 2003: Fig. 7.4).

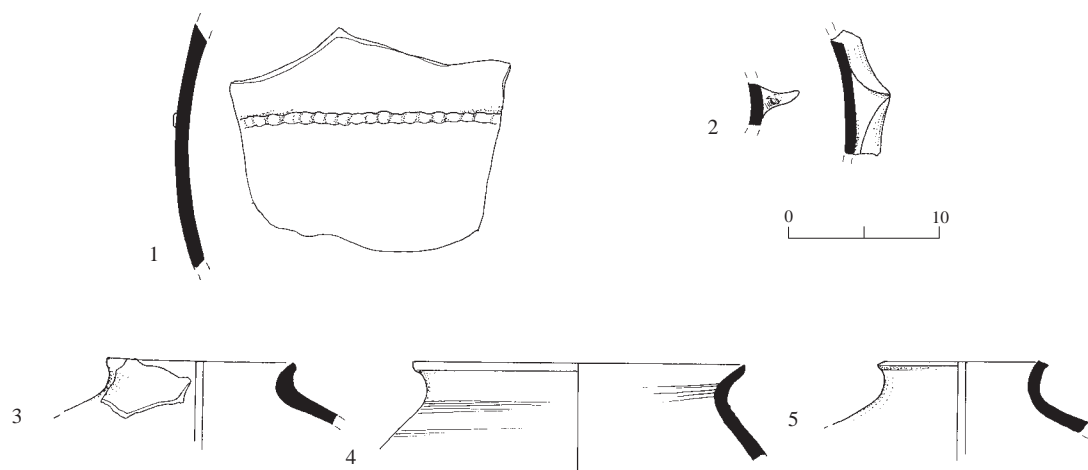


Fig. 12. Intermediate Bronze Age sherds.

| No. | Vessel | Reg. No. | Description |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Body sherd | 3774/11/72/2 | Brown to red-brown clay outside, brown to pinkish brown clay inside, gray core, hard-fired |
| 2 | Ledge handle | 3774/11/37 | Pink clay, light greenish cream slip, gray core |
| 3 | Jar | 3774/18/9 | Orange clay outside, buff clay inside, gray core |
| 4 | Jar | 3774/11/72/1 | Dark brown to brown clay outside, reddish brown clay inside, numerous shiny inclusions, rim wheel-turned |
| 5 | Jar | 3774/11/33 | Traces of reddish slip, light buff clay, rim possibly wheel-turned |

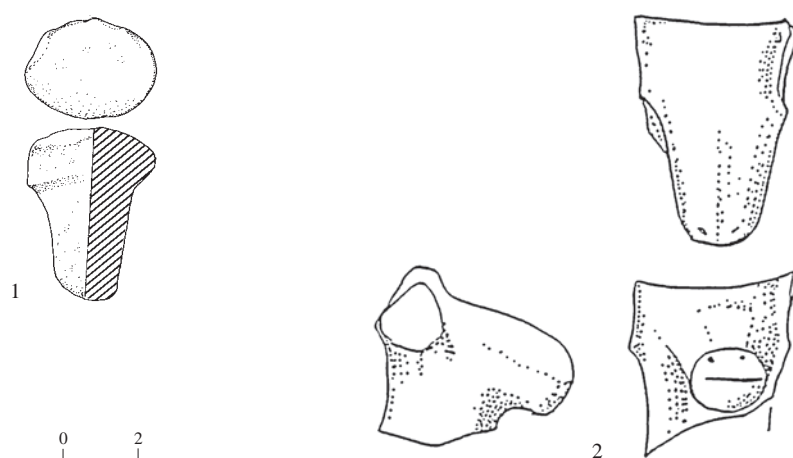


Fig. 13. Stone stopper (1) and zoomorphic figurine head (2).

| No. | Reg. No. | Area | Description |
|-----|--------------|------|---|
| 1 | 2496/sur/184 | B/C | Limestone |
| 2 | 3774/11/47 | D | Orange clay, incised and impressed features |

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the accumulative evidence from the various excavations and soundings at the site, Me'ona appears to have been the focus of human endeavor and probable sedentary occupation from sometime in the Late Neolithic and/or Early Chalcolithic horizon until the end of the third millennium BCE. It appears to have supported settlements in at least several phases of these early chrono-cultural horizons, perhaps localized in different sectors of the site. Ceramics dated to several phases of settlement in EB I suggest either some continuity of occupation in the period or, perhaps, intermittent settlement. By late EB I, or perhaps EB II, the site seems to have supported a population that was substantial enough to invest a good deal of time and energy in ensuring its safety by constructing a fortification system (Braun 1996). Most of the discoveries discussed here are likely to be associated with that phase of the site's occupation.

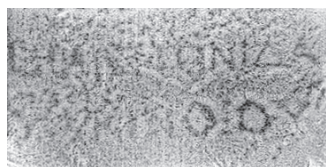
Perhaps the site was abandoned after that episode, because, to date, there is no sign of activity in the EB III. The discovery of some pottery dated to the Intermediate Bronze Age is noteworthy. Following this period, the site seems to have been abandoned for several millennia, after which it was utilized for agricultural purposes, probably in Classical times, as indicated by sherds dating to the Hellenistic and Roman–Byzantine periods.

APPENDIX 1: HELLENISTIC AMPHORA FRAGMENTS

GERALD FINKIELSZTEJN

Two amphora fragments were discovered in the excavation at Me'ona (see above): one Rhodian stamped handle, and the rim and upper handle attachment of an unidentified Greek amphora. Both were found out of context.

Rh 1. 22.83.1. Rectangular stamp.



[Ἐπὶ Ἀρισ]τωνίδα

Ἰακινθίου

[In the term of] Aristonidas

[In the month of] Yakinthios

This eponym may be dated c. 209–205 BCE (Finkielsztejn 2001:181, 191, Table 18).

Gr 1. 22.83.2. Small fragment of the rim with a broken fragment of the upper attachment of the handle, eroded.

The rim is rounded, smoothly prolonged from the neck and slightly flaring. The section of the handle seems to have been elliptic. The fabric is light yellowish red, with fine white and black inclusions. One can very tentatively suggest a North Aegean origin for this fragment. A date in the third century BCE is very tentative.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF LOCI FOR AREA D

| Locus | Square | Description |
|-------|--------|---|
| 1 | D/9 | Probe, <i>terra rossa</i> surface soil containing modern debris |
| 2 | E/9 | Probe, surface soil containing modern debris and eroded fill from the top of the hill; directly covering stone structures |
| 3 | H/10 | Probe, surface soil, containing small quantities of modern debris |
| 4 | M/10 | Probe, surface soil, containing some modern debris |
| 5 | D/9 | Probe, below modern fill covering stone structures; devoid of modern debris |
| 6 | E–D/9 | Probe into fill above stone structures |
| 7 | D/9 | A small patch of pebble surface below east half of L1 |
| 8 | D/9 | Fill of stone structures |
| 9 | H/10 | Fill below L3, somewhat harder packed, but same soil type |
| 10 | M10 | Fill below L4, with small stones; part of this locus is fill of W502 |
| 11 | D/9 | Fill below L5, apparently occupation debris; many large sherds and a complete bone cylinder (Fig. 11) |
| 12 | F/9 | Probe through surface soil directly into eroded fill above the stone structures; contained numerous large fieldstones, apparently tumbled into heaps on the slope |
| 13 | F/9 | Continuation of L12 further to the east, down the slope |
| 14 | E9 | Fill to the west of W500, dark soil below L5 |
| 15 | E–D/9 | Fill below L5 and above W501; dark soil as in L14 |
| 16 | D/9 | Surface fill in the south half of the square |
| 17 | D/9 | Fill between W501 and the northern balk; continuation of L11 |
| 18 | H/10 | Fill below L9; upper part mostly soil, lower part mostly small stones; fill of the terrace |
| 19 | M/10 | Dark soil with many small stones between W502 and W504 may be fill within a structure or in a lane between buildings. |
| 20 | E/9 | Fill below L2 and L3, including a small stone tumble; possibly displaced from the structures |
| 21 | M/10 | Fill with small fieldstones, above W504 |
| 22 | H/10 | Continuation of L18 to the east |
| 23 | E/9 | Same as L20 in the west, down to bedrock |

NOTES

¹ The excavation was directed by the author on behalf of the IAA (Permit No. A-3774); the director was also responsible for field photography and surveying. Y. Lehrman assisted in the surveying. Yehezkel Bar-Dan and Yossi Yaakobi provided logistical backup. Moshe Hartal kindly produced a GPS map. Mariana Salzberger photographed the cylinder seal-bead and Carmen Hersch drew it and the remaining objects. The excavation enjoyed the help of the Northern District of the IAA, especially from Dror Barshad and Nimrod Getzov.

² The excavation in Area A was described elsewhere (Braun 1996); selected finds from this area that had not been previously published are included in the present report.

³ Fine weather in the early part of the season allowed for excavation in the open air, but

after only a few days, a rainy spell forced excavation to be confined to two small soundings within specially constructed hothouses, with all incumbent inconveniences, especially for photographic recording.

⁴ The excavation (Permit No. A-2496) was conducted by the author (for a preliminary report, see Braun 1999).

⁵ The finds from Areas B, C, and D come from the excavation described in the present report; the finds from Area A come from previous excavations.

⁶ For a list of locus numbers of the 1989 season, see Braun 1996:26–28.

⁷ Six sherds impressed with cylinder seals were found in previous excavations at Me'ona and were published in Braun 2004: Figs. 2:1; 4:2, 3; 6:1–3.

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