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Ḥorbat Sahar on Giv'at Ha-More: A Byzantine–Early Islamic Rural Samaritan(?) Settlement, Revisited in the Crusader–Mamluk Period

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This article presents building remains uncovered at the site of Ḥorbat Sahar, on the Giv'at Ha-More ridge, which formed part of a house and a large building comprising several rooms, a pathway, a small part of a plastered installation (*miqveh*?), and other installations, all dated by the pottery and other finds to the late Byzantine–Early Islamic period. The presence of Samaritan-type lamps, and the absence of LRRW bowls in the pottery assemblage, may hint to a Samaritan presence at the site following their suppression in the Samaria heartland. The large building was resettled in the Crusader–Mamluk periods, without architectural changes. The wealth of glazed bowls and animal remains in powdery accumulation layers may reflect the use of the site by overnight pilgrims travelling to visit Christian sites in Galilee.

Keywords: miqveh, rural settlement, Samaritan lamps, Samaritan population, Crusader-Mamluk Christian pilgrims

Introduction

Ḥorbat Sahar is located on the northeastern lower slopes of the Giv'at Ha-More (Jebel Duhy) hill ridge. The ridge is surrounded by the Kesullot and Jezreel Valleys on the north, west and south, and by the Ramat Issachar basaltic plateau on the east (map ref. 23569/72466; Fig. 1). The elongated ridge has two crests: the eastern (500 m asl) exhibits a rocky landscape of hard dolomite limestone, and the western (517 m asl) features an overlay of basaltic rocks. The ancient site of Ḥorbat Sahar comprises the settlement and adjacent rock-cut installations and burial caves (Figs. 2, 3). It was sheltered on the south and west by the upper slopes of the hill while commanding a view of Mount Tabor and the Nazareth hills to the northwest and of the Ramat Issachar plateau to the east. The settlement lies c. 4 km east of the major ancient Megiddo-Legio road leading via Mount Tabor into Galilee. Today, an Israel Defense

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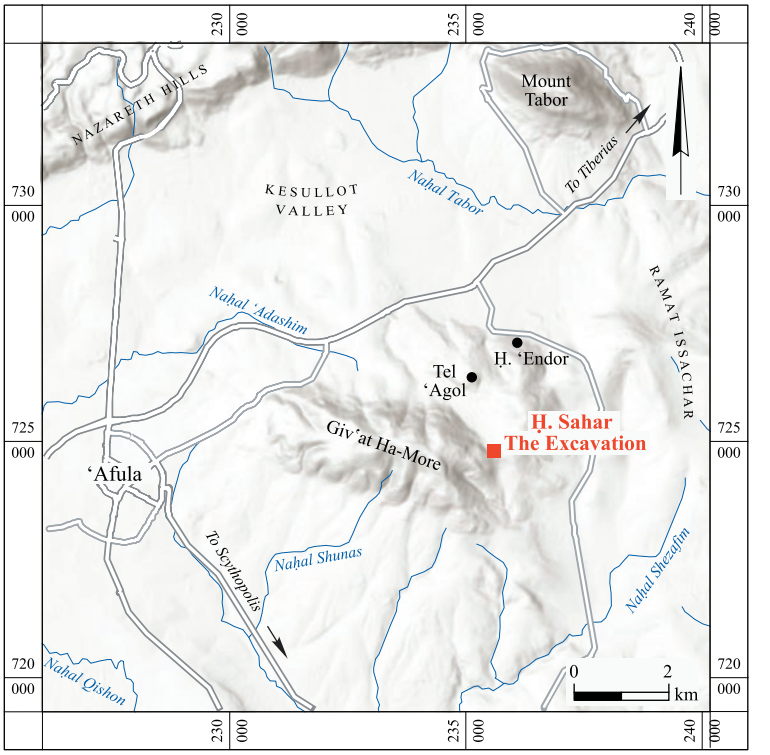


Fig. 1. Location map of the site.

Fig. 2. Ḥorbat Sahar, burial caves, installations and quarries, aerial view to the south.

Fig. 3. Ḥorbat Sahar, showing Areas A and B in foreground and army fence on left, aerial view to the east.

Force military base impinges on the northern margins of the archaeological site, the damage rendered to the site by the southward extension of the military fence leading to the salvage excavation.[2]

Previous Research

In the late nineteenth century, Victor Guérin recorded ruined stone buildings with three rows of broken columns and ashlar blocks, a cistern, a reservoir and oil presses. He described the rock-hewn necropolis on the adjacent slope as comprising twelve rock-hewn tombs, each with an entrance room leading into a burial chamber with three hewn burial troughs adorned with raised headrests and arcosolia (Guérin 1880:121–124). The Survey of Western

[2] The excavation (Permit No. A-7993/2017) was undertaken between May and July 2017 on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, under the direction of Yardenna Alexandre, with the assistance of Arfan Najjar, Noa Shatil (area supervision), Samia Najjar (registration), Roee Liran, Yakov Shmidov (field plans), Assaf Peretz (photography), Michael Peleg (aerial photography), Yossi Yaakobi, Uri Laban (administration), Oren Zingboym (army liaison), Karen Covello-Paran (archaeological consultation), Leea Porath (pottery restoration), Hagit Tahan-Rosen (final plans, pottery and finds drawings and plates), Yael Gorin-Rosen (glass, not published), Ilia Raznisky, Lena Kupferschmidt (metal laboratory), Dafna Gazit (metal finds photography), Helena Sokolov and Lior Sandberg (numismatics), Zohar Turgeman-Yaffe (fauna). The excavation was funded by the Ministry of Defense following damage caused to the site by earthworks carried out to extend the adjacent military camp fence.

Palestine focused on the adjacent cemetery, describing the rolling stones blocking the square doorways of the rock-hewn burial caves (Conder and Kitchener 1882:123–124). Nehemiah Zori recorded the remains of many buildings and several architectural elements visible on the surface, identifying scattered sherds from Iron Age II and the Persian period, and predominantly pottery from the Roman–Byzantine and Umayyad periods; he also described the adjacent rock-hewn burial caves and installations (Zori 1977:61, Sites 92, 93).

In the ʻEn Dor Map survey (45), Zvi Gal retrieved Roman, Byzantine, Early Islamic and Crusader–Mamluk-period sherds at the site, and provided a schematic plan and a detailed description of the visible settlement remains: "The settlement is traversed for 50 m by an east–west path; outlines of rooms may be noted on either side. At the western end of the path remains of a structure with two rows of columns (remains of a church?). To its north, a stone wall surrounds a large courtyard. The northern wall runs east, terminating at a mound occupied by remains of a structure (5 × 5 m; tower?). In the southeastern corner of the site, there is a similar structure. The building remains and the stratigraphy indicate two or three building phases" (Gal 1998:61*, Site No. 34, Fig. 34.6). Gal recorded rock-hewn installations on the adjacent slope, including winepresses, an olive-oil press, bell-shaped cisterns, two rectangular reservoirs, shallow plastered pools and rock-hewn cup marks, and a cemetery that comprised rock-hewn cist graves, sarcophagi and several burial caves with vaulted burial chambers and a side groove for a blocking stone (Gal 1998:61*).

As there is no adjacent spring, the ancient settlement must have relied on water collected in cisterns. Gal described a large rectangular subterranean reservoir, Bir es-Siyaḥ, on the hill above the site, c. 600 m to its west (Gal 1998:60*, Site No. 32, elevation c. 410 m asl, see p. 77 for plan and photograph). The reservoir (c. 400 liters) was filled with rainwater from an opening in the east, and the water was drawn via a square rock-cut opening in the roof. A small rock-cut pool (1.7 × 2.0 m, 0.4 m deep), where Roman and Byzantine sherds were retrieved, adjoined the reservoir. The reservoir almost certainly provided the water requirements of the ancient settlement.

About 2 km north of Ḥorbat Sahar, at the foot of Givʻat Ha-More ridge, lies the old Arab village of ʻEndor, abandoned since 1948, where Roman, Mamluk and Ottoman remains were identified in the survey (Gal 1998:54*, Site 6). Old maps of Nazareth mark an ancient path that approached Nazareth from the village of ʻEndor, passing Mount Tabor and Iksal (see, for example, Schumacher 1890: Table 4). Nineteenth-century explorers record that this was the standard route (Van de Velde 1854:382) and that the travelers branched off the ancient Egypt–Damascus caravan route just north of Jebel Duhy, taking the path to Mount Tabor and Nazareth (Robinson and Smith 1867:330–331). Conder reports riding from Jenin to Nazareth, passing Gilboʻa, Jezreel, Shunem, Nein and ʻEndor, then ascending the great cliff that rises from the plain by a narrow pass to the hills (Conder 1878:136–137). It is evident from the records of many of the Christian pilgrims from the Byzantine period onward that they also traveled this path to visit the sacred places at Mount Tabor and Nazareth, as, for example, Paula in 386 CE and Willibald in 726 CE (Baldi 1982:206, No. 240; 207, No. 245).

The Excavation

At the outset of the excavation, a thick layer of disturbed dumped soil and building stones of the recent earthworks was removed mechanically down to the tops of the walls. Two excavation areas were opened: Area B (five squares; c. 120 sq m), adjacent to the area damaged by the military base fence, and Area A (two squares; 50 sq m), located about 25 m further south (Fig. 3). The ruined walls described in the early surveys were covered by tall spring vegetation, but by the end of the excavation in the summer, the wall contours were visible on the ground and in the aerial photograph.

Buildings dating from the Byzantine–Early Islamic periods were uncovered in the excavation, some of which were reoccupied in the Crusader–Mamluk period after a long period of abandonment. Glimpses of earlier settlements from the Iron Age and the Roman period were exposed in very small probes. The architectural remains of each period are presented here, together with the associated pottery and other finds, with references to studies of the coins (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume) and zooarchaeological remains (see Turgeman-Yaffe, this volume).

The presentation of the architectural remains, the ceramic assemblages and the other finds from all the periods is followed by a discussion on the nature of the settlement in the different periods.

The Iron Age

The Iron Age remains were very limited, as the excavation reached below the later buildings only in two very small probes. In the northern square in Area A, an uneven bedrock surface (L153) was reached, exposing part of a rock-hewn circular pit (L162; diam. c. 1.5 m, excavated depth 0.6 m; Plan 1: Section 2–2; Fig. 4), which yielded a few Iron II sherds.

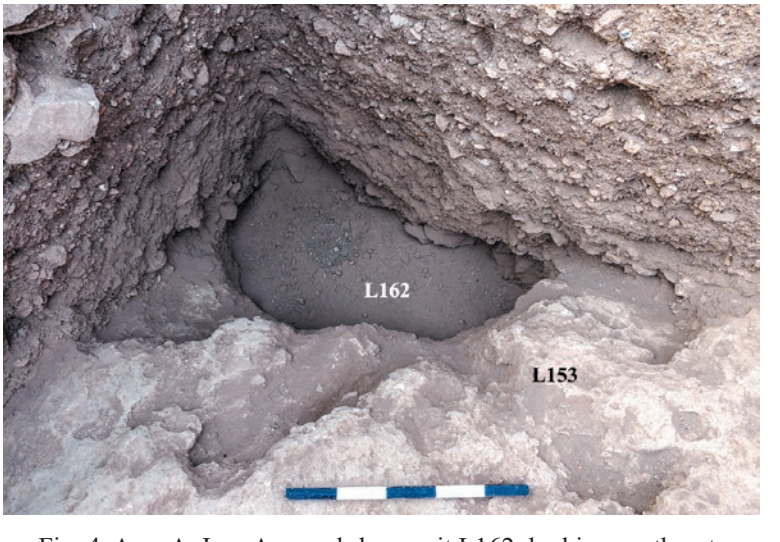


Fig. 4. Area A, Iron Age rock-hewn pit L162, looking southeast.

Fig. 5. Area B, Probe 143, dug below later Pathway 140, looking south.

Bedrock was not reached in the southern square. In Area B, a very small probe dug below the pathway (L140) of the later building complex exposed an underlying accumulation layer (L143; depth 0.7 m; Plan 2: Section 2–2; Fig. 5), in which several Iron II potsherds were retrieved; bedrock was not reached here.

Iron Age II Pottery (Fig. 6)

The excavation yielded a few Iron II sherds in Pit 162 (Area A) and a few in Probe 143 (Area B); additional Iron II sherds appeared sporadically in the later layers (see Tables 1, 2). The vessels include a bowl with a rounded wall, a slightly out-turned lip, and a reddish-brown slipped and irregularly hand-burnished interior and rim (Fig. 6:1). A ledged rim carinated bowl also exhibits a worn reddish-brown slip (Fig. 6:2). Irregular hand-burnishing over a reddish-brown slip is characteristic of Iron IIA–B bowls, such as at Yoqneʻam (Zarzecki-Peleg, Cohen-Anidjar and Ben-Tor 2005:240–241). Kraters with convex rims and burnished red slip on the rim (Fig. 6:3, 4) are a common Iron IIA–B form, as, for example, at Yoqneʻam (Zarzecki-Peleg, Cohen-Anidjar and Ben-Tor 2005:268–269) and at Ḥorbat Rosh Zayit Area B, where several vessels exhibit a red band on the rim (Gal and Alexandre 2000:170, Fig. VI.12:1–7). The large open cooking pot with a triangular rim (Fig. 6:5, 6) is the characteristic cooking pot form of Iron IIA, as, for example, at Yoqneʻam (Zarzecki-Peleg, Cohen-Anidjar and Ben-Tor 2005:272–273). The jar rim sherds are rather small, lacking the shoulder, and it is, therefore, difficult to classify the forms. One neckless jar has an outturned rim (Fig. 6:7); another has a short, thickened neck (Fig. 6:8). Two

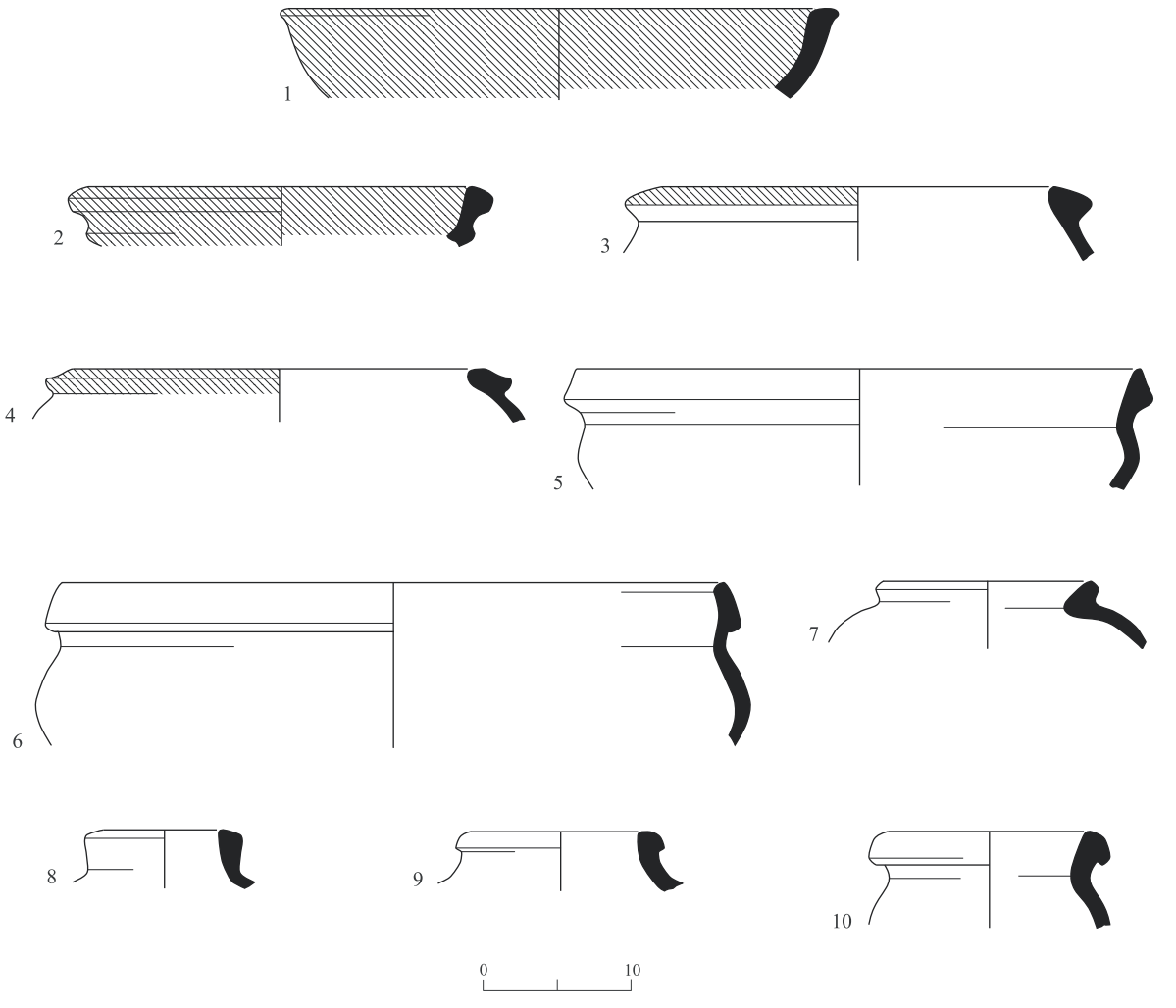


Fig. 6. Iron Age IIA pottery.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Bowl	B	127	1139	Handmade; gray ware; reddish-brown slip; irregular hand burnishing
2	Bowl	B	143	1235/3	Pinkish gray ware; worn reddish-brown slip
3	Krater	B	143	1235/4	Light brown ware; many white grits; red-slipped rim
4	Krater	A	162	1323	Light brown ware; burnished red-slipped rim
5	Cooking pot	B	143	1235/6	Brown heavy cooking ware; gray core; white grits; soot marks
6	Cooking pot	B	143	1235/1	Brown heavy cooking ware; gray core; white grits; soot marks
7	Holemouth jar	B	102	1028	Reddish-brown ware; burnished
8	Jar	B	143	1235/2	Brown ware; gray core
9	Jar	B	143	1216	Light brown ware
10	Jar	B	143	1197/2	Light brown ware

other jar rims have very short necks and thickened rolled-out rims (Fig. 6:9, 10), similar to holemouth jars; no exact parallels were found.

Iron Age II Other Finds

Basalt Grinding Stones.— Four fragments of loaf-shaped basalt grinding stones, the characteristic Iron Age form, were found in Areas A and B in various accumulations, including on a later floor attributed to the Roman period (L100, L106, L111, L157; not illustrated).

THE ROMAN PERIOD

In Area A, a small probe was dug in the southern square, below the floor (L148) of the Byzantine building exposing an underlying accumulation layer (L157; Plan 1: Section 1–1; Fig. 7) that yielded some small Middle to Late Roman sherds, together with a few Byzantine sherds. Several Middle to Late Roman storage-jar sherds were also found together with many Byzantine sherds on the overlying floor (L148). In the northern square, four coins were retrieved from the accumulation layer that reached down to bedrock (L153), dating to the third–fifth centuries CE (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. Nos. 1, 3–5); a fourth-century CE Roman Imperial coin came from the topsoil layer (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. No. 2). No building remains from the Roman period were reached in Area B.

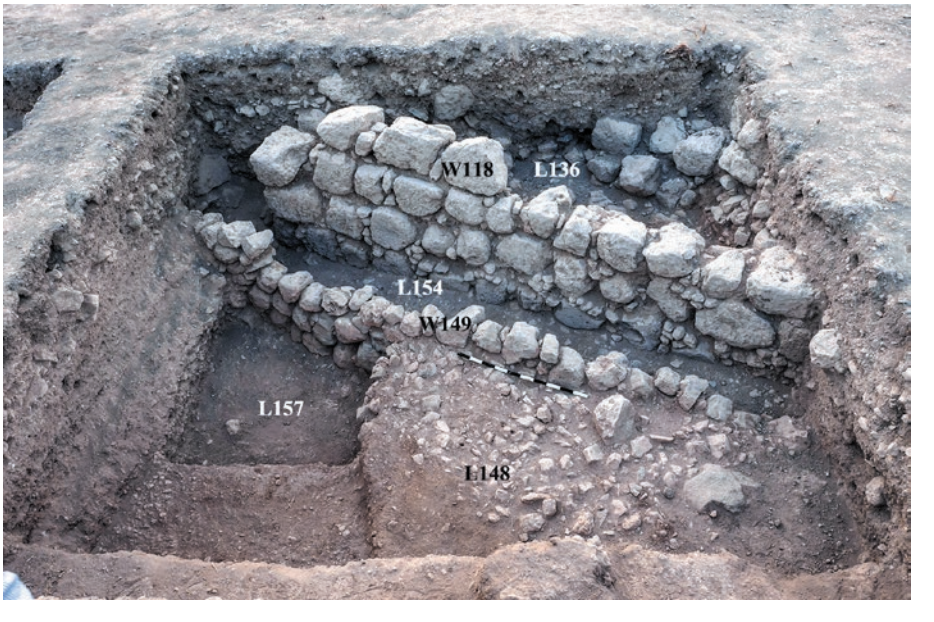


Fig. 7. Area A, accumulation Layer 157 below Byzantine-period walls and Floor 148, looking east.

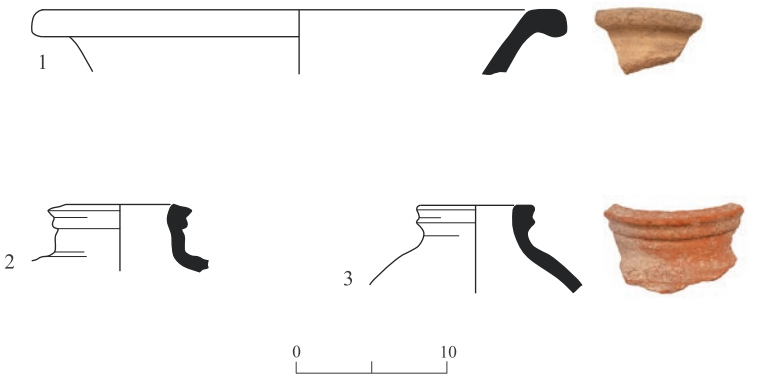


Fig. 8. Roman-period pottery.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Basin	B	132	1145/2	Light orange gritty fabric; light yellow surface
2	Storage jar	A	157	1308/3	Orangey-red fabric
3	Storage jar	A	148	1309	Orangey-red fabric

Roman-Period Pottery (Fig. 8)

The Roman-period sherds (n = 43 rims) came almost entirely from the Roman accumulation layer and the overlying Byzantine floor in Area A (L157, L148; see Tables 1, 2). The pottery includes a few very small rim sherds of Kefar Ḥananya forms, classifying as a KH Form 1B bowl, two KH Form 3B casseroles and a KH Form 4B cooking pot, a repertoire characteristic of the early second–fourth centuries CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993:91–97, 119–124, 126–128); the sherds were not illustrated as they were very small. A large sherd of an open basin with thick walls and a wide flat everted rim is made of a light orange gritty fabric (Fig. 8:1). Such flat-based basins are common in the Roman period at Caesarea and at sites in Jezreel Valley and Lower Galilee, for example at Ẓippori (Balouka 2013:47, Fig. 23:8–11) and Jalame (Johnson 1988:183, Fig. 7–31). They date from the second to the fourth centuries CE, and they are recognized as vessels imported from Cyprus or from the northeastern coast of the Mediterranean region (Blakely, Brinkmann and Vitaliano 1992). The storage jars retrieved from Floor 148 and beneath Layer 157 have short, carefully profiled rims and are made of an orangey-red fabric (Fig. 8:2, 3). Similar jars were found at ʻAfula in the Byzantine period (Permit No. A-7724; Edna Dalali-Amos, pers. comm.).

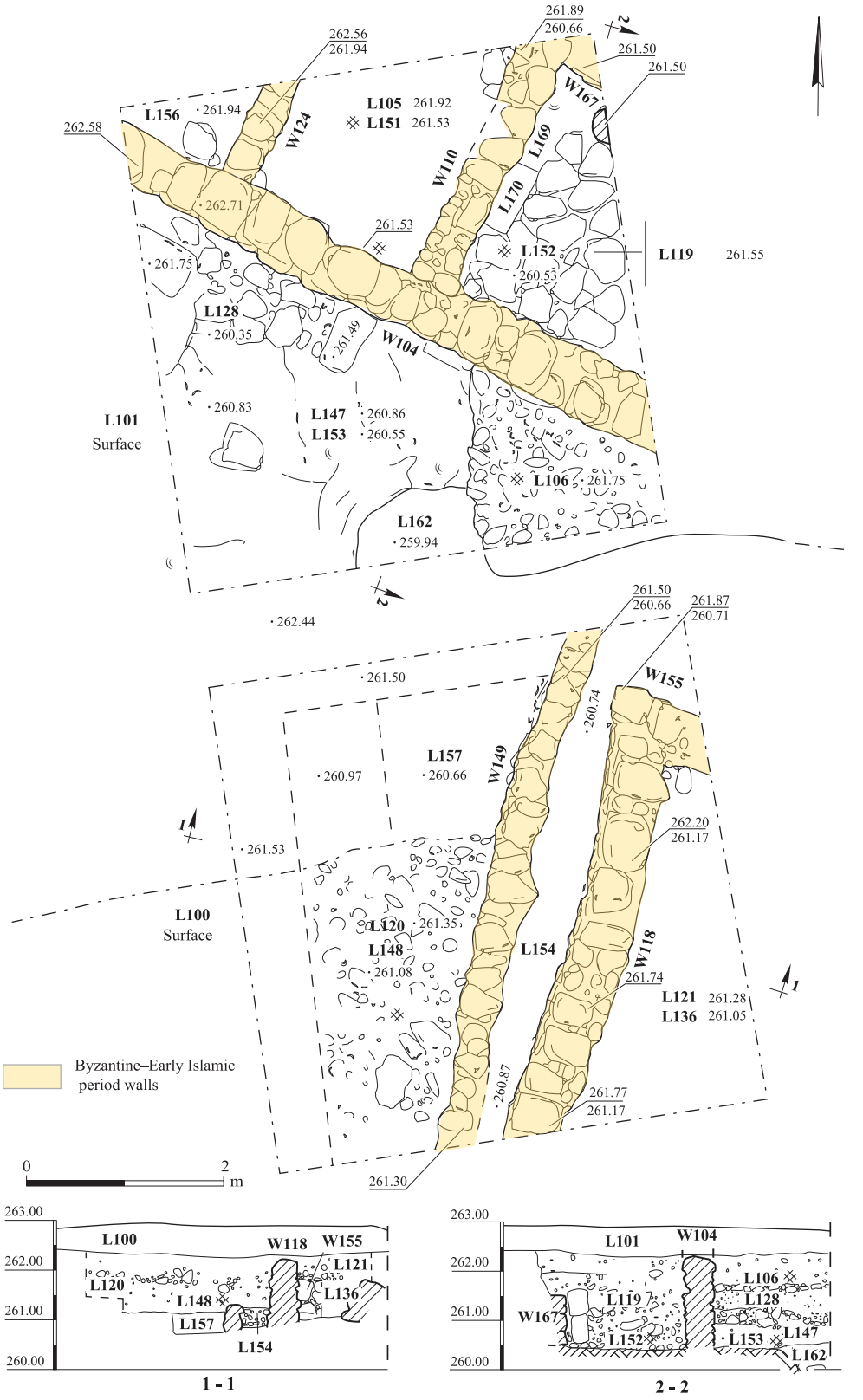
The Byzantine–Early Islamic Periods

Architectural remains dating from the Byzantine–Early Islamic period were exposed in Areas A and B. Although the areas lay only c. 25 m apart, the buildings exposed were different in character.

Area A

In Area A, walls of rooms, probably of a domestic building, were uncovered (Plan 1). In the southern square, a five-course wall (W118; width 0.6 m, height 1.5 m), constructed of roughly worked, large- and medium-sized stones, and lined on the eastern inner face with small stones, formed a corner with an adjoining wall, of which only a short stub was exposed (W155; Figs. 7, 9). The excavation did not reach the floor in the partially exposed room, but the accumulation layers (L136, L121; Fig. 10) yielded a few Byzantine–Early Islamic-period sherds. Outside the room, a thin, four-course narrow wall, built of medium- and small-sized stones (W149; width 0.3 m, height 0.8 m), ran parallel to W118 and may have delineated a drainage channel (L154; Plan 1: Section 1–1). A small-stone and packed-earth floor (L148) runs up to the channel wall's western face; it was probably this building's courtyard floor. Many Byzantine sherds were retrieved from Floor 148 and in the overlying accumulation layer (L120); an Umayyad-period coin was found on the floor (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. No. 12).

In the northern square, four walls of another building were exposed (Fig. 11). Wall 104, set directly on the bedrock (L153), was constructed of large fieldstones and preserved seven courses high (width 0.6 m; Plan 1: Section 2–2; Fig. 12). The wall's internal face was lined with small stones, overlain by a plaster coating that was extant up to the fourth or fifth course. Similarly constructed W110 abutted W104 and was adjoined by just visible W167, delineating part of a room (Fig. 13). The room was paved with a stone-slab floor (L152), carefully lain on the flat bedrock surface (L169) and running up to the base of W104. The accumulation layers (L119) on and above the floor yielded an upstanding round column segment, visible in the balk (Fig. 14), a roughly worked limestone lid (see Fig. 33:2) and Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery, albeit with a few intrusive Crusader–Mamluk sherds. A tiny probe dug below the stone paving exposed part of a small rectangular installation hewn out of the bedrock (L170; 0.8 × 0.4 m, depth 0.55 m; Fig. 15), in which a few Byzantine jar sherds were found. The bottom course of W110 was built over Installation 170, post-dating it. Another wall (W124) also abutted W104, delimiting a room with a higher packed earth floor (L151), and here too, some Early Islamic-period pottery was retrieved in the overlying accumulation layers (L151, L105). The excavation did not reach down to the original floor of the building in this room. South of the building, a floor made of a packed layer of small stones (L106) ran up to the middle of the external southern face of W104. The floor and the overlying accumulation layer (L106) produced Byzantine–Early Islamic sherds, a silver ring (see Fig. 34:1) and an Umayyad coin (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. No. 13), again with a few intrusive Crusader–Mamluk sherds. No lower floor was observed here, and the thick underlying accumulation layers (L147, L128) down to the bedrock comprised some stone collapse and yielded Byzantine pottery, as well as several Byzantine and Umayyad coins, dated between the late fourth and the mid-eighth centuries CE (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. Nos. 7–11, 14). A single Mamluk coin was also found in an accumulation layer above bedrock (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. No. 15).



Plan 1. Area A, plan and sections.

Fig. 9. Area A, W118, W155 and Channel W149, looking south.

Fig. 10. Area A, W118, delimiting Room 121/136, looking west.

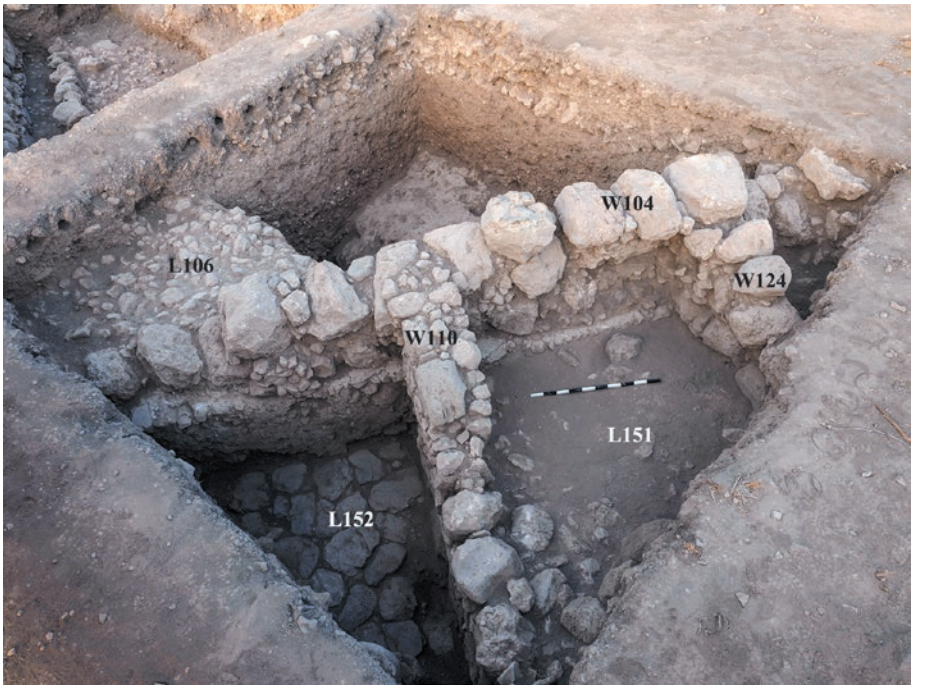


Fig. 11. Area A, the northern square, looking southwest.

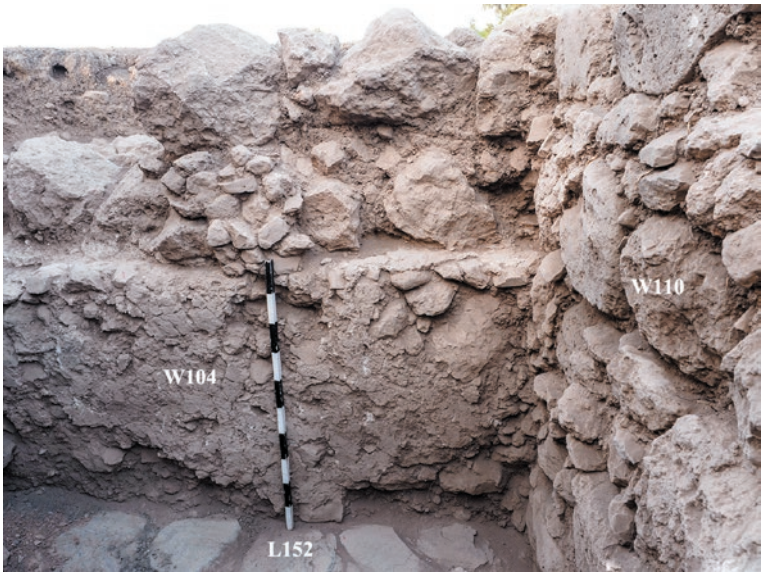


Fig. 12. Area A, W104, looking southeast; note plaster coating on inner face.

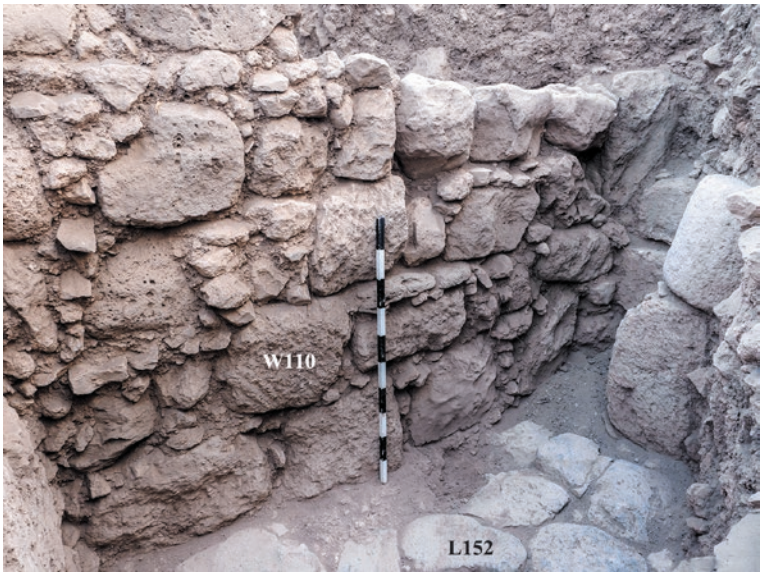


Fig. 13. Area A, W110, looking west.

Fig. 14. Area A, Room 152, column in balk, looking north.

Fig. 15. Area A, rock-hewn Installation 170 below W110, looking northwest.

The architectural remains uncovered in Area A were probably parts of two houses or domestic buildings constructed in the Byzantine period. They continued in use in the Early Islamic period, after which they were abandoned. This led to the understanding that the later Crusader–Mamluk sherds found in the accumulation layers in Area A reflect a presence of an ephemeral nature post-dating the buildings.

Area B

Parts of two buildings were exposed in Area B, separated by an intervening pathway (L140; Fig. 16; Plan 2). The aerial photograph of the site shows that these buildings were part of a much larger building complex (see Fig. 3; see *Discussion*, below).

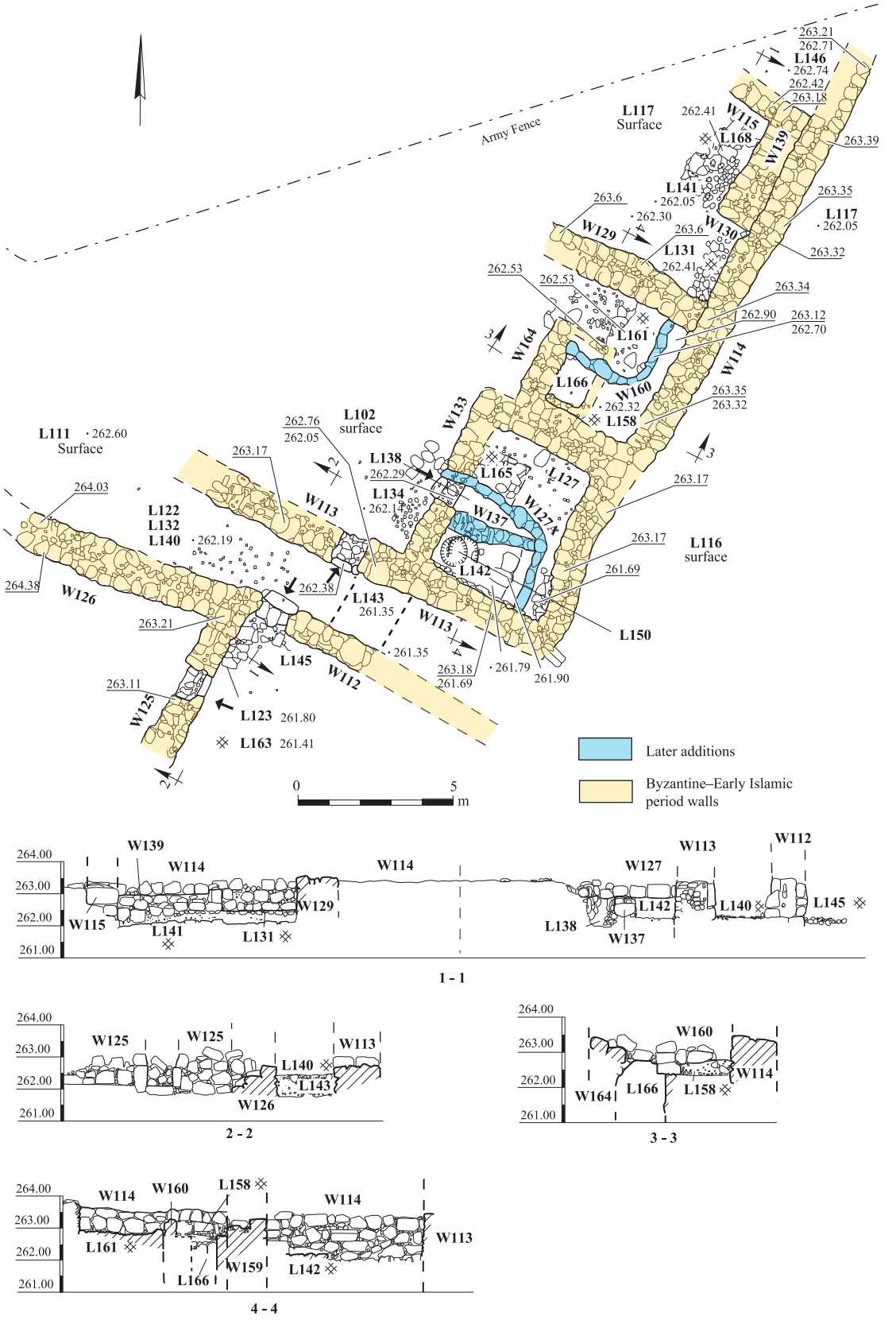
Only two walls of the southern building were exposed. Wall 112/126, delimiting the southern building and the pathway, was constructed of five courses of large stones (width 1.2 m, height 1.2 m). An entrance in the wall, leading southward from the pathway into the building, had two monolith doorposts and a threshold with a stone step that led down to a partially stone-paved floor (L145, L163; Plan 2: Section 1–1; Fig. 17). Wall 125, forming an integrally constructed corner with W126, also exhibited an entrance with dressed doorposts, and a stone threshold with hewn door sockets and three hollows, no doubt for bolting a wooden door (Figs. 18, 19). This entrance led into a large room that was not excavated and therefore, no pottery was retrieved. Next to the entrance, the few pottery sherds retrieved on

the stone-paved floor (L145, L163) and in the overlying accumulation layer (L123) dated to the Mamluk period.

The pathway (width c. 2.2 m), delimited by the long walls of the two buildings (W112/126, W113), was paved with a dense small pebble and packed-earth floor (L140) that ran up to the walls (Plan 2: Section 2–2; Fig. 20). Pottery sherds from the Byzantine–Early Islamic periods, as well as a single Late Roman coin (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume: Cat. No. 6) were found on the floor (L140). A few Byzantine–Early Islamic and some Crusader–Mamluk sherds were retrieved from the accumulation layer on the pathway (L132), and only Crusader–Mamluk sherds were found in the overlying accumulation (L122).

Two external walls of the northern building were exposed. Wall 113 (length 12.9 m, width 1.2 m, height 1.4 m) was built of large coarsely worked stones, its eastern part extant for six courses and its western part incorporating a few huge stones, some lain lengthwise, others widthwise (Fig. 20). An entrance in the wall leading from Pathway 140 into the building also had a stone threshold flanked by dressed monolithic doorposts. Wall 114 (exposed length 22 m, width 1.1 m, height 1.5 m) was built of two outer rows of large stones with a small-stone core, and it was exposed for four courses at the corner with W113, without reaching down to its base; there were no entrances along the wall. The entrance in W113 led into the building, probably into an inner courtyard. A row of three rooms and part of a fourth were excavated on the eastern side of the building; the western part of the building was probably destroyed by the recent earthworks. The rooms were delimited by short walls that adjoined or abutted the western inner face of W114.

Fig. 16. Area B, general view, looking east.



Plan 2. Area B, plan and sections.

Fig. 17. Area B, monolithic doorpost, and entrance threshold in W112/W126, looking east.

Fig. 18. Area B, W125 and entrance into southern building, looking west.

Fig. 19. Area B, monolithic doorpost and threshold of entrance in W125, looking southwest.

Fig. 20. Area B, Pathway 140 delimited by W112/126 on right and W113 on left, looking east.

The first room was accessed via a stone threshold in W133. The tops of three large stones in a row, just visible in the packed earth floor (L142) of the room, lined up with a join observed in W113, indicating that W113 may have been built over the wall of an earlier building, incorporating some of its stones (Fig. 21). The base of the walls was not reached. Consequently, it was not established whether the exposed floor was the original floor of the room. The northern part of the room had a stone-paved floor (L165), while the southern part had a packed earth floor with some plaster patches (L142), in which two superimposed large clay ovens (L150) were set (Fig. 22). Some flimsy walls built over the floor and accumulation layer in the room are attributed to the later use of the room in the Crusader–Mamluk period (see below). The accumulation layer (L138) above Floor 142/165 yielded some Byzantine–Early Islamic and several Crusader–Mamluk sherds. Consequently, it was not possible to entirely separate the two strata.

The middle room was probably also accessed via an entrance in its rather damaged western wall (W164; Fig. 23). This room housed a sunken plastered rectangular installation built against W164 and W159. The installation was rectangular (L166; 2.0 × 1.3 m) and deep—more than 1 m, but unfortunately, the excavation did not reach down to its floor (Fig. 24). Although the lower part of the installation was not exposed, it was almost certainly rock-hewn. The plaster coating of the partially exposed walls of Installation 166 comprised

Fig. 21. Area B, southern room in northern building looking south; note join in W113.

Fig. 22. Area B, clay ovens in southern room of northern building, looking west.

Fig. 23. Area B, middle room of northern building, showing *miqveh* 166 and later partition W160, looking west.

two layers, the plaster smoothly curved along the corners. Two *in situ* dressed arch stones, just visible where emerging from W164, were evidence for a no longer extant arched or vaulted ceiling (Plan 2: Section 3–3; Fig. 25). There was also a hint of evidence for possible

Fig. 24. Area B, plastered *miqveh*, looking southeast.

Fig. 25. Area B, remains of arched ceiling of plastered *miqveh*, looking north.

Fig. 26. Area B, northern room with stone podium or bench, looking east.

plastered steps in W164 leading down into the installation. The packed earth floors (L158, L161) in the room ran up to the top of the walls of the plastered installation, and there may well have been an earlier underlying floor here that was not reached. Floor 158/161 yielded a few Early Islamic sherds and several Crusader–Mamluk sherds. The distinct features of Installation 166—the small dimensions, the depth, the vaulted ceiling, the plastered walls, the hint of the steps and the location inside the small room—are compatible with a *miqveh* (see *Discussion*, below). The fill inside the installation (L166) contained stones and Crusader–Mamluk pottery, indicating that it was filled in this period. The overlying flimsy wall (W160) erected in this middle room is attributed to the later period (see below).

The adjacent room had a stone-paved floor (L141) and was furnished with a stone-built bench or podium (W139) that was probably part of the original building, although technically a later addition (Fig. 26). As in the two other rooms, mainly Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery, and some Mamluk sherds, were found above this floor. A patch of a small-stone floor (L131), exposed in the southern part of this room, may have been a later repair, possibly dating to the secondary use of the building. Floor 131 also yielded some Early Islamic, and mainly Mamluk sherds. The northernmost room was only very partially exposed as it was mostly destroyed by the military fence; an accumulation layer (L146) was excavated here without reaching the floor.

Pottery sherds dating to the late Byzantine–Early Islamic periods (sixth–eighth centuries CE) were found on the floor levels in the three rooms, although often mixed with some later Mamluk pottery sherds (see below). The accumulation layers in the rooms were extremely

powdery, precluding the possibility of isolating accumulation layers containing only late Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery.

Byzantine to Early Islamic-Period Pottery (Figs. 27–32).

A total of 327 rim sherds from the Byzantine–Early Islamic periods were retrieved, 274 from Area A and 53 from Area B (Tables 1; 2). The relatively few Byzantine–Early Islamic sherds from Area B may partially be due to the original floors not being reached or some later cleaning up of the rooms. As noted above, the accumulation layers in the building were not clean loci, usually exhibiting later Crusader–Mamluk pottery in the powdery accumulation layers together with the Byzantine–Early Islamic sherds. The earlier pottery retrieved sufficed to date the construction and the original occupation of the building to the Byzantine–Early Islamic periods. In the absence of 'uncontaminated' loci (specifically in Area B; see Table 2), the Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery assemblages are presented and illustrated typologically rather than according to loci. The provenance of the sherds from Areas A and B appears in the pottery description tables.

Table 1. Area A Pottery Count[i]

Period / Locus	Iron Age	Roman	Byzantine–Umayyad						Crusader–Mamluk					
			BL	BS	CP	SJ	JG/JT	LP	GL BL	BS	CP	JR	JG	HMGP
100	1					3	1		33		17	2		10
101							1		13		7	2		7
105		3			2	4	3		3		6			1
106				1	14	18			3		1			2
119					3	3			3		2			2
120	1	2	1		29	31		1	6		5			3
121				1		2	1							
128					9	10		5						
136					2									
147					5	4			1					
148	4	15			31	25	4	1						1
151					5	2	3							
152					2	2	1		3			1	1	2
153		1			5	2								
154					1	2								
156								1						
157		17			18	25								
162	3													
169						10								
170						10								
Total	*9*	*38*	*1*	*2*	*136*	*113*	*14*	*8*	*65*		*38*	*5*	*1*	*28*
			274					*137*						

[i] Abbreviations: BL = bowl; BS = basin; CP = cooking pot; SJ = storage jar; JG = jug; JT = juglet; LP = lamp; HMGP = Handmade Geometric Painted.

Table 2. Area B Pottery Count[i]

Period / Locus	Iron Age	Roman	Byzantine–Umayyad						Crusader–Mamluk					
			BL	BS	CP	SJ	JG/JT	LP	GL BL	BS	CP	JR	JG	HMGP
111									7	2	2			1
113									2					
116									6		1			
117	1				2	5	1		7		5			3
122									6		1	1		2
123						1				2			1	1
127	4				1		1		9	1	3			40
131	2	1			5	3		3	14		5	2		12
132	1	1				2			5					1
134		1				1		1	5		2			5
135								1						
138	1								3		1	1		3
140					4		4		1					
141			1		3	1			2	1	2	1		1
142		1				1		1	7	1	6	1		23
143	20	1				3								
145									1	1	1	1		
146							2	1			5			3
158						1	1		3		2			
161	2					1	1		4		5			3
163											1			
165					1		1		3					3
166									5		1	1		8
168						20					1			
Total	*31*	*5*	*1*		*16*	*19*	*11*	*6*	*93*	*8*	*44*	*7*	*1*	*113*
			53						*266*					

[i] Abbreviations: BL = bowl; BS = basin; CP = cooking pot; SJ = storage jar; JG = jug; JT = juglet; LP = lamp; HMGP = Handmade Geometric Painted.

The late Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery assemblage comprised predominantly cooking vessels and storage jars, with only a few bowls, juglets and lamps (Tables 1; 2; Fig. 27). The cooking and storage vessel types mostly reflect continuity in forms and fabrics from the late Byzantine into the Early Islamic periods, exhibiting only minor changes in the rim forms. The appearance in the same loci of the storage jars with the more profiled Byzantine rim forms, together with the jars exhibiting the simpler or rounder Early Islamic rim forms, reflects the continued occupation from the Byzantine into the Early Islamic period. Since the pottery is characteristic of the period, limited parallels are cited, predominantly from published assemblages from stratified excavations of sites in the Carmel, such as at Ḥorbat ʻAqav (Calderon 2000) and Ḥorbat Raqit (Vincenz 2004), and along the northern edge of the Jezreel Valley, such as Yoqneʻam (Avissar 1996a; 1996b), ʻAfula (Feig 2016) and

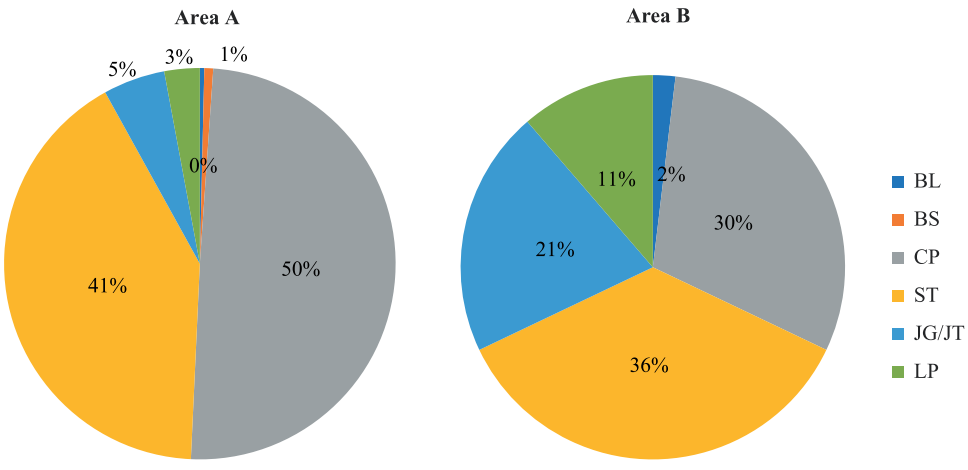


Fig. 27. Pie-charts showing the relative quantities of Byzantine–Early Islamic vessel types in Areas A and B (for abbreviations, see Table 1).

Bet She'an (Bar-Nathan 2011), as well as from Tiberias (Stacey 2004). Comprehensive discussions and additional parallels and dating may be found in those publications.

Bowls (Fig. 28)
No plain bowls and no imported Late Roman Red Ware bowls were found in the assemblage (see *Discussion*, below).

Polychrome Splash-Ware Glazed Bowl (Fig. 28:1).— A single creamware bowl with an out-turned, almost S-shaped rim, is decorated with green splashes and glazed. These glazed bowls first appeared in the ninth century CE, for example, in Tiberias, where they were manufactured (Stacey 2004:117, Fig. 5.25) and at Yoqne'am (Avissar 1996b:78).

Kerbschnitt Bowls (Fig. 28:2, 3).— An open bowl with curved walls, handmade of a finely levigated red ware, has a carefully cut-out triangular *kerbschnitt* design around the exterior and on the top of the flat rim (Fig. 28:2). A different *kerbschnitt* bowl has a flat base and vertical walls with an intricate cut-out design, and a matte black surface (Fig. 28:3). Similar curved and straight-sided bowls appear at several sites in Israel and Jordan, for example at Tiberias (Stacey 2004:93, Fig. 5.6) and Yoqne'am (Avissar 1996b:122, Fig. XIII.74:3). The *kerbschnitt* bowls are dated to the Umayyad and Abbasid periods (Avissar 1996b:122).

Bowl (Fig. 28:4).— A large handmade bowl made of grayish brown gritty ware has an applied band with a finger-impressed piecrust pattern on the rim. A fairly similar bowl came from Ḥorbat Raqit, where a date at the end of the Byzantine period was proposed (Vincenz 2004: Fig. 1:8).

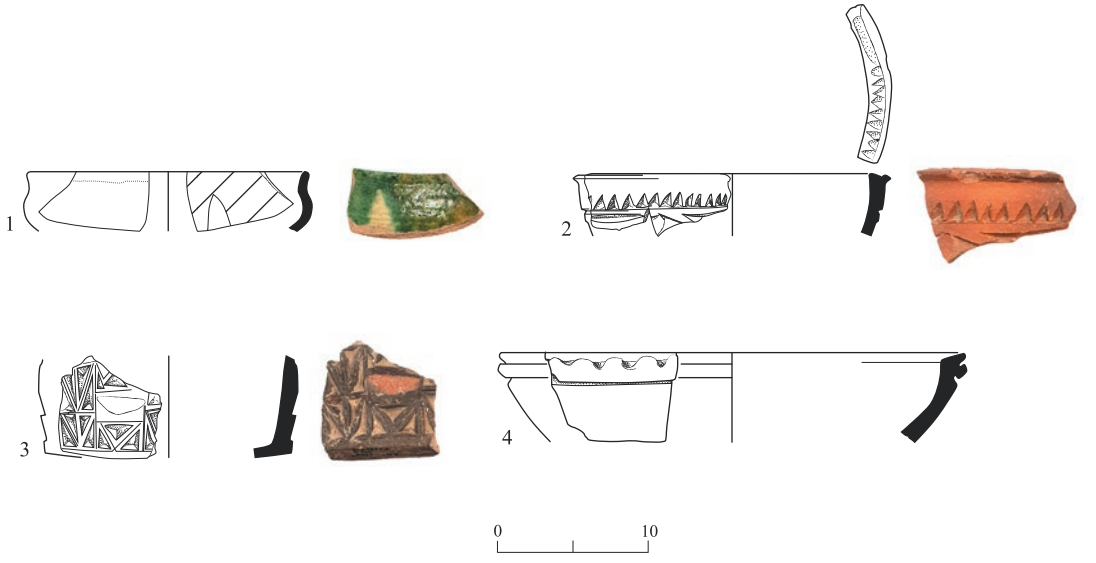


Fig. 28. Byzantine–Early Islamic bowls and basin.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Splash-ware glazed bowl	B	141	1194/3	Creamware; green-splashed glaze on pale yellow slip
2	*Kerbschnitt* bowl	B	134	1145/1	Fine red ware; *kerbschnitt* decoration on ext. and flat rim
3	*Kerbschnitt* bowl	A	120	1113	Black surface; red core; *kerbschnitt* decoration on ext.
4	Large bowl with piecrust pattern	A	106	1045	Grayish brown ware; applied pinched decoration; soot marks on int.

Cooking Vessels (Fig. 29)

The many cooking vessels include open cooking bowls or casseroles, cooking pots and cooking pot lids.

Open Cooking Bowls (Fig. 29:1–3).— The open cooking bowls, or casseroles, have ribbed walls, beveled rims and two horizontal handles close to the rim; some bowls are shallow, while others are deep. The vessels are manufactured of gritty reddish cooking ware, the surface usually gray from firing or blackened from use. Similar casseroles are common at many sites, for example, at Ḥorbat ‘Aqav (Calderon 2000:140, Pl. XXIII), Ḥorbat Raqit (Vincenz 2004: Fig. 3), Yoqne‘am (Avissar 1996b:139, Fig. XIII.99), ‘Afula (Feig 2016: Fig. 20:5–8), Bet She’an (Bar-Nathan 2011:254–255, Fig. 11.17:5, 6) and Tiberias (Stacey 2004:123, Fig. 5.32:6–8). These casseroles appear from the Byzantine to the Early Islamic periods, from the fourth to the eighth or ninth centuries CE; the shallower vessels are considered earlier than the deeper ones (Avissar 1996b:139).

Cooking-Pot Lids (Fig. 29:4, 5).—The cooking ware lids were made to cover the open cooking bowls, their cut rims fitting the beveled cut rims of the casseroles. The smaller lid

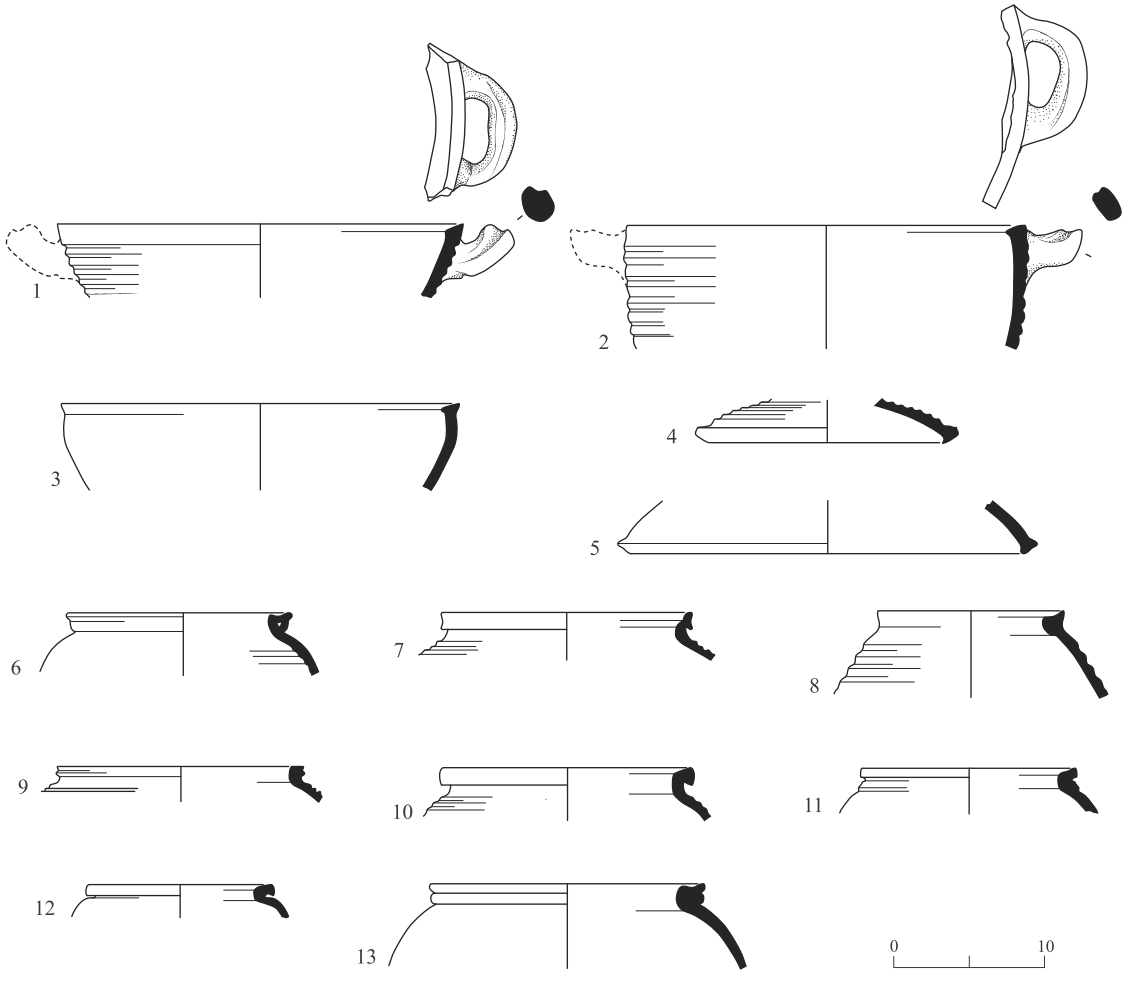


Fig. 29. Late Byzantine–Early Islamic cooking vessels.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Open cooking bowl/casserole	A	119	1108/1	Reddish cooking ware
2	Open cooking bowl/casserole	A	119	1108/2	Gray cooking ware
3	Open cooking bowl/casserole	B	165	1345	Black and reddish cooking ware
4	Lid	A	148	1238/2	Reddish cooking ware
5	Lid	A	106	1042	Reddish cooking ware
6	Cooking pot	A	148	1238/3	Gray cooking ware
7	Cooking pot	A	157	1319	Gray and reddish cooking ware
8	Cooking pot	A	148	1278	Gray and reddish cooking ware
9	Cooking pot	A	147	1258/1	Gray and reddish cooking ware
10	Cooking pot	A	157	1308/4	Reddish cooking ware
11	Cooking pot	A	128	1133	Gray and reddish cooking ware
12	Cooking pot	A	148	1238/1	Gray and reddish cooking ware
13	Cooking pot	A	120	1186	Reddish cooking ware

(Fig. 29:4) probably fitted a closed cooking pot, as, for example, at Ḥorbat ʻAqav (Calderon 2000:140, Pl. XXIII:52), Ḥorbat Raqit (Vincenz 2004: Fig. 4) and ʻAfula (Feig 2016: Fig. 20:13–15).

Cooking Pots (Fig. 29:6–13).— The many closed cooking pots are deep with faintly ribbed bodies and two vertical loop handles on the shoulder, manufactured of reddish and gray gritty cooking ware. The pots have very short or no necks, and their outward folded rims exhibit some variations, including triangular, stepped rims, and outward folded squared rims. Similar cooking pots, also exhibiting a variety of rims, came from other Byzantine and Early Islamic contexts at sites such as Ḥorbat ʻAqav (Calderon 2000:138, Pl. XXII:40), Ḥorbat Raqit (Vincenz 2004: Figs. 5:1–7; 6:1–6), Yoqneʻam (Avissar 1996a:73, Fig. XII.6:8, 9), ʻAfula (Feig 2016: Fig. 20:9–12; Edna Dalali-Amos, pers. comm. [A-8147]) and Bet She'an (Bar-Nathan 2011:252, Fig. 11.16:4–12). The neck-less globular cooking pot form first appears in the Byzantine period and continues into the Early Islamic period, from the fifth to the eighth century CE.

Storage Jars (Fig. 30)
Bag-Shaped Jars (Fig. 30:1–13).— All the many storage jars are bag-shaped with ribbed bodies and high necks. Most jars are made of reddish or brownish ware with a dark gray surface. Two broken but restorable jars from the accumulation layer (L147) overlying the bedrock surface in Area A have a pronounced fold on the rim exterior and a ridge toward the base of the neck (Fig. 30:1, 2). Several jars exhibit variations of this profiled neck and rim form (Fig. 30:3–7). Similar jars are found at many sites in the north, for example, at Ḥorbat ʻAqav, where several were discovered in a pottery pit dated to the Byzantine period (Calderon 2000:130–131, Pl. XVIII). Other jars have straight necks and more simple rounded rims (Fig. 30:8–12), the characteristic development of the Early Islamic period. Similar storage jars with simple rims dating to the Umayyad period were common throughout the north of the country, for example, at Ḥorbat Raqit (Vincenz 2004: Figs. 7, 8), Yoqneʻam (Avissar 1996b:147–148, Fig. XIII.114, Type 4 and other parallels therein) and Tiberias (Stacey 2004: Fig. 5.34:1, 2). Similar jars were manufactured in the pottery workshop at Bet She'an in the Umayyad period (Bar-Nathan 2011:232–233, Fig. 11.3). A few of the jars exhibit white painted lines (Fig. 30:10). Some of the jars with simple rims are made of a light brown ware (Fig. 30:11, 12). One jar with a high neck and folded-out rim is made of creamware (Fig. 30:13).

Jar Stopper (Fig. 30:14).— A heavy handmade jar stopper made of gritty red ware with a gray surface, similar to the storage jar ware. Similar stoppers were found at Ḥorbat Raqit in the southern Carmel Range (Vincenz 2004: Fig. 9:14–17, and see many parallels therein) and at Bet She'an (Bar-Nathan 2011:256, Fig. 11.18:3), where they are dated from the sixth to the eighth century CE.

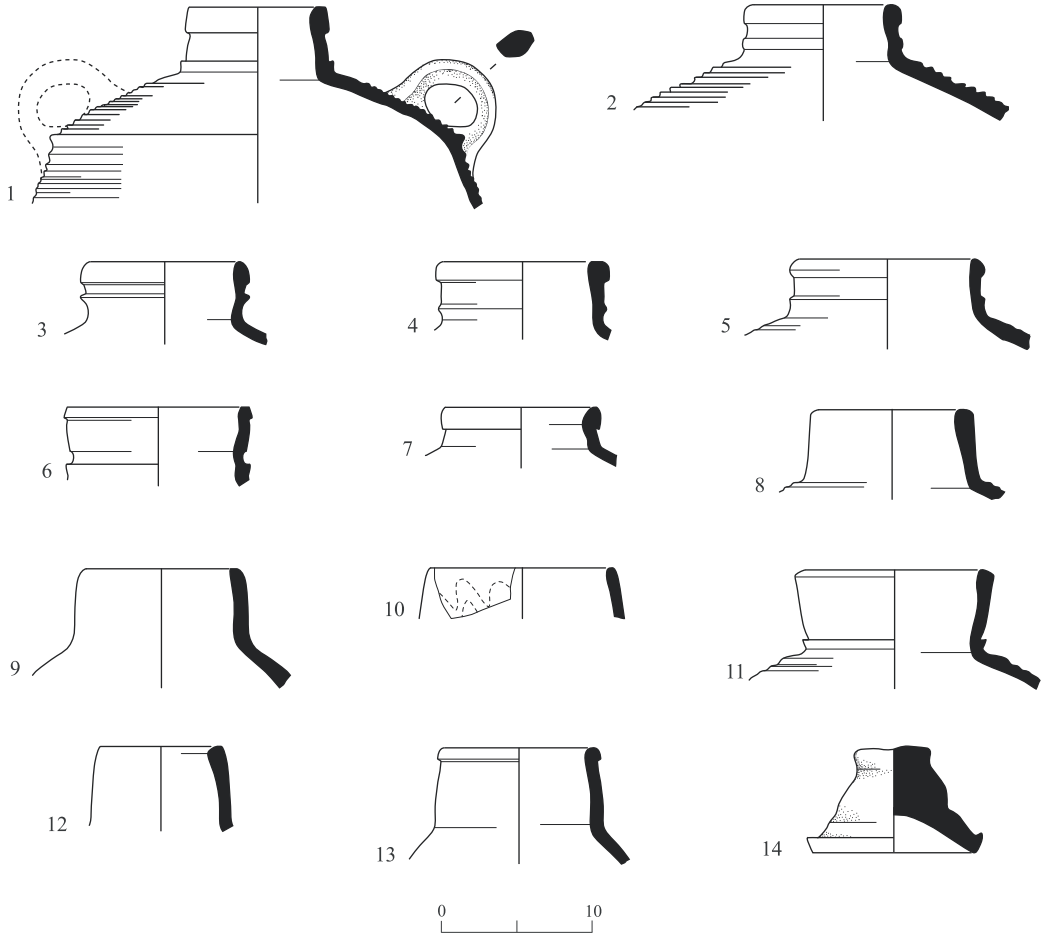


Fig. 30. Late Byzantine–Early Islamic storage jars.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Storage jar	A	147	1279/2	Reddish-brown ware; gray surface
2	Storage jar	A	147	1279/1	Reddish-brown ware; gray surface
3	Storage jar	A	147	1258/2	Gray surface; reddish ware
4	Storage jar	A	157	1308/2	Gray surface; reddish ware
5	Storage jar	A	157	1308/1	Gray surface; reddish ware
6	Storage jar	A	157	1319	Gray surface; dark brown ware
7	Storage jar	B	132	1143	Gray surface; dark brown ware
8	Storage jar	A	120	1185	Gray surface; reddish ware
9	Storage jar	A	106	1089	Gray surface; reddish ware
10	Storage jar	B	131	1174	Gray surface; thin-walled
11	Storage jar	A	153	1333	Brown surface; reddish ware
12	Storage jar	B	141	1214	Brown surface; reddish ware
13	Storage jar	A	151	1260	Creamware
14	Jar stopper	A	106	1089	Gray ware

Jugs and Juglets (Fig. 31)
Only few jug and juglet sherds were found, exhibiting some variety. A jug rim made of a pinkish ware was decorated with two faint reddish-brown diagonal bands (Fig. 31:1). A juglet has a ribbed globular body (Fig. 31:2). One juglet neck has a thickened out-folded rim (Fig. 31:3), while another has a triangular flanged rim (Fig. 31:4).

Buff Ware Jugs (Fig. 31:5, 6).— A couple of vessels are Buff Ware jugs, one a drinking jug with a delicate eggshell-thin rim with two incised lines (Fig. 31:5), the other a table jug with two handles (Fig. 31:6). The Buff Ware jugs are common at many Early Islamic sites, for example at Tiberias, where they are dated from the latter half of the eighth and the ninth centuries CE (Stacey 2004:130–132, Fig. 5.41).

Lamps (Fig. 32)
Nine fragments of mold-made lamps were retrieved. In as far as the features were extant on the fragments, it seems that the lamps are almond-shaped, tapering to a fairly pointed nozzle end, with upturned tongue handles and a defined channel from the filling hole to a small wick-hole. The lamps are decorated with linear and net patterns on the upper surface. One fragment exhibits a linear vegetal or possibly menorah-like decoration (Fig. 32:1). Two small fragments of gray-ware lamps have designs executed in higher relief, one with a double-curved line, probably around the filling hole (Fig. 32:2), the other with a circular symbol within a straight-line frame (Fig. 32:3). One lamp has a tongue handle and a diagonal

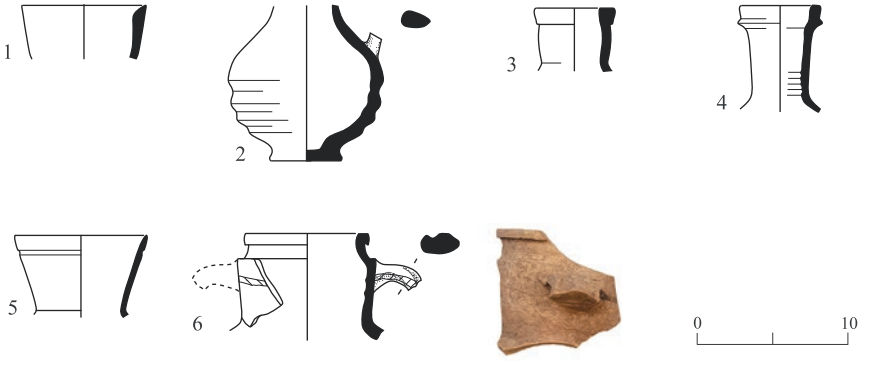


Fig. 31. Late Byzantine–Early Islamic jugs and juglets.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Jug	B	141	1194/4	Pinkish ware; faint reddish brown bands
2	Juglet	B	117	1135	Orangey brown ware
3	Juglet	A	148	1238/4	Reddish-brown ware
4	Juglet	B	141	1194/5	Dark gray ware
5	Jug	A	105	1189	Buff Ware, thin-walled
6	Table jug	B	158	1320	Buff Ware

line decoration covering the entire lamp surface (Fig. 32:4); another nozzle fragment has a pronounced channel and a rather primitive circle on the side (Fig. 32:5). One lamp has a linear pattern on either side of a tapering channel that exhibits part of a circle topped by an inverted triangle executed in a double line (Fig. 32:6).

Varda Sussman identified a series of oil lamps as Samaritan lamp types, with the earliest appearing in the Early Byzantine period and the latest continuing into the Early Islamic period (Sussman 1978). These lamps are common in Samaria and at sites where a Samaritan

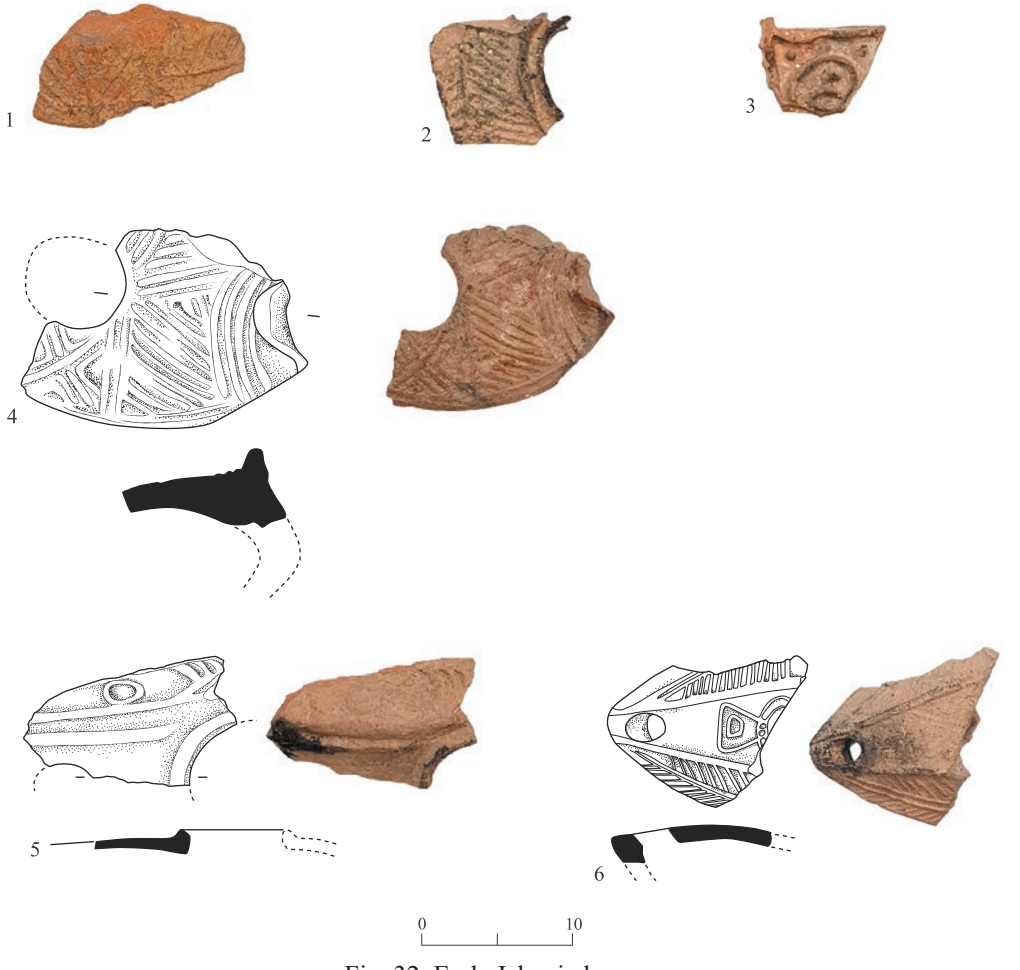


Fig. 32. Early Islamic lamps.

No.	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	A	128	1158/10	Light orangey ware; geometric and menorah design
2	A	156	1293	Gray ware; herringbone pattern; deep relief
3	A	148	1283	Gray ware; deep relief; deep relief; circular symbol
4	B	142	1324/10	Brown ware; geometric pattern
5	B	146	1283/11	Reddish-brown ware; incised circle
6	B	131	1174/10	Gray ware; geometric pattern; triangle and circle motif

population is known to have existed at the time. The later lamps, dating to the Early Islamic period (sixth–eighth centuries CE), are characterized by an almond-shaped body with a channel from the filling hole to the nozzle and a tongue-shaped handle. Sussman traced the northern distribution of the later Samaritan lamps from Shiqmona via the Carmel and the Jezreel Valley (including at Nein on Giv‘at Ha-More) to Bet She’an (Sussman 2004:209, Fig. 1).

Some Samaritan lamps exhibit the circle-with-triangle design, similar to the design on the Ḥorbat Sahar lamp (Sussman 2017:188, Fig. 147:2, 3, 5). An identical circle-with-triangle design appears on the channel of a Samaritan lamp from Bet She’an, where these lamps are dated from the late sixth century CE to the Umayyad period (Hadad 2002:77, No. 335). The significance of the circle-with-triangle symbol has yet to be explained.

Other Byzantine to Early Islamic-Period Finds

The other finds retrieved from the excavation included a few stone vessels and metal artifacts (see below), some glass vessels (not published), a few coins (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume) and animal bones (see Turgeman-Yaffe, this volume).

Stone Vessels

Chalk Vessel Base (Fig. 33:1).— A thick base of a lathe-turned chalk vessel was retrieved from a floor (L145) in the southern building in Area B. The vessel may have been a cup or a mug, but the complete form of the vessel cannot be reconstructed. Chalk vessels, including lathe-turned cups and handmade mugs, were used in Roman-period Jewish settlements in Judea and Galilee, as according to Jewish law, stone vessels were impervious to ritual impurity (Magen 2002b:139–142). The Jewish population ceased to use chalk vessels prior to the Byzantine period. While the Samaritan population was concerned with ritual purity issues and built *miqwa‘ot* (ritual baths) for this purpose, there is little evidence to date that they used chalk or soft limestone vessels (Magen 2002b:160; Adler 2021:40).

Limestone Lids (Fig. 33:2, 3).— A couple of round limestone lids were found, one in the accumulation layer in a room in Area A (L119), the other in secondary use in W127A, a Crusader–Mamluk-period partition wall. The lids have rounded sides and may have been formed by smoothing limestone pebbles.

Basalt Grinding Vessels.— A few fragments of basalt mortars, grinding bowls, pestles and a ring were found in the excavation (not illustrated).

Clay Spindle Whorl

A single spindle whorl made of coarse baked clay (Fig. 33:4) was a surface find.

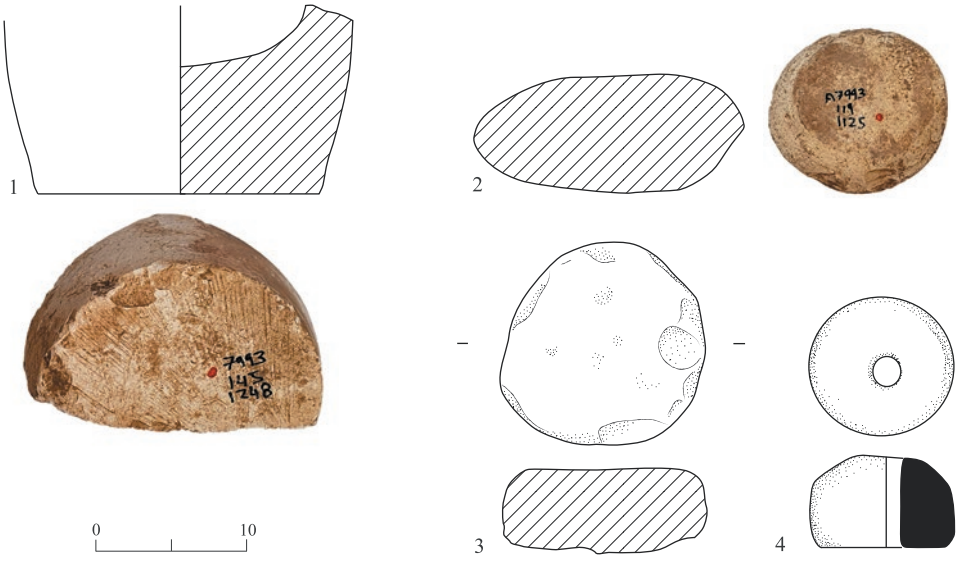


Fig. 33. Stone vessels (1–3) and clay spinning whorl (4).

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Vessel base	B	145	1248	Limestone
2	Lid	A	119	1125	Limestone
3	Lid	B	W127A	1162	Limestone
4	Spindle whorl	B	117	1094	Clay

Metal Artifacts (Fig. 34)

Silver Ring.— An intact finger ring (Fig. 34:1) was retrieved from Floor 106 in Area A. The ring is engraved rather carelessly with a six-stroke star, two strokes scarcely visible. The ring is made of silver with a small copper content and traces of lead (81.58% Ag, 14.68% Cu, 3.12% Pb; composition of silver identified by the IAA metal laboratory).

Bronze Buckle.— A bronze buckle was found in L123 in Area B (Fig. 34:2).

Iron Nails.— Six iron nails were found in various loci (L123, L131, L148, L138; not illustrated).

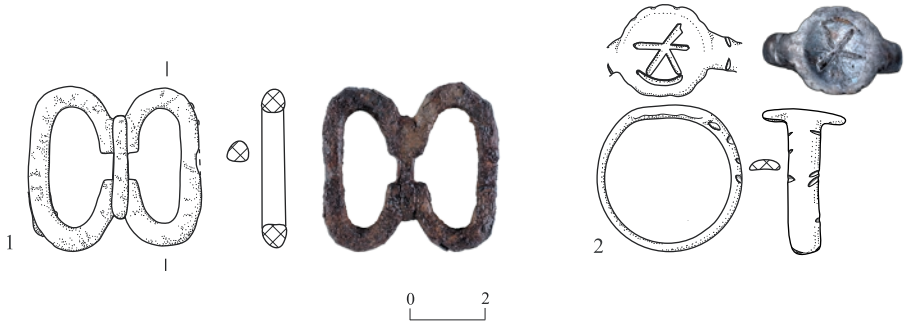


Fig. 34. Metal artifacts.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Ring	A	106	1029	Silver
2	Buckle	B	123	1224	Bronze

The Crusader–Mamluk Period

Area A

In Area A, there was no architectural evidence of a later occupation of the Byzantine–Early Islamic building. Many Crusader–Mamluk-period sherds were retrieved from the upper accumulation layers, close to the surface, some of the sherds penetrating down into the earlier accumulation layers.

Area B

In Area B, some minor building activity occurred in the earlier abandoned building. In the southern room, a row of stones (W137) was lain about 0.3–0.4 m above the disused ovens, and a flimsy curved partition wall made of a single row of medium-sized stones (W127A) was built over this stone row (see Plan 2). A distinct floor was not evident in this phase. In the middle room, another flimsy curved partition wall (W160), similar to the wall in the southern room, was built above the earlier floors and over the extant top of the plastered *miqweh* (Installation 166), clearly postdating it (Plan 2: Section 4–4; see Fig. 23). The pottery found in the *miqweh* (L166) dates its filling-in to the Crusader–Mamluk period. In the northern room, a higher floor made of smaller stones (L131) was probably a slightly later change in the original building, but it may possibly belong to this later occupation. The Area B building was finally abandoned during the Mamluk period.

Crusader–Mamluk Pottery (Figs. 35–38)

The Crusader–Mamluk pottery (n = 403 rims) was retrieved from the upper accumulations above the building remains in Area A (n = 137 rims) and predominantly from the upper accumulations in the Area B building (n = 266 rims; see Tables 1; 2). As noted above, the Crusader–Mamluk pottery was found in the powdery accumulation layers that 'contaminated' the earlier Byzantine–Early Islamic pottery, with almost no evidence of construction or stratification that could separate the two periods. This led to the understanding that the later pottery reflects a later squatter-type occupation inside the earlier building. The pottery is, therefore, presented typologically and not according to loci.

The pottery predominantly comprised glazed bowls, cooking vessels and many hand-painted vessels, with only very few jars and jugs (see Tables 1; 2; Fig. 35; see *Discussion,* below). The pottery is presented here concisely, classified according to Avissar and Stern's (2005) classification of the pottery of the Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, where comprehensive discussions, parallels and chronological ranges may be found. Based on the parallels, the pottery assemblage can be dated from the thirteenth to the fourteenth, or possibly down to the fifteenth century CE.

Glazed Bowls (Fig. 36)

Glazed bowls are the most common vessels in the Crusader–Mamluk assemblage. These mainly include a variety of local/regional bowls, as well as several imported bowls. A thin-walled bowl with a ledge rim and yellow gritty glaze with incised thin-line decoration (Fig. 36:1) is dated from the second half of the twelfth to the first half of the thirteenth century CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:8, Type I.1.2.1, Fig. 2:3, 6, 7). A carinated bowl with an inward thickened rim and a well-adhering monochrome green glaze over a white-slipped interior (Fig. 36:2) is a monochrome bowl type with a long chronological range from the second half of the thirteenth to the fifteenth century CE and later (Avissar and Stern 2005:12, Type

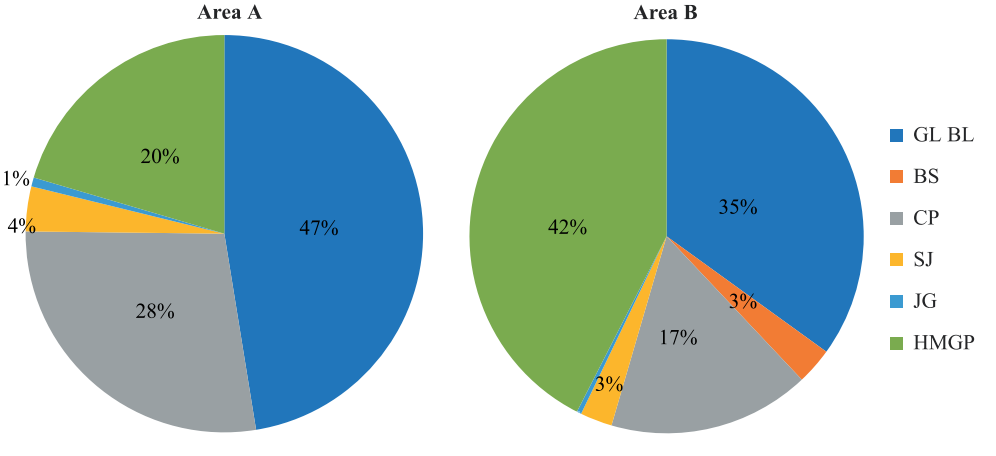


Fig. 35. Pie-charts showing the relative quantities of Crusader–Mamluk vessel types in Areas A and B (for abbreviations, see Table 1).

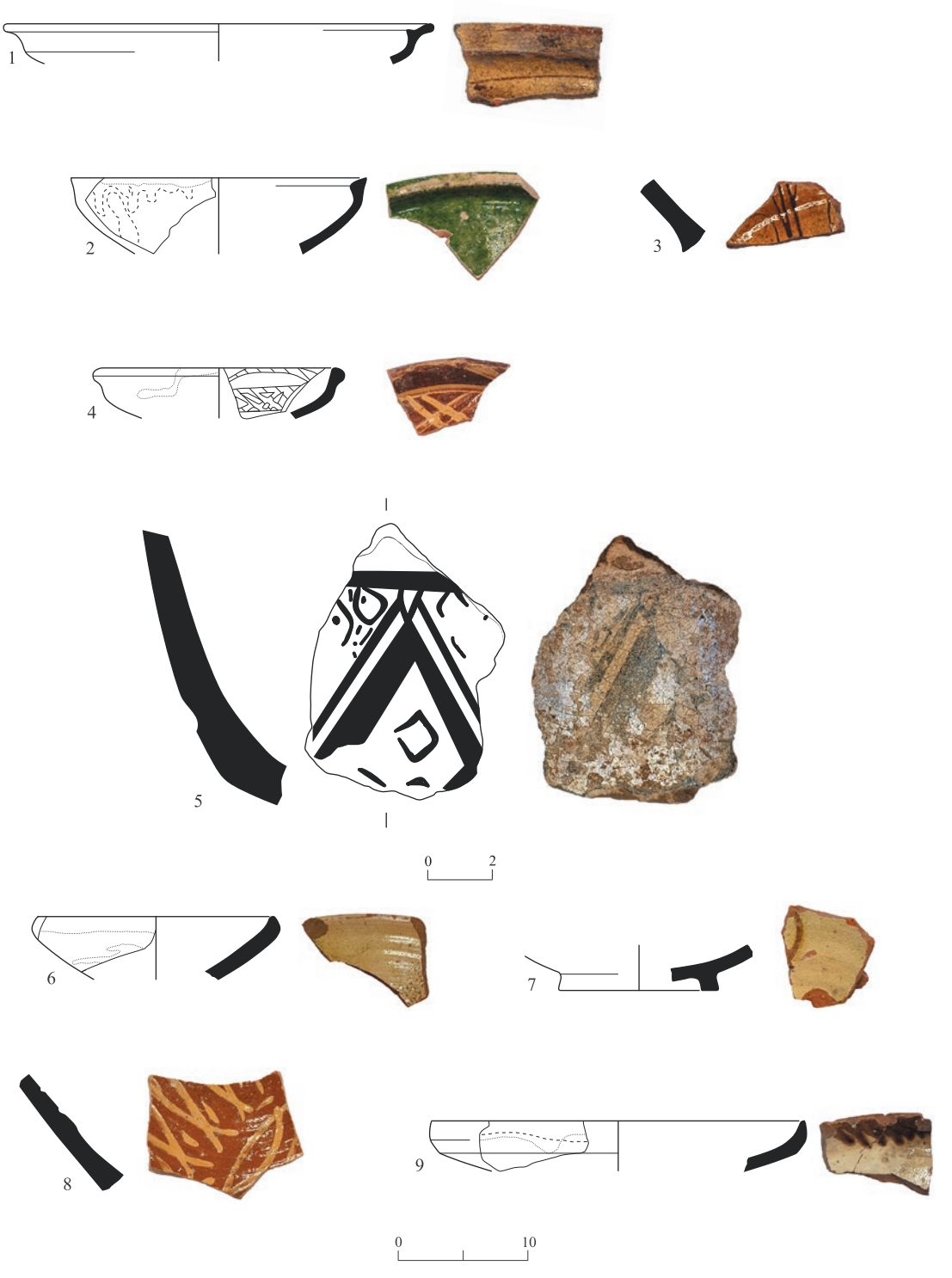


Fig. 36. Crusader–Mamluk glazed wares.

◂ **Fig. 36**

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Gritty glazed bowl	B	122	1109/4	Red gritty ware; cream slip; yellow-glazed int. and over rim
2	Monochrome glazed bowl	B	116	1091	Red ware; cream slip int. dripping over ext.; green-glazed int.
3	Fine sgraffito glazed bowl	A	100	1006/1	Red ware; cream slip; thin sgraffito line decoration; yellowish brown-glazed int.
4	Slip-painted glazed bowl	B	142	1273/1	Reddish ware; cream slip line decoration; brown-glazed int.
5	Soft-paste jar rim	B	141	1195/2	Underglaze soft-paste; blue and black geometric decoration
6	Aegean glazed bowl	B	141	1195/1	Reddish ware; thick walls; cream slip on int. and ext.; pale yellow-glazed int. and over rim
7	Aegean glazed bowl	B	131	1174/2	Reddish ware; cream slip on int. and ext.; pale yellow-glazed int.
8	Cypriot slip-painted glazed bowl	B	127	1139/4	Body sherd; reddish-brown ware; white slip line decoration and brown transparent glaze on int.
9	Cypriot glazed bowl	B	122	1109/2	Reddish surface; gray ware; cream slip on int. with brown fuzzy dabs over int. rim; pale yellow glaze

I.1.4, Fig. 4, Pl. III:6). A small body sherd with fine-line incised decoration and a shiny deep yellow glaze (Fig. 36:3) is a sgraffito bowl dated to the thirteenth century CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:16, Type I.1.5.1, Fig. 6, Pl. V:1–3). There are several bowls with slip-painted decoration, here exhibiting a white slip net pattern and a yellow glaze (Fig. 36:4). These bowls first appeared in the latter half of the twelfth century CE, and they were especially popular in the Mamluk period (Avissar and Stern 2005:19, Type I.1.6.1, Fig. 7:2, 3, Pl. VI).

A thick-walled worn sherd made of soft-paste ware was probably the neck sherd of a large jar (Fig. 36:5). It is decorated with a blue and black geometric decoration on the exterior, the light bluish glaze also dripping over the interior. According to Avissar and Stern, soft-paste wares were first produced in Egypt. Egyptian potters established new production centers in Syria in the second half of the twelfth century CE. A fairly similar, blue- and black-painted large jar rim is dated to the mid-thirteenth to fourteenth centuries CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:26, Type I.2.3, Fig. 11:7, Pl. X:15).

The imported bowls came from the Aegean and Cyprus. Two thick-walled Aegean bowls with a transparent pale-yellow lead glaze (Fig. 36:6, 7), one exhibiting a thick incised decoration, are dated between the end of the twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:46, Type I.5.3, Fig. 17:3, 4, Pl. XIV). A body sherd of a large bowl with white slip and thick-line painted design (Fig. 36:8) is a Cypriot slip-painted bowl (Avissar and Stern 2005:58, Type I.8.1, Fig. 23, Pl. XVIII:2). A thick-walled shallow bowl with a white-slipped interior, and brown fuzzy dabs on the interior rim (Fig. 36:9) is also an imported Cypriot bowl (Avissar and Stern 2005:62, Type I.8.5, Fig. 25, Pl. XIX:3), both bowls attributed to the thirteenth century CE.

The glazed bowls thus have a chronological range from the late twelfth to the fourteenth centuries CE.

Basins (Fig. 37:1, 2)
There were a couple of large, heavy, wheel-made basins. One is very large and has a ledge rim, protruding in and out (Fig. 37:1), while the other is made of a brown dense ware and has a curved rim (Fig. 37:2). Similar large bowls are attributed to the Mamluk period, from mid-thirteenth to mid-fifteenth century CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:84, Type II.1.2.3, Fig. 36:4, 5).

Cooking Vessels (Fig. 37:3–13)
The many cooking vessels comprise a few handmade cooking bowls, but mainly open cooking bowls and closed cooking pots.

Handmade Cooking Pot.— A large, heavy handmade cooking basin with a pulled-up horizontal handle is made of a very coarse ware (Fig. 37:3).

Cooking Bowls or Frying Pans.— The open cooking bowls, or frying pans, were shallow open vessels with horizontal handles and a glazed interior (Fig. 37:4, 5). The glazed interior was usually dark brown. One vessel was a slightly closed form, made of a more orange-colored ware and coated with an orangey-brown glaze that dripped over the exterior (Fig. 37:5). The glazed cooking bowls or frying pans first appeared in the ninth or early tenth century CE, continuing in use until the mid-thirteenth century CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:96). The relatively small rim sherds illustrated here may be similar to cooking bowls that are dated to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE at ʻAkko (Stern 2012: Pl. 4.14) and Yoqneʻam (Avissar 1996b:142, Fig. XIII.103).

Globular Cooking Pots (Fig. 37:6–13).— The closed cooking pots were far more common at the site. They mostly had a thin-walled, globular body, almost no neck or neck-less, and an out-turned rim. The rims were usually simple and only slightly thickened (Fig. 37:6–10). Some exhibited small splashes of brown glaze. These cooking pots are similar to those dated to the second half of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:91, Fig. 39:2, 3). Two heavier globular cooking pots with a ledge rim (Fig. 37:11, 12) are similar to cooking pots from Yoqneʻam and at other sites dated to the Mamluk period, the fourteenth and possibly the fifteenth centuries CE (Avissar 1996b:136, Fig. XII.97; Avissar and Stern 2005:92, Fig. 39:9–11). A strap handle decorated with an incised line design (Fig. 37:13) resembles a cooking pot handle from Yoqneʻam (Avissar 1996b:138, Fig. XIII.7).

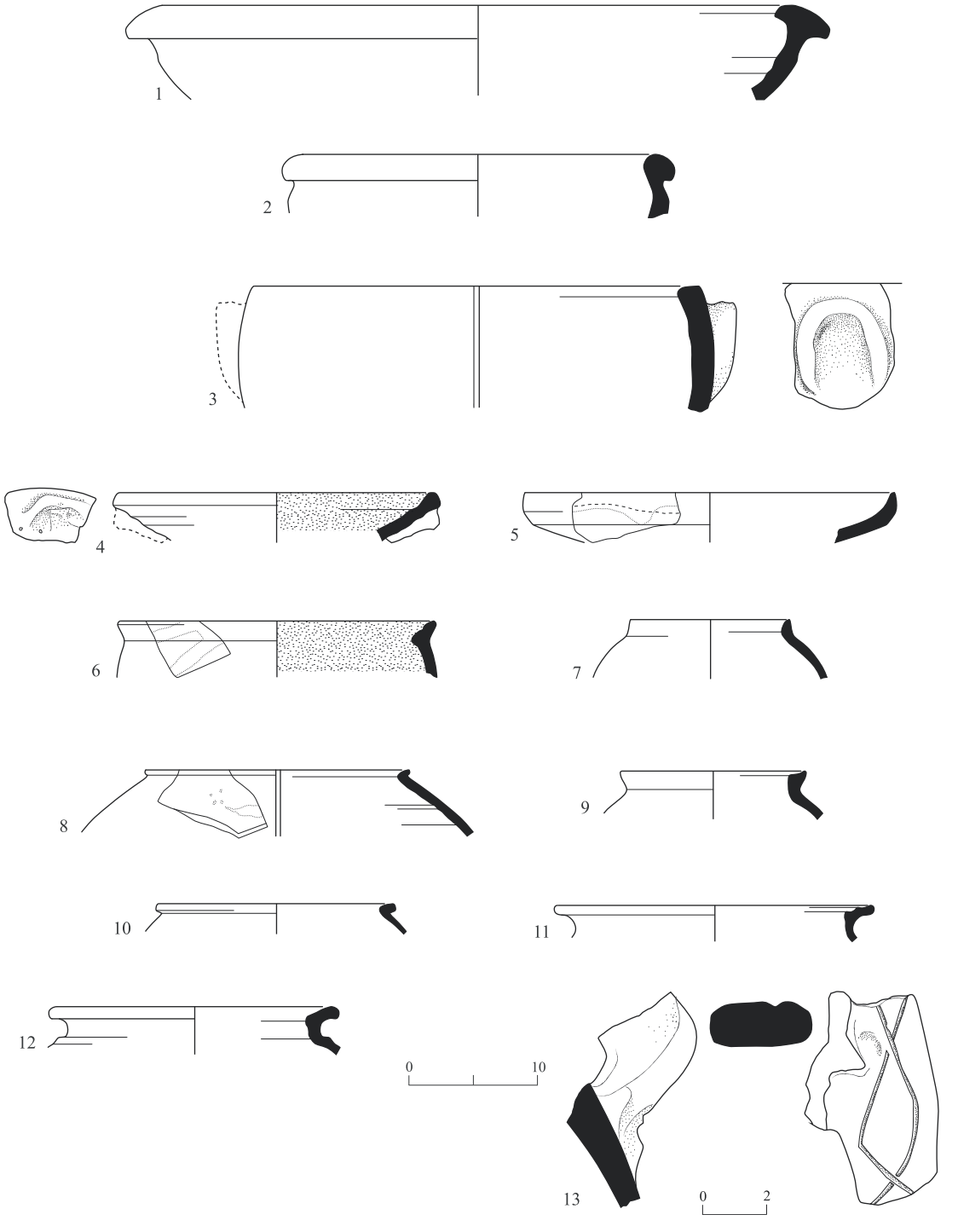


Fig. 37. Crusader–Mamluk basins and cooking pots.

◂ **Fig. 37**

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Basin	B	142	1273/2	Red ware; heavy
2	Basin	B	145	1322	Dark red ware
3	Handmade cooking pot	B	145	1217	Reddish-brown coarse ware with many grits
4	Cooking bowl	B	142	1215	Reddish-brown cooking ware; brown-glazed int.
5	Cooking bowl	B	122	1109/3	Reddish-brown cooking ware; brown-glazed int.
6	Cooking bowl	B	131	1136/2	Orangey brown ware; brown glaze on int. and rim and drips over ext.
7	Cooking pot	A	100	1006/2	Red cooking ware, thin-walled
8	Cooking pot	B	131	1174/3	Red cooking ware; thin-walled; splash of brown glaze
9	Cooking pot	B	168	1352	Light brown ware
10	Cooking pot	B	141	1194/2	Red cooking ware; thin-walled
11	Cooking pot	B	131	1136/1	Orangey brown cooking ware
12	Cooking pot	A	105	1046	Brown cooking ware
13	Cooking pot handle	B	166	1346	Brown(?) cooking ware

Storage Jars (Fig. 38:1–3)

The very few jars found in the excavation had long, ribbed necks and rounded, thickened rims. One jar is well-levigated and well-fired (Fig. 38:2). One jar probably had two handles and may have been an amphora (Fig. 38:3). These jars may bear a similarity to Mamluk water jars that were found in large quantities at Mary's Well in Nazareth (Alexandre 2012:77–79, Fig. 3.12). Similar jars, including from Yoqneʻam, are attributed a chronological range spanning the second half of the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:102, Fig. 42:7).

Mold-Made Vessel (Fig. 38:4)

A single sherd of a mold-made vessel was found in Area B (Fig. 38:4). The vessel was made of a slightly greenish creamware and may have been a flask. This sherd bears some similarity to mold-made vessels manufactured in Syria that are dated from the twelfth to the fourteenth century CE (Avissar and Stern 2005:117–118).

Handmade Vessels with Geometrical-Painted Decoration (Fig. 39)

Many handmade vessels with geometrical-painted decoration (HMGP) were found, mostly coming from the powdery accumulation layers in Area B. The handmade vessels include a few simple bowls and a considerable variety of jugs. The vessels are thick-walled and have a whitish slip with brown or reddish-brown painted geometrical designs. The bowls

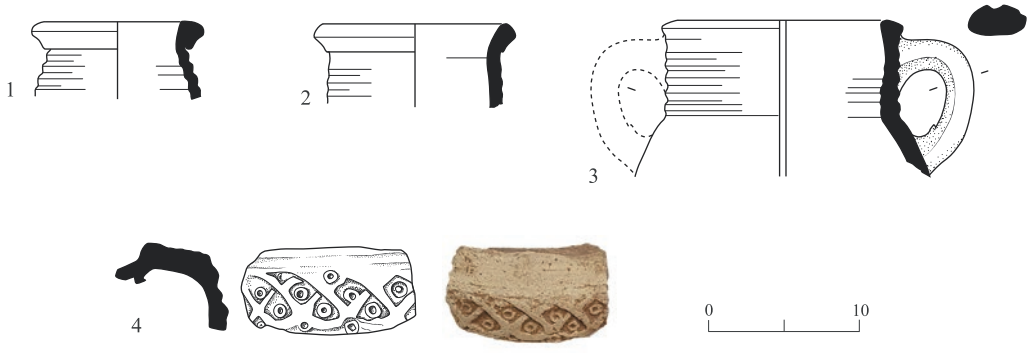


Fig. 38. Crusader–Mamluk storage jars and mold-made vessel.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Storage jar	B	138	1347	Brown ware
2	Storage jar	B	131	1146	Reddish ware
3	Handled jar	B	142	1285	Light reddish-brown ware
4	Mold-made vessel	B	131	1174/1	Greenish creamware

are decorated on the exterior and sometimes on the interior (Fig. 39:1–3). One sherd may be the leg of a chalice (Fig. 39:4). Two jugs have out-flaring necks and handles from mid-neck down to the shoulder (Fig. 39:5, 6). One jug is decorated with wavy lines that may be intended to look like Arabic letters (Fig. 39:7). One jug is different from the other vessels, having thinner walls, manufactured of a bright red ware without a slip and decorated with a creamy-yellow painted geometric decoration (Fig. 39:9).

The handmade geometrical-painted ware was first produced at the end of the twelfth century CE. It flourished throughout the Levant and beyond in the Mamluk period, appearing at many sites in northern Israel, for example, at Yoqne‘am and Nazareth (Avissar 1996b:168–169, Fig. XII.154; Bagatti 2002: Figs. 62, 63; Avissar and Stern 2005:113). Petrographic analysis of Mamluk-period HMGP vessels led to the understanding that these wares were manufactured at several different sites, including in eastern Galilee. They were then distributed both regionally and beyond the region (Gabrieli, Ben-Shlomo and Walker 2014:204–208).

DISCUSSION

The discussion focuses on the archaeological remains exposed in the excavation at Ḥorbat Sahar in their geographical and historical context, proffering tentative understandings due to the limitations of the excavation. More extensive excavations at the site may provide additional data to support these provisional understandings or provide alternative interpretations.

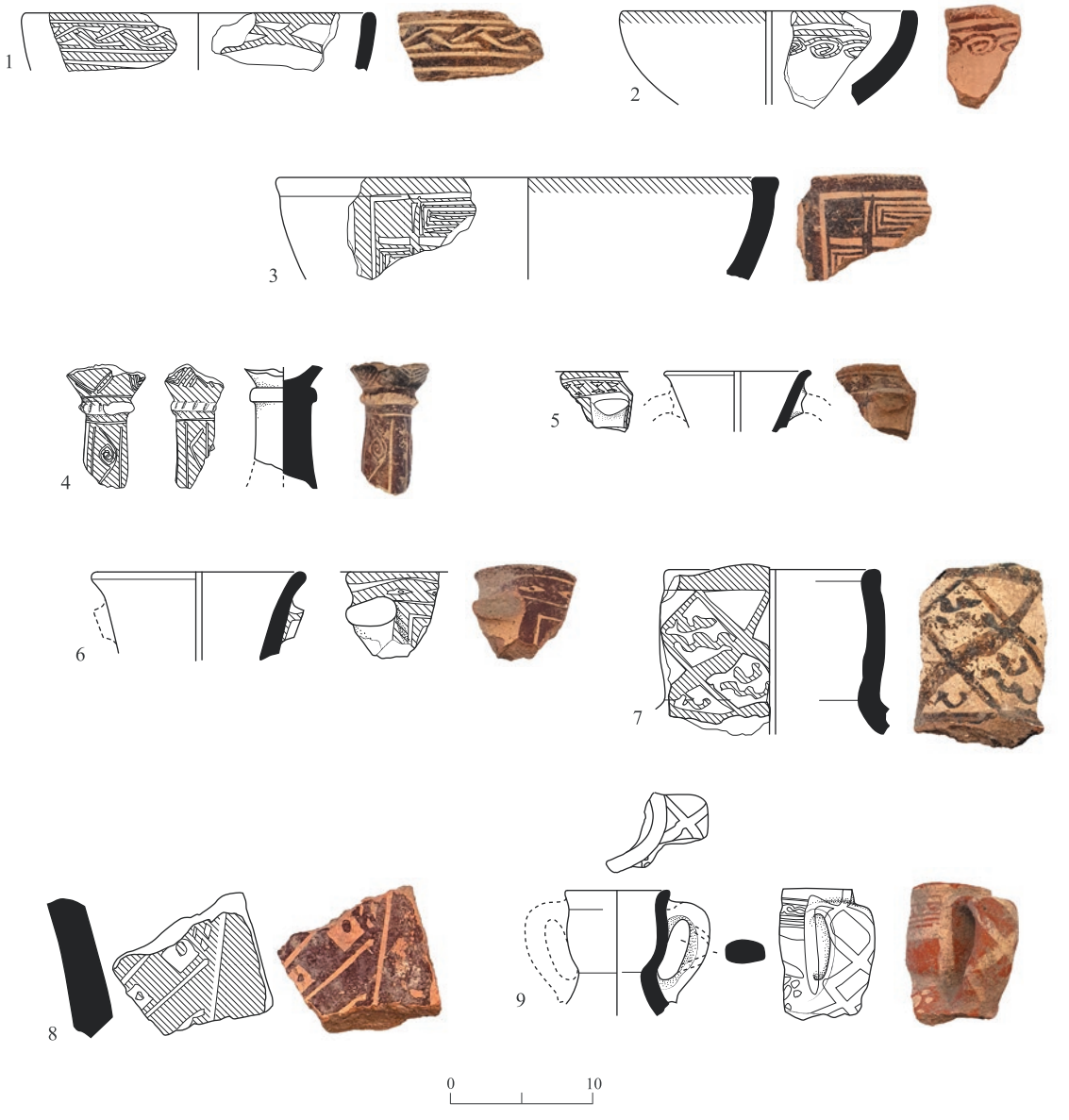


Fig. 39. Mamluk handmade geometric-painted ware (HMGP).

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Bowl	B	142	1273/3	Creamware; dark brown decoration on ext. and int.
2	Bowl	B	127	1139/1	Creamware; thick cream slip; dark red decoration on int. and rim
3	Bowl	B	102	1002/1	Light brown ware; dark brown decoration on int. and rim
4	Chalice leg? stem?	B	102	1002/2	Gray ware; cream slip; dark red decoration
5	Jug	B	131	1174/2	Gray ware; cream slip; dark red decoration
6	Jug	B	127	1139/2	Gray ware; cream slip; dark red decoration
7	Jug	B	117	1062	Gray ware; cream slip; dark brown decoration; pseudo-Arabic letters
8	Jug	B	141	1194/1	Gray ware; pinkish slip; dark red decoration
9	Jug	B	138	1230/6	Red ware; gray core; cream slip; line decoration

Iron Age

The few Iron Age pottery sherds retrieved in the partially excavated small rock-hewn pit in Area A and in the very small probe dug below the pathway in Area B suffice to establish that there was an Iron IIA settlement at Ḥorbat Sahar and that it was possibly the earliest occupation at the site. There are several sites with Iron Age remains or pottery in the immediate vicinity, including Ḥorbat Ẓur, ‘En Na‘ura and Tel ‘Agol (Gal 1998: Sites 25, 36 and 14). At Tel ‘Agol, located c. 1.3 km north of Ḥorbat Sahar, at the northern edge of the military camp, there was an Iron IIA–B fortified tell (Feig, forthcoming). Several identified place names in the biblical account of the allotment of the tribe of Issachar (Joshua 19:17–23), including Jezreel (Tel Jezreel), Kesullot (Iksal), Shunem (Sulem), Kishion (Tel Kishion), Tabor (Mount Tabor), and as far east as the Jordan river, support locating Giv‘at Ha-More within the borders of this tribal allotment (Gal 1992:105–106).

Roman Period

A few sherds, but no building remains specifically attributable to the Roman period, were exposed in the excavation. It is possible, although unlikely, that the Byzantine-period building in Area A was already built in the Late Roman period. Many sites in the vicinity exposed remains dating to the Roman period, for example, Ḥorbat ‘Endor/Indur, Tel ‘Agol, Nein, Sulem, Tamra, ‘En Na‘ura and Kafr Miṣr (Gal 1998: Sites 6, 14, 11, 37, 17, 36, 8).

The location of Giv‘at Ha-More at the interface between Galilee and the Jezreel Valley raises the issue of the southern border of Jewish Galilee in the Early Roman period. Josephus describes the southern border of Galilee at the time of the Jewish Revolt (66 CE) as bounded by Samaria and the territory of Scythopolis, specifying Xaloth, a village in the Great Plain (’Iksal, in the Jezreel Valley; Josephus, *Jewish War* 3:35–40). According to the New Testament, Jesus resuscitated the widow’s son at Nein, a Jewish village located on the western slope of Giv‘at Ha-More (Luke 7:11–15). A small archaeological excavation carried out at Nein exposed evidence of the violent destruction of a house in the village, probably at the time of the Great Revolt, thus possibly reflecting the border location of Giv‘at Ha-More (Abu Zidan, Alexandre and Syon 2022). An Early Roman (first–second centuries CE) burial cave excavated at Ḥorbat ‘Endor on the lower northwestern slopes of Giv‘at Ha-More, contained ‘Herodian’ knife-pared lamps, ‘southern lamps’ and discus lamps with broken discs (Barshad 2004), all characteristic of Jewish burial caves in Early Roman Galilee. Burial caves excavated at the western foot of Giv‘at Ha-More, near the village of Nein, produced pottery from the first–third centuries CE, possibly with a gap in use between the late first and the mid-second centuries CE (Bisharat and Alexandre 2024). It was proposed there that these were Jewish family burial caves, although the discovery of some Samaritan lamps raises the possibility that a Samaritan population may have used the tombs in the third century CE.

Byzantine–Early Islamic Periods

The excavations exposed a small part of an extensive settlement at Ḥorbat Sahar dated to the Byzantine–Early Islamic period. The architectural remains included a few walls of houses and part of a large building and pathway. The contours of the architectural remains visible in the aerial photographs in the adjacent unexcavated area (see Fig. 3) clearly indicate that the building was part of a large, well-planned settlement, that comprised large buildings with several rooms, almost certainly buildings of a public or communal nature, and intervening pathways. The orientation of the building complex was northeast–southwest (or northwest–southeast), and the building probably had a continuous outer wall. The walls were solidly built, and the three doorways exposed were well-built from monolithic doorposts, with multiple holes for securely barring the doors. The impression is that the main part of the settlement was established according to an overall plan.

Additional building remains visible on the settlement periphery may be outhouses or pens. Extensive remains of several rock-hewn agricultural installations, including an oil press and winepresses, as well as cisterns, pools and burial caves with arcosolia and tracks for rolling stone doors, indicate that there was an all-inclusive rural settlement at the site (see Gal 1998: Fig. 34:6). The ceramic evidence dates the settlement to the Byzantine to Early Islamic Umayyad period, probably from the fifth or sixth to the eighth century CE. The coins also support this understanding (see Sokolov and Sandberg, this volume). The analysis of the animal bones found in the Byzantine–Early Islamic contexts pointed to an economic system based primarily on livestock animals, not on hunting, with an emphasis on the cattle being used for work and culled in adulthood (see Turgeman-Yaffe, this volume).

Notwithstanding the small size of the excavation, a few points may be tentatively proffered on the ethnic or religious identity of the Byzantine–Early Islamic settlement. Giv‘at Ha-More borders the Jezreel Valley and Galilee, where Jewish, Christian and Samaritan populations resided in the Roman to Byzantine periods. Several indicators in the material culture raise the possibility that the settlement’s population may have been Samaritan, a monotheistic sect that separated from Judaism in the Second Temple period. The northeast–southwest orientation of the main building complex aligns with the direction of Mount Gerizim, the sanctified site of the Samaritans, but this is of limited significance, as Jerusalem also lies to the south or south–southwest; this orientation may also simply be related to the natural slope. The presence inside the northern building of what seems to have been a *miqweh* (the identification is not unequivocal as its excavation was unfortunately not completed) is significant, as ritual baths dating between the first and eighth centuries CE have been exposed in Samaritan villages, for example at Qedumim, el-Khirbe, Khirbat Samara, Ḥorbat Migdal and Sebastia, indicating that the Samaritans observed ritual purity laws in the Roman and Byzantine periods (Pummer 1989:161–164; Peleg and Greenfeld 2007). Reich considered that the Samaritans may not have used the *miqwa‘ot* for personal ritual purity but instead constructed them adjacent to agricultural installations for economic reasons, namely, to produce ritually pure olive oil to be purchased by Jews (Reich 2013:230–

231). The Ḥorbat Sahar installation, if indeed a *miqweh*, was not directly associated with agricultural processing activities.

Another aspect of the material culture is the total absence of Late Roman Red Ware bowls (and almost no bowls at all) in the Byzantine–Early Islamic ceramic assemblage. It has been shown that the Samaritans abstained from using imported pottery in this period, while this ware was found in large quantities in contemporary Late Roman–Byzantine Jewish settlements in Galilee and the Golan Heights (Leibner and Ben David 2014:195–196). Sites illustrating this feature are the Samaritan site of Ḥorbat Raqit in Mount Carmel, as opposed to the neighboring, mainly Jewish settlement of Ḥorbat Sumaq (Vincenz 2004:213).

The Ḥorbat Sahar pottery assemblage included several fragments of the later almond-shaped Samaritan lamp types. The Samaritan lamp types have a wide distribution beyond the Samaritan heartland of Samaria, reaching in the north from the Bet She'an region to Mount Carmel and western Lower Galilee (Sussman 2004:209–210, Fig. 1). The wide distribution has raised the possibility that the Samaritan lamps may have been used by other religious and/or ethnic groups, an issue not yet resolved (Sussman 2002:339; 2017:188; Magen 2008:243–248). Certainly, Samaritan lamps alone cannot prove a Samaritan presence.

In addition, no pig bones were found in the faunal assemblage (see Turgeman-Yaffe, this volume), whereas such bones would be common in Christian settlements.

Turning to the necropolis on the slope adjacent to the site that was described by earlier researchers (see above), the burial caves exhibited arched entrances, a side groove for a blocking stone and three vaulted burial chambers; in addition, there were some rock-hewn cist graves and sarcophagi (Gal 1998). The Samaritans buried their deceased in arcosolia rock-hewn caves, often with rounded stone doors, similar to the burial customs of the Jews (Tal and Taxel 2015:195).

Apart from the possible 'Samaritan' indicators at Ḥorbat Sahar, some other aspects of the settlement are noteworthy. Significant features are the large communal-like building complexes, the thick-walled buildings and the well-built doorways with multiple holes for locking and bolting the doors. These features are not characteristic of an organic, gradually developing village but rather characteristic of a settlement established at a single point in time, probably under conditions of insecurity.

Well-built doorjambs made of monolithic upstanding stones with several lock recesses were observed at the Roman to Byzantine-period site of Ḥorbat Raqit in the Carmel range (Dar 2004: Figs. 52; 124). This settlement comprised several buildings, agricultural installations, water facilities, quarries and burial caves, as well as a synagogue with a mosaic floor. Based on a Samaritan inscription on the mosaic floor, and another on a burial cave, the settlement was understood as a Samaritan rural estate, settled in the third to fifth centuries CE, and following a settlement gap, again in the sixth to seventh centuries CE (Dar 2004:152–155). Dar observed that the Samaritan rural settlements were well-built with a high architectural standard, with solid walls hewn of local stone, large courtyards and agricultural installations (Dar 2010:195). He also noted that some of the villages identified as Samaritan were originally country estates, a phenomenon known archaeologically

outside the Samaritan homeland but, to date, insufficiently studied from the historical and settlement pattern points of view.

Regarding the location of Ḥorbat Sahar on Giv‘at Ha-More, there are no written sources to help define the northern extent of the Samaritan settlement, and the presence of a Samaritan settlement depends on the archaeological record. The heartland of the Samaritan settlement in the Roman period is defined by Josephus as ‘Samaria’ as far north as Ginea-Jenin (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:188; *Jewish War* 2:232). In the course of the Byzantine period, the Samaritans suffered oppressive economic and religious measures taken by the Byzantine administration against the Samaritan rural population (Crown 1989:66–77). Four Samaritan revolts against Byzantine rule in the late fifth and sixth centuries CE led to severe suppression measures and harsh legislation against the Samaritans, eventually resulting in the dispossession of their lands in the Samaritan heartland. The fiercest clashes occurred under Emperor Zeno (c. 484 CE) and Emperor Justinian I (529 CE; Crown 1989:75–77). There is archaeological evidence for the move or expansion of the Samaritan population westward to the Sharon and the coastal plain, for example, Ẕur Natan, Caesarea, Arsuf and Yavne (Porath, Dar and Applebaum 1985:64–66; Tal and Taxel 2015:194–205). In the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, Samaritan agricultural farmsteads/settlements, such as Ḥorbat Raqit, existed alongside Jewish and Christian settlements in the Carmel range (Dar 2004:152–154; 2014:290).

Archaeological evidence for a Samaritan population in the Roman and Byzantine periods on the southern fringes of the Jezreel Valley is documented at the village of Kefar ‘Othnay, next to Megiddo, where there is evidence of a mixed Jewish and Samaritan population in the second to fourth centuries CE (Tepper 2014). At Scythopolis-Bet She’an, in the Bet She’an Valley, a synagogue exhibiting a Samaritan inscription excavated at Tel Iẓṭaba, on the northern side of Bet She’an (Zori 1967), was identified by some scholars as a Samaritan synagogue (Foerster 1992:313–314), although its Samaritan affiliation has been questioned (Pummer 1989:143–144; Magen 2002a:439–440). Another building with a Greek inscription on the southern side of Bet She’an may also be a Samaritan synagogue (Atrash and Mazor, in prep.). A sarcophagus and several oil lamps found in a burial cave on the northwestern slopes of Mt. Gilbo‘a exhibit close stylistic ties with the Samaria region, indicating that the cave may have served a Samaritan community in the fourth century CE (Syon 1999). A recent excavation at ‘Afula exposed a settlement with a *miqweh* dating from the Byzantine period (Edna Amos-Dalali, pers. comm.). The present excavation provides some possible evidence for a Samaritan presence on Giv‘at Ha-More.

In the late Byzantine and Early Islamic periods, there is evidence of Jewish and Christian populations in the area of Giv‘at Ha-More and the northern Jezreel Valley. Most notably, a church excavated in the village of Tamra ez-Zu‘abiyya in Ramat Issachar, c. 3 km northeast of the site, had several building phases dating from the late Byzantine to Abbasid periods (sixth–eighth centuries CE), including one phase exhibiting a mosaic floor with a Greek inscription bearing a date according to the Islamic *hijri* calendar of 107 (725 CE; Tepper 2018). Imported Late Roman Red Ware bowls including African, Cypriot, Phocean and

Egyptian bowls, were retrieved in the different phases of the church building, consolidating the sixth–eighth century CE dating.

The ceramic evidence indicates that the Ḥorbat Sahar site was abandoned in the seventh or eighth century CE. On the understanding that this may have been a Samaritan settlement, its abandonment may be attributed to the restrictive economic measures and taxes imposed on the Samaritan population and the pressure for them to convert to Islam under Yazid in the Abbasid period religious extremism in the mid-eighth century CE. Many of the Samaritan settlements ceased to exist at this time (Gil 1992:822–824).

The proposed Samaritan identity of the site remains tentative as only a very small part of the site was excavated. More extensive excavations of the large building complex visible in the aerial photograph of the site may well expose a monumental building at the site, possibly a synagogue, or another religious building, as well as epigraphic material, that may determine the ethnic and/or religious identity of the site.

Crusader–Mamluk Period

The addition of the few flimsy partition walls in the Area B rooms, and the absence of any substantial building remains overlying the earlier building complex, points to a later, squatter-type occupation, following a long period of abandonment. The very powdery accumulations, containing many pottery sherds in and overlying all the rooms, support the understanding that the occupants were not permanent settlers. The Crusader–Mamluk pottery repertoire overwhelmingly comprises glazed bowls and cooking vessels, as well as large quantities of hand-painted wares, on the one hand, and extremely few storage jars, jugs and juglets, on the other hand (see above). The composition of this assemblage further supports the understanding of the squatter-type nature of the site in the Crusader–Mamluk period (late twelfth–fourteenth centuries CE). The analysis of the Crusader–Mamluk-period bone assemblage may support this ‘overnighters’ hypothesis, the livestock and working animals being brought by travelers and used mainly for food and transportation. The presence of butchery waste discarded at the site of consumption may also support the possibility of an itinerant population. The occupants could have hunted gazelles, but game animals were uncommon (see Turgeman-Yaffe, this volume).

Based on the archaeological data, we tentatively raise the possibility that in the Crusader–Mamluk periods (twelfth–fourteenth centuries CE), the site served as an overnight lodging for the many western and eastern pilgrims who came to the Holy Land to visit the Christian holy sites, specifically at Nazareth and Mount Tabor. These visitors would need a relatively sheltered place to set up camp, cook, dine and stay overnight. The proximity of the site to the main road, at the junction with the path turning off to Mount Tabor and Nazareth, both essential stops on the pilgrims’ itinerary, raises the possibility that Ḥorbat Sahar served as an overnight camp for the pilgrims.

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