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Fahl during the Early Mamluk Period: Archaeological Perspectives

THE JORDAN VALLEY IN MAMLUK ARCHAEOLOGY

The hot and fertile Jordan Rift Valley, copiously provided with water by the many springs and waterway systems it embraces, has featured prominently in the archaeology of Mamluk southern Bilād al-Shām since the mid-twentieth century (fig. 1). The information generated by a number of early surveys and excavations in the valley was interpreted as evidence for renewed prosperity from the thirteenth century, brought about by widespread resettlement and a rejuvenated rural economy based on the cultivation of sugar cane. The evidence was also seen as suggesting that this prosperity suddenly ended in the mid to late fourteenth century due to the collapse of the sugar industry, abandonment of the land, and growing nomad infiltrations. In pioneering archaeological work undertaken on the floor of the broader eastern side of the valley, site occupation datable to Mamluk times was especially easy to identify due to the distinctive glazed, industrial and hand-made painted ceramics typical of the period, while many prominent hydraulic installations were likewise effortless to detect and record.

Seminal amongst the early survey work in the valley was the comprehensive archaeological survey undertaken in two parts during early spring in 1975 and 1976 between the Yarmuk River and the Dead Sea on the east bank of the Jordan Valley.¹ A total of 224 sites were explored, of which 107 revealed evidence of "Ayyubid/Mamluk" occupation—that is, almost half of the sites surveyed. That impressive statistic encouraged Ibrahim, Sauer, and Yassine to remark: "the epoch that was introduced with the Ayyubid/Mamluk witnessed a transformation of the Jordan Valley far beyond the scope of any that had occurred previously."² They

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¹Mo'awiyah Ibrahim, James A. Sauer, and Khair Yassine, "The East Jordan Valley Survey, 1975 (Part One)," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 222 (1976): 41–66; Khair Yassine, James A. Sauer, and Mo'awiyah Ibrahim, "The East Jordan Valley Survey, 1976 (Part Two)," in *Archaeology of Jordan: Essays and Reports*, ed. Khair Yassine (Amman, 1988), 189–207; and the publication of the Ayyubid to Ottoman ceramics from the survey in Jum'a M. H. Kareem, *The Settlement Patterns in the Jordan Valley in the Mid- to Late Islamic Period*, BAR International Series, no. 877 (Oxford, 2000), 66–80.

²Yassine, Sauer, and Ibrahim, "East Jordan Valley Survey, 1976 (Part Two)," 203.



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concluded that many new sites were founded, and sugar mills established at water sources. "Ayyubid/Mamluk" occupation was especially easy to identify in the valley through the ubiquitous presence of sugar pots.

The perceived rapid increase, near explosion, of settlement profiles in Mamluk times has been commonly associated with the agricultural development of the valley by land-owning amirs and especially the estate-style cultivation of sugar cane using servile labor.³ While recent studies have moved towards presenting more complicated explanations for settlement development and change for all Jordan during the middle ages, there is little doubt that the Mamluk period is a significant one in the social and economic history of the rift valley.

Contributing to an understanding of settlement profiles in the Jordan Valley during Mamluk times are the results of excavations undertaken in the early 1980s at Ṭabaqat Faḥl by team members from the Sydney component of the Sydney-Wooster Excavations at Pella (fig. 1). Work on the main archaeological mound in particular exposed significant Mamluk-period settlement at the site, including a mosque, occupational levels belonging to an adjacent settlement, and a large cemetery at the eastern end of the mound. This article focuses on the results of that work, including new ceramic studies undertaken by McPhillips, and reviews the insights these excavations offer for understanding the nature of human settlement in the Jordan Valley during the Mamluk period.

FAHL WITHIN THE *MAMLAKAH* OF DAMASCUS

Ṭabaqat Faḥl, more simply known as Faḥl into early Ottoman times,⁴ did not escape the notice of Islamic geographers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Noted in both the geographical compilation of al-Dimashqī (d. ca. 1327) and the exhaustive study of al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), the *Iqlīm Faḥl* was one of the many districts that formed the extensive Mamlakat Dimashq in Bilād al-Shām during the Mamluk period (1250–1517).⁵ In Jordan the territory of the Mamlakat Dimashq

³Generally on investment in sugar by Mamluk amirs, see E. Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), 206–8; idem, "Levantine Sugar Industry in the Late Middle Ages: a Case of Technological Decline," in *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900*, ed. A. L. Udovitch (Princeton, NJ, 1981), 91–112.

⁴Initially named Fiḥl in Umayyad and Abbasid times, the name transmuted into Faḥl at some point between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, probably because the original name was meaningless in Arabic, as noted by al-Ya'qūbī (Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb ibn Ja'far al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, trans. M. J. De Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 7 [Leiden, 1892], 327, l. 55). The village name of Faḥl persists in the early Ottoman *daftars*, for which see W. D. Hütteroth and K. Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Trans-Jordan and South Syria in the Late 16th Century* (Erlangen, 1977), 167.

⁵Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Dimashqī, a Syrian, died in Ṣafad in 727/1327; D. M. Dunlop,



encompassed all of the territory north of the dramatically deep gorge of Wādī Mūjib, and was partitioned into five main regions.⁶ While arrangements were fluid, these regions were in general:

1) the Balqā' region, which included the towns of al-Salt, Amman, and al-Zarqā', all fortified under the Ayyubids;⁷ also Ḥisbān, a town of sufficient importance to be the capital of the Balqā' for a period;⁸

2) the Jabal 'Awf region including the fortified town of 'Ajlūn, the castle of which was built between 1188 and 1192 and extended in 1214–15;⁹

3) the Sawād (used specifically to designate an area under cultivation), and in particular the district (*iqḷīm*) of Bayt Rās and that of Faḥl;¹⁰

4) the upper Ghawr (properly the floor of the Jordan Valley) with its principal town of al-Quṣayr, modern North Shūnah, seemingly equipped with a small fort (as the name would suggest);

5) the middle Ghawr around the town of 'Amatah (modern Abū 'Ubaydah), the burial place of the supreme commander of the Muslim forces in Bilād al-Shām and one of the Companions of the Prophet.

Hence the boundary between the Mamlakat Dimashq and the Mamlakat al-Karak was positioned along the Wādī Mūjib/Wādī Wālah catchment, which placed the southern Ghawr in Karak. Zīzah (modern Jīzah) in the Balqā' seemingly functioned as a forward post on the Karak road, as it was equipped with a water reservoir and a solid fort.¹¹

"Al-Dimashqī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:291; Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās al-Qalqashandī, an Egyptian, was an accomplished Mamluk bureaucrat who died in 821/1418; C. Edmund Bosworth, "Al-Qalkashandī," *EI*², 4:509–11. Both works, while essentially authoritative, incorporated much material drawn from other sources, some early.

⁶For a recent synopsis of modern scholarship on Mamluk administrative divisions in Jordan, see Bethany J. Walker, "Mamluk Investment in Southern Bilad al-Sham in the Eighth/Fourteenth Century: the Case of Hisban," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 62, no. 4 (2003): 241–43.

⁷Salt: M. Adnan Bakhit, "Al-Salt," *EI*², 8:999–1000; J. Garrow Duncan, "Es-Salt," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (1928): 28–100; Amman: A. Ostrasz, "The Citadel of Amman: The Conservation and Restoration of the Ayyubid Tower," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 41 (1997): 395–402; Jason Wood, "The Fortifications," in *Studies on Roman and Islamic 'Amman*, ed. Alastair Northedge (Oxford, 1992), 105–113–14, 125; al-Zarqā': Andrew Petersen, "Two Forts on the Medieval Hajj Route in Jordan," *ADAJ* 35 (1991): 347–50.

⁸Walker, "Mamluk Investment in Southern Bilad al-Sham," 249–50.

⁹C. N. Johns, "Medieval 'Ajlun," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* 1 (1932): 21–33; R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: the Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (New York, 1977), 77.

¹⁰Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat al-Dahr fī 'Ajā'ib al-Barr wa-al-Baḥr*, trans. A. Mehren, *Collectio Editionum Rariorum Orientalium* (Leipzig, 1923), 201, l. 3.

¹¹David Kennedy, *The Roman Army in Jordan* (London, 2000), 123–24; Petersen, "Two Forts on



Within the *Iqlīm Faḥl* and giving the district its name was the settlement of Faḥl, an ancient place continuously occupied since before 6000 B.C.E. due to the presence of fertile lands and multiple springheads, the latter creating the second most powerful water source in the Jordan Valley between Lake Tiberias and the Dead Sea.¹² The middle Islamic name of Faḥl can be traced back to the ancient Semitic name "Pahil,"¹³ and the continuity of this name over four millennia is indicative of the site's long history of settlement. The historical significance of Faḥl was partly strategic, partly resource-based. In addition to abundant water and good soils, Faḥl served as a traditional "gateway" location between the coastal routes of Palestine and the highland roads that traversed the Jordan highlands. Although in most of the Mamluk period the main lateral road from east to west passed north of Faḥl over the Jisr al-Mujāmi'ah, which joined Baysān with al-Quṣayr, the site retained a strategic importance as it lay between the fortified settlements of al-Quṣayr in the upper Jordan valley and 'Ajlūn, positioned high in the Jabal 'Awf region to the south-east.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MAMLUK FAḤL

The occupational history of Faḥl in middle Islamic times received scant attention until the Sydney University team commenced archaeological investigations on the main *tall* of Ṭabaqat Faḥl in the 1980s.¹⁴ While recent excavations have uncovered more Mamluk levels on the southern edge of the *tall*, as described below, the investigations are still limited to the mosque, small areas of the settlement, and part of the cemetery.

The first attention to Islamic-period occupation at Faḥl, albeit only modest, came out of a reasonably detailed survey of the site undertaken by John Richmond

the Medieval Hajj Route," 350–55.

¹²Water Resources Development Directorate—Water Quality and Pollution Control Division, *Water Quality in Jordan, Part 1: Springs* (Amman, 1979), "Ṭabaqat Fahil" with a mean discharge of 1391.32 cubic meters per hour as recorded in 1972 and 1975; Department of Water Resources Development, *Spring Flow Data in Jordan Prior to October 1985*, Technical Paper No. 51 (Amman, 1986), with a median flow of 1130 cubic meters per hour as recorded in 1972–74 and 1983–86. Peak flow was between April and September, the summer growing and autumn processing seasons.

¹³Or "Pahila," transliterated to "Pahir" in Egyptian and first attested ca. 1800 B.C.E.; Robert H. Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis Volume 1: The 1967 Season of the College of Wooster Expedition to Pella* (Wooster, OH, 1973), 24–25.

¹⁴Names continue to be transformed by events at Ṭabaqat Faḥl. Today the archaeological *tall* is locally referred to as "Bella," whereas Ṭabaqat Faḥl is the official name for the village on the plain to the west of the antiquities site.



in the 1930s.¹⁵ His published description focuses on the visible tombs and architecture, noting early churches and the absence of “Crusader work.”¹⁶ Structures on the flat top of the mound are ignored, even though “Arab” ruins are labeled on the accompanying map along with the limits of a new village (fig. 2), in existence until bombed during the War of Attrition (1967–70) and still in ruins when first visited by Walmsley in 1977 (fig. 3).¹⁷ The map also shows the clear outline of a rectangular building next to an “Arab Cemetery” on the southern edge of the mound, but only incidentally does Richmond identify this building as a mosque in a caption to a photograph (fig. 4). Further observations of Islamic medieval ceramics were made by Nelson Glueck in a 1942 visit,¹⁸ and then in 1958 the first real indication of the extent of Middle Islamic occupation at Faḥl came about from work in one of two exploratory soundings undertaken by R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson on the main mound at Faḥl.¹⁹ Here they initially encountered some two meters of “Medieval and early Arab occupation,” but about which very little else was said except that “the strata were not clearly defined for the most part.”²⁰ With the 1967 excavations of Robert Smith, which focused on the West Church and tombs, a corpus of Middle Islamic pottery was recovered from tomb overburden in Area II, the tombs east of the main mound (fig. 5).²¹ Tomb 2 produced ceramics of Middle Islamic date mixed with fragmentary human bone, but unlikely from a burial.²² Tomb 7, which had collapsed into an underlying tomb (8), had significant Middle Islamic material, including sheep, goat, camel, and cattle bones (the latter

¹⁵John Richmond, “Khirbet Fahil,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (1934): 18–31.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁷This village features prominently in the photographs on the endpapers of Smith’s publication of his 1967 season of excavations, and is accompanied by a vivid first-hand account of the June War and the damage that was subsequently inflicted on Ṭabaqat Faḥl and its village; Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis I*, 21–22.

¹⁸Nelson Glueck, *Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV*, Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 25/28 (New Haven, CT, 1951), 254–57.

¹⁹Nine days were devoted to digging, for which forty laborers from the village were hired “including about half women and girls who proved to be excellent workers”; R. W. Funk and H. N. Richardson, “The 1958 Sounding at Pella,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 21 (1958): 82.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 88–89. There is no doubt that the levels associated with the Mamluk settlement of Faḥl are archaeologically challenging, but Funk and Richardson betray their disinterest in the Islamic periods elsewhere in their account. In their brief report, they devote two pages to outlining ancient historical references to Faḥl and nearly four to its Graeco-Roman and early Christian history, but no mention is made of Islamic references to the site although these had already been made available 75 years earlier in Guy Le Strange, “Account of a Short Journey East of the Jordan,” *PEQ* 16 (1885): 157–80.

²¹Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis I*, 168–95.

²²*Ibid.*, 177.



suggesting sedentary life) either dumped or washed in, or both.²³ The ceramics ranged from glazed wares, mostly local slipped-glazed but also blue-black underglazed frit ware and glazed relief ware, to the ubiquitous Hand-Made Geometric Painted wares (HMGPW), sugar pots and basins, and coarse cooking wares.²⁴

Accordingly with the commencement of the University of Sydney's excavations in 1979 on the main mound, some knowledge of Middle Islamic settlement at Faḥl had already been retrieved from earlier work, but none of this gave useful details about the nature of that settlement or its geographical and chronological extent. The first encounter was with an extensive cemetery in the south-eastern corner of the mound, located over an area of Byzantine-Umayyad housing destroyed in the earthquake of 749 C.E. (fig. 5, Area IV).²⁵ Attention was subsequently directed towards the mosque (Area XVII), the outline of which was still clearly visible on the top of the mound next to the cemetery of the modern village, the burial ground still being in use at the time (fig. 6).²⁶ In an at times harsh winter of 1982, Ghazi Bisheh as the Departmental Representative supervised the excavation of the mosque, uncovering a rectangular building made of reused stone blocks. A third area of Mamluk occupation on the mound at Faḥl was uncovered with the opening of two rectangular excavation units to the east and west of the reopened Square 1 of Funk and Richardson, where significant Hellenistic deposits had been found in the 1958 sounding and more were hoped for (fig. 5, Area XXIII).²⁷ Little architecture of Mamluk date was uncovered in this area; rather, thin interweaved courtyard levels were encountered instead. The complexities of the strata called for meticulous excavation, yet were rich with discarded material culture. More recently further Middle Islamic material was uncovered through the excavations of S. Bourke in Area XXXII, located immediately south of the mosque. In spite of

²³Ibid., 193–95.

²⁴Ibid., 236–43. That Smith retrieved and published this material is commendable, while his reluctance to place plain wheel-made wares after the Abbasid period can be excused given the poor state of knowledge at the time.

²⁵Stephen Bourke, "First Preliminary Report on the Excavation and Study of Human Remains at Pella," in *Pella in Jordan 2: The Second Interim Report of the Joint University of Sydney and College of Wooster Excavations at Pella 1982–1985*, ed. A. W. McNicoll, J. Hanbury-Tenison, et al. (Sydney, 1992), 225–26; also Christopher Browne, "Palaeopathological Survey of the Human Remains from Pella," in *Pella in Jordan 2*, 227–29; Christopher Browne, "Arthritis in Antiquity," *Patient Management* (1991): 29–34.

²⁶Fuller details in Alan Walmsley, "Settled Life in Mamluk Jordan: Views of the Jordan Valley from Faḥl (Pella)," *ARAM* 10 (1998): 1–15; see also idem, "The Islamic Period: the Later Islamic Periods," in *Pella in Jordan 2*, 190–92, but now dated.

²⁷Walmsley, "Settled Life in Mamluk Jordan," 192–93.



its limitations, the material from these four discrete areas provide a more detailed insight into the settlement of Faḥl in Mamluk times, including its place in the cultural and economic life of the Jordan Valley.

THE MOSQUE AT FAHL

The Faḥl mosque was built on open land towards the southern edge of the main mound, with the settlement located to its north and west (fig. 2, "Arab" ruins). Given its open location there was no restriction on the mosque's plan, which conformed to the shape of a plain rectangle measuring some 19 by 9.5 meters (fig. 7). A niche (mihrab) projecting some 1.8 meters was placed mid-point in the long south (qiblah) wall, and emphasized internally by the incorporation of two short columns on either side of the niche. To its right (west) the remains of three stone steps were uncovered, which clearly belonged to a minbar (fig. 8). The only doorway into the building was placed axially opposite the mihrab in the north wall of the mosque, either side of which were three evenly-spaced vertical windows, making six in total. The northern wall faced part of the settlement, and to separate the mosque from the cemetery to the east a wall extended out northwards from the north-east corner of the hall. No evidence for a porch was found in front of the entrance wall.

Internally, the hall of the mosque, measuring ca. 7.25 by 14.5 meters, was divided into three lateral aisles by two rows of four low-set columns positioned some 4.25 meters apart. The columns once carried six high-pointed arches, the voussoirs of which were found between the columns in a tumbled but orderly line upon the earth floor. At either end of the rows the columns were buttressed by a small wall against the short east and west walls, surely to carry the outward thrust of the colonnades. The remains of thin walls between the end columns suggest that all six recesses formed by the buttresses were made into benches and/or screened off from the body of the hall, more than likely with drapes. As the floor area of the hall measured ca. 105 square meters, it could have supported a congregation of up to 85–100 persons, and the presence of a minbar indicates a resident imam at some time in the mosque's history.

Construction of the mosque was of stone throughout, except probably for the roof. Much of the building stone came from reused material, especially the columns, one of which was of Troad grey granite, and the well-squared overlapping blocks at the wall corners. All the walls were built in 0.35 meter-deep foundation trenches with the exception of the qiblah wall, where it was built almost directly on the ground surface. The columns inside the hall were sunk from a half to three-quarters of a meter below the floor surface. The floor as found was essentially compacted earth, although remnants of a plaster surface were found in front of the mihrab. Mats made out of reeds, once copious in the Wādī Jirm, were probably used to



cover the floor. The roof was almost certainly flat, built from a traditional construct of wood beams, cane, and matting sealed over with earth.²⁸

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT OF THE MOSQUE

The Faḥl mosque is not a unique structure in the architectural heritage of Mamluk Jordan. Since its unearthing a number of other Mamluk-period mosques have been located, and some excavated, in the region, many of which conform to the style of the Faḥl mosque.²⁹

Two prominent mosques clearly belong to the same architectural tradition as the example at Faḥl. The first and perhaps earlier of the two is the small mosque in the Ayyubid-period fort at Azraq. This building, the result of a major reconstruction of an earlier Roman-period fort, is dated to 1236–37 by an inscription over the entrance doorway, and attributes its construction to ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak, Lord of Ṣalkhad. The mosque, probably part of ‘Izz al-Dīn’s building program, is a free-standing structure of basalt placed in the center of the fort’s courtyard. In plan the mosque is essentially rectangular, with its long axis running parallel to the qiblah wall. The hall features a double, laterally-oriented line of high-pointed arches that spring from deeply buried columns (fig. 9). The roof is flat and of stone, although rebuilt. However, the Azraq mosque is not as wide as the example at Faḥl, with two instead of three arches per row, while the arches terminate on pilasters, not engaged pillars. Also different is the location of the doorway, which is in the short east wall, as is the inclusion of only two windows, one either side of the mihrab high up in the qiblah wall.

The second mosque stands in front of the Cave of the Sleepers (al-Kahf wa-al-Raqīm), located south-east of Amman. Tradition holds this is the cave mentioned in the Quran in which a group of youths hide with their dog Qīṭmīr, sleeping, for 300 or 309 years to preserve their faith (Quran 18:9–26, “al-Kahf”). In later times the site was venerated by the construction of two mosques; one above the cave, perhaps Umayyad, and a second in front of the cave, either later Ayyubid or Mamluk. This latter mosque had a doorway in the short west wall,

²⁸After excavation the partially collapsed south wall was restored. Subsequently, the mosque walls were partially and sympathetically rebuilt in a traditional style by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

²⁹Editor’s note: In addition to the structures described below, a contemporary mosque of nearly identical scale, construction, and plan was recently surveyed in the village of Ḥubrās, roughly 22 kilometers northeast of Faḥl (Bethany J. Walker, “The Northern Jordan Survey 2003—Agriculture in Late Islamic Malka and Hubras Villages: A Preliminary Report on the First Season,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 339 [2005]: 76–77). It is currently being excavated and restored by Grand Valley State University, with the collaboration of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Ministry of Religious Endowments.



which led to an irregular courtyard positioned between the qiblah wall of the mosque and the cut rock face containing the tomb entrance. A second, blocked doorway in the west wall might suggest the mosque was an adaptation of an earlier building, maybe a church. From the court, entry to the mosque was through three broad openings in the north wall each ca. 2.37 meters wide, probably originally arched and left permanently open. In the center of the south wall a two-meter deep mihrab was located and, to the right (west), a minbar built of stone blocks with four steps remaining. Given the considerable thickness of the walls, the al-Kahf mosque may have been roofed with a stone vault.

Community mosques of a similar style were also built in other towns and villages in Jordan as part of a general program of cultural and political restructuring to counteract Shi'ite-Fatimid and Crusader influence in the region. The village of Sūf, northwest of Jarash, was equipped with a mosque of rectangular shape with lateral colonnades, while a number of long-room mosques each with a deep, horseshoe-shaped mihrab have been identified in the 'Ajlūn area, some of which have been excavated in recent years.³⁰

THE CEMETERY

An extensive cemetery belonging to the Mamluk settlement has been identified on the south-eastern quadrant of the main mound, probably starting to the east of the mosque where a modern cemetery, no longer in use but protected, is located. The excavation of the eastern sector of the Mamluk cemetery was coincidental to the principal intention of the work in Area IV, which was to investigate the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine settlement of Pella over an extended area.³¹ Between 1979 and 1982, over 250 individuals were disinterred, consisting of 110 adults and 142 children and adolescents. All were buried in ovoid pits measuring 1.5 to 1.75 meters in length and about 0.5 meters wide. Each body was laid in a pit on its right side, extended, with the head pointing east and the face turned to the south

³⁰Yūsuf Ghawānimah, *Al-Masājīd al-Islāmīyah al-Qadīmah fī Minṭiqat 'Ajlūn* (Irbid, 1986); Neil D. MacKenzie, "Ayyubid/Mamluk Archaeology of the 'Ajlun Area: A Preliminary Typology," *ADAJ* 46 (2002): 615–20.

³¹Interim reports in P. Watson, "The Byzantine Period: Byzantine Domestic Occupation in Areas III and IV," in *Pella in Jordan* 2, 163–81; Anthony McNicoll, Robert H. Smith, and Alan Walmsley, "Chapter 7: The Umayyad Period," in *Pella in Jordan 1. An Interim Report on the Joint University of Sydney and The College of Wooster Excavations at Pella 1979–1981*, ed. Anthony McNicoll, Robert H. Smith, and Basil Hennessy (Canberra, 1982), 123–41; A. W. McNicoll, "Chapter 6: The Hellenistic Period," in *Pella in Jordan* 2, 103–18; a more recent assessment of the Umayyad houses in Alan Walmsley, "Households at Pella, Jordan: the Domestic Destruction Deposits of the Mid-Eighth Century," in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: The Archaeology of Everyday Life*, ed. Adam Gutteridge, Ellen Swift, and Mattia Guidetti, *Late Antique Archaeology* (Leiden, in press).



(the qiblah). In some instances rough field stones were laid along the pit flanking the body. Grave goods were scarce, mostly personal jewelry such as finger rings, earrings, and bracelets in glass and copper.³²

As a result of a study of the skeletal material by Stephen Bourke,³³ it was concluded that the average life span of the Mamluk population was 30 to 35 years, perhaps a little lower than in earlier periods but nevertheless close to a standard pre-industrial life expectancy. The absence of any trauma to the bones would suggest that the principal cause of death was acute infection. Female lifespan was slightly less than males, probably due to the hazards of childbirth. Bourke noted that small changes in the morphology of the Mamluk population could be observed when compared to the earlier Roman-period population at Faḥl, which were suggestive of the introduction of Negroid and Asiatic (Turkic?) groups into the local population. Overall, however, this shift was only minor; rather, the evidence was for "significant biological continuity from Roman through to Mamluk times."³⁴ In other words, the Mamluk population of Faḥl was genetically little separated from their Roman-Byzantine predecessors, indicating Mamluk Faḥl was inhabited by people drawn from the local population, and not predominantly by outsiders such as imported labor.

A pathological study of the Mamluk skeletal material by C. D. Browne has identified compelling evidence for degenerative spinal disease and osteoarthritis of peripheral joints in the population of Faḥl.³⁵ These are degenerative joint diseases caused by hard work. While infant mortality levels were high, as common in pre-industrial societies, the stature of the population, bone mineralization, dental features, and the absence of skeletal deformities was suggestive of generally good levels of nutrition.

THE MAMLUK SETTLEMENT

The Mamluk-period settlement of Faḥl was in two sections, located to the north and east of the mosque. A rough outline of ruins corresponding to the settlement is given on Richmond's fold-out plan,³⁶ and in the 1980s could still be easily

³²On glass bracelets in the Jordan Valley, see Margreet Steiner, "Glass Bracelets from Tall Abu Sarbut," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* (Amman, 1995), 5:537–39.

³³Stephen Bourke and Karen Hendrix, "Twenty Years of Australian Physical Anthropology in Jordan: Retrospects and Prospects," in *Australians Uncovering Ancient Jordan: Fifty Years of Middle Eastern Archaeology*, ed. Alan Walmsley (Sydney/Amman, 2001), 77–88; Bourke, "Excavation and Study of Human Remains at Pella," 221 and 225–26.

³⁴Bourke and Hendrix, "Twenty Years of Australian Physical Anthropology in Jordan," 86.

³⁵Browne, "Palaeopathological Survey of the Human Remains from Pella"; idem, "Arthritis in Antiquity."

³⁶Richmond, "Khirbet Fahil," pl. V; see fig. 2 of this article.



traced by a spread of truncated stone walls and pottery scatter. The remains were visible in two parts: over an area of approximately 110 by 80 meters north of the mosque on the summit of the mound and a smaller area of 35 by 20 meters to the west of the mosque, in total about one hectare. The descriptions provided in the first European travelers' accounts, especially that of G. Schumacher,³⁷ record that the collapsed house walls of the settlement still stood to considerable height in the nineteenth century, but by the time of Richmond's visit in 1933 he could observe that "no walls remain above ground level."³⁸ The walls had, it seems, been removed in the first decades of the twentieth century to build the village of Ṭabaqat Faḥl, just as the West Church was being quarried for its stone by the villagers at the time of Richmond's visit.³⁹ Nevertheless, surviving surface remains in the 1980s indicated that each domestic unit of the Mamluk settlement consisted of rooms facing out onto an open courtyard and surrounded by an enclosure wall.

Modest excavations during the 1988 season either side of Funk and Richardson's 1950s' sounding in the center of the mound (designated Area XXIII) exposed finely stratified layers belonging to a courtyard, consisting of a complex sequence of accumulated deposits consisting of interleaved black ash and yellow clay lenses.⁴⁰ Although conducted on a small scale, the excavations succeeded in producing an excellent sequence of ceramics from the early Mamluk period, firmly dated by coins, and forms part of McPhillips' study that follows.

MAMLUK POTTERY FROM FAḤL

Ceramics from Faḥl broadly datable to the Mamluk period represent a distinct corpus of wares that can be clearly differentiated from the early and pre-Islamic material culture of the site. The following report focuses on a representative selection of ceramic material recovered by the University of Sydney team in 1988 from two excavation plots, each of which measured five by ten meters, located in the center of the main archaeological tell of Khirbat Faḥl to the west (plot XXIIID) and east (plot XXIIIE) of Funk and Richardson's original 1958 sounding.⁴¹ These excavations revealed evidence of courtyard residential compounds constructed in stone and mud brick walls and beaten earth floors.⁴² The structures were associated

³⁷Gottlieb Schumacher, *Pella* (London, 1888).

³⁸Richmond, "Khirbet Fahil," 30

³⁹*Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁰First reported in Walmsley, "The Islamic Period: the Later Islamic Periods," 192–93.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 192.

⁴²In 1999, excavations directed by Stephen Bourke brought to light more Middle Islamic material, in association with courtyard housing units divided by what is probably a street (pers. comm., Stephen Bourke). This material has been studied by McPhillips and will be included in the final



with at least nine Mamluk-period stratigraphic sequences of occupation and other deposits, while eleven copper alloy coins minted between 1341 and the final decade of the fourteenth century have been identified from Area XXIII, providing some elements for the creation of a relative chronology for the accompanying pottery corpus.⁴³

The Mamluk sequences represent a single period of Middle Islamic occupation and are superposed directly over Byzantine and early Islamic occupation, recognized by a sharp break in the material culture: there is no evidence available to suggest occupation in this zone in the intervening Islamic centuries or later than the fifteenth century.⁴⁴ This interim report is not intended to be definitive, nor does it include the full range of comparative published data, but rather it brings up to date the current state of knowledge of the ceramics from the site based on a study of the Area XXIII pottery undertaken by McPhillips in the spring of 2000.⁴⁵ A total of 1726 vessel fragments from the 1988 Area XXIII excavations have been assigned to twelve categories of ware and to a more detailed typology according to form.⁴⁶ The following discussion presents an overview of this material with an indication of its importance relative to the rest of the assemblage. The catalogue number of the featured specimens is given in parentheses.

HAND-MADE WARES

HAND-MADE GEOMETRIC PAINTED WARE (324, FIG. 10)

Often referred to by the acronym HMGPW,⁴⁷ this ware is constantly present in

publication on Mamluk Fahl.

⁴³Alan Walmsley, "Islamic Coins," in *Pella in Jordan 1979–1990: The Coins*, ed. Kenneth A. Sheedy, Robert Carson, and Alan Walmsley, Adapa Monograph Series, v. 1 (Sydney, 2001), 63–66, 152–53.

⁴⁴The uppermost deposits in this area of the tell did see major perturbation after 1967, yet diagnostic Ottoman or later wares are not seen in surface or other deposits.

⁴⁵Mamluk pottery has been published previously from Fahl as follows: from Tomb 2 and Tomb 7 in Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis I*, 236–43, pls. 70–77, 86, and 93–94; and a preliminary publication of the Area XXIII material in Walmsley, "The Islamic Period: the Later Islamic Periods," 193–98, pls 125–27; and idem, "Settled Life in Mamluk Jordan," 138–41, figs. 9–10. The present author has also presented a concise description with photographs in Stephen McPhillips, "Ceramics from Middle Islamic Fahl," in *Australians Uncovering Ancient Jordan: Fifty Years of Middle Eastern Archaeology*, ed. Alan Walmsley (Sydney/Amman, 2001), 271–78.

⁴⁶A much larger quantity of non-diagnostic pottery was examined by the current author, but this has not been added to the quantification given here as its value is affected by the discard of body sherds of unspecified wares at the time of excavation.

⁴⁷See Jeremy Johns, "The Rise of Middle Islamic Hand-Made Geometrically-Painted Ware in Bilad al-Sham (11th–13th Centuries A.D.)," in *Colloque international d'archéologie islamique*, ed. Roland-Pierre Gayraud, IFAO, Textes arabes et études islamiques, vol. 36 (Cairo, 1998), 65–93.



non-elite sites in Bilād al-Shām from the twelfth century on through to the twentieth century.⁴⁸ At Faḥl it is the second most represented category of Mamluk pottery, and consists primarily of jars, bowls, and basins. Geometric decoration in black, brown, purple, or red paint is usually applied to the greater part of the surface over a thick coat of white slip. Several of the larger open forms in this ware also have applied bands with finger impressions on the exterior surface. The finished surface is often highly burnished, which contrasts with the often thickly and irregularly made character of this ware, which was produced in village bonfire kilns. There is considerable variation in the fabrics within the Faḥl assemblage, but they are always coarse and gritty, with abundant vegetal inclusions. A number of the examples possess textile impressions on the interior surface, indicating the use of a simple mold manufacturing technique.⁴⁹ Taken in combination with the two subsequent wares below, 31.2% of the assemblage consists of hand-made material.

RED PAINTED HAND-MADE WARE

Six pieces of a burnished ware with a thinly applied red painted exterior decoration occur in this assemblage. A similar ware has elsewhere been suggested as a possible precursor to the more common HMGPW in Jordan.⁵⁰

HAND-MADE COARSE WARE (209, FIG. 11)

This sizeable group of pottery consists of jars with large horizontal loop handles, jugs, and bowls in a thick walled ware containing abundant coarse crystalline and other inclusions. The exterior surface of this type is frequently slipped and burnished. These were clearly used as cooking pots, for there is evidence of burning on the interior or exterior surfaces of some of the Faḥl examples. This class of ceramic is common throughout Middle Islamic Bilād al-Shām in the Mamluk period.⁵¹

⁴⁸At the Damascus Citadel excavations this ware is notable by its near absence; see Stephen McPhillips, "Twelfth Century Pottery from the Citadel of Damascus," in "Études et travaux à la citadelle de Damas 2000–2001: un premier bilan," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 53–54, Supplément: Citadelle de Damas, ed. Sophie Berthier and Edmond Al-Ajji (2001–2): 139–55.

⁴⁹For examples excavated at Faḥl, see Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis 1*, pl. 86.

⁵⁰Johns, "The Rise of Middle Islamic Hand-Made Geometrically-Painted Ware in Bilad al-Sham," 66; Robin M. Brown, "A 12th Century A.D. Sequence from Southern Transjordan: Crusader and Ayyubid Occupation at Al-Wu'eira," *ADAJ* 31 (1987): 284; idem, "Late Islamic Ceramic Production and Distribution in the Southern Levant: A Socio-Economic and Political Interpretation" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, 1992), 245–46.

⁵¹For discussion of distribution, see Brown, "Late Islamic Ceramic Production and Distribution in the Southern Levant," 256–59. Similar jars are published from Jerusalem: G. J. Wightman, *The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem: Excavations by Crystal-M. Bennett and Basil Hennessy at the Damascus*



WHEEL-MADE UNGLAZED WARES

SUGAR POT WARE (186, FIG. 12)

More than ten percent of the Mamluk pottery from the Faḥl assemblage belongs to this ware, which consists solely of large ribbed jars and straight-sided bowls in a uniformly soft yellow fabric with some fine inclusions.⁵² Although not connected directly to the sugar manufacturing process, these jars have been identified as containers for the finished product at a number of other sugar producing sites.⁵³ It is likely that sugar cane cultivation and production took place in the Wādī Jirm immediately south of Khirbat Faḥl, explaining perhaps the presence of such a quantity of this ware in domestic contexts on the tell. Nineteenth century visitors to Ṭabaqat Faḥl refer to recently abandoned mills in the Wādī Jirm,⁵⁴ and water mills are mentioned in the vicinity of Faḥl in the Ottoman *daftars* of the sixteenth century.⁵⁵ The Jordan Valley was a major sugar cane growing and refining area in the Mamluk period.⁵⁶

PLAIN UNGLAZED WARE (95, FIG. 13)

This group consists of bowls, jars, and jugs. The closed forms have looped handles

Gate, Jerusalem, 1964–66, BAR International Series no. 519 (1989), pl. 61:8, and have recently been published from Rāfiqah (Raqqah) in northern Syria; Marcus Milwright, "Ceramics from the Recent Excavations near the Eastern Wall of Rafiqah (Raqqah), Syria," *Levant* 37 (2005): 197–219. Fine walled wheel-made cooking wares with interior glazing are absent from the Faḥl assemblage.

⁵²Sugar pots from Tombs 2 and 7 at Faḥl had been initially dated to the Abbasid period: Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis I*, 237. This group has also been referred to as "Plain Ware" at Faḥl: Walmsley, "The Islamic Period: the Later Islamic Periods," 193–94.

⁵³Tell Abū Ṣarbut and Dhra' al-Khān both provide local comparative material in the Jordan Valley: Kareem, *Settlement Patterns in the Jordan Valley*, 66–80; Margreet Steiner, "The Excavations at Tell Abu Sarbut, A Mamluk Village in the Jordan Valley," *ARAM* 9–10 (1998): 145–51; H. E. LaGro, "Sugar Pots: A Preliminary Study of Technological Aspects of a Class of Medieval Industrial Pottery from Tell Abu Sarbut, Jordan," *Newsletter of the Department of Pottery Technology, University of Leiden* 7/8 (1989–90): 7–20; H. E. LaGro and H. de Haas, "Announcing a Study of Islamic Pottery from Tell Abu Sarbut," *Newsletter of the Department of Pottery Technology* 6 (1988): 89–96, and idem, "Syrup Jars and Sugar Pots: A Preliminary Study of a Class of Medieval Industrial Pottery from Tell Abu Sarbut, Jordan, Part II," *Newsletter of the Department of Pottery Technology* 9–10 (1991–1992): 55–68; H. J. Franken and J. Kalsbeek, *Potters of a Medieval Village in the Jordan Valley: Excavations at Tell Deir 'Alla: A Medieval Tell, Tell Abu Gourdan, Jordan* (Amsterdam/Oxford, 1975), 143–54.

⁵⁴Schumacher, *Pella*, 33–34, 51.

⁵⁵Hütteroth and Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Jordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century*, 167. However, there is no mention of sugar production in this period.

⁵⁶Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Production in the Late Middle Ages," 92–93; J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry, An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914* (Cambridge, 1989), 31–35, 43.



and a few examples show elongated and thickened cylindrical necks with internal filters. They are close in fabric to the "thin painted ware," although the only secondary surface treatment is an occasional whitish slip. Parallels are provided by several regional sites, the most extensively published being those from Tall Qaymūn (Tall Yoqne‘am).⁵⁷ In the south of Jordan similar "cream wares" have been excavated in both urban and rural contexts and are well represented at sites such as Khirbat Fāris.⁵⁸

RED WARE (113, FIG. 14)

This is a hard dense ceramic which is pale or dark reddish to gray in color and is thrown in a well-levigated siliceous clay. The main forms are medium to large bowls and jars with thickened rounded rims and comparatively thin walls. Published parallels exist from Jerusalem and Tall Qaymūn.⁵⁹

THIN PAINTED WARE (49, FIG. 15)

This is a fine ware fired reddish yellow to pink with reddish brown or black painted decoration sometimes over a white or yellowish slip. The most common shapes are jars and jugs with vertical loop handles. In both its decorative technique and its fabric, it is reminiscent of earlier Islamic pottery from the site.⁶⁰

WHEEL-MADE GLAZED WARES

MONOCHROME GLAZED WARE (541, FIG. 16)

Monochrome glazed wares are the most frequently occurring Mamluk ceramic from the Fahl excavations.⁶¹ Forms represented are overwhelmingly footed bowls with incurving or everted rims. The uniformly thick lead glaze is green, yellow, or sometimes brown in color and always applied over a thick white slip, often spilling over onto the exterior surface. The fabric is hard yellowish red to pale

⁵⁷Miriam Avissar, "The Medieval Pottery," in *Yoqne‘am I, The Late Periods*, ed. A. Ben-Tor, M. Avissar, and Y. Portugali, Qedem Reports, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1996), 151–55, 167–68.

⁵⁸Mads Sarley Pontin, "The Pottery," in A. M. McQuitty, M. Sarley Pontin, M. Khoury, M. P. Charles, and C. F. Hoppe, "Mamluk Khirbat Faris," *ARAM* 9–10 (1997–98): 189.

⁵⁹A. D. Tushingham, *Excavations in Jerusalem 1961–1967* (Toronto, 1985), 1:142–51, pls. 34–43; Avissar, "Medieval Pottery," 128–29, 151–53. Very close forms in a similar ware dating to the Mamluk period have been catalogued in the Damascus Citadel excavations (pers. comm., Véronique François).

⁶⁰Alan Walmsley, "Tradition, Innovation, and Imitation in the Material Culture of Islamic Jordan," *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* (Amman, 1995), 5:661 (Walmsley's Ware 8). See comments in Walmsley, "The Islamic Period: the Later Islamic Periods," 194 (Type 2).

⁶¹It is probable that the presence of glazed wares in the assemblage has been somewhat exaggerated due to their high visibility during excavation.



yellow, and is well-levigated with small quantities of fine inclusions. There are a few fragments from closed forms from the site, and only one lamp. This prominence of monochrome glazed wares is not unusual at a site in the Jordan Valley,⁶² but at Faḥl it represents a larger proportion of the pottery repertoire than at other village sites in Northern Jordan, resembling more the situation at rural Palestinian sites, to which it was more accessible in this period.⁶³

SLIP PAINTED WARE (79, FIG. 17)

Underglaze slip painted ware is the second most frequent glazed pottery in the assemblage. In fabric it is fine and a consistent brittle red with few visible inclusions. The principal form at Faḥl is a carinated bowl with an incurving thickened rim. This is a ware well known at many sites in Bilād al-Shām, but generally occurs less frequently in Jordan than in Syria and Palestine.⁶⁴ The carinated form is dated at Burj al-Aḥmar to after 1265.⁶⁵ A single sherd from the Faḥl group is green glazed.

GLAZED INCISED WARE (43, FIG. 18)

Lead glazed wares with decoration incised into the underlying white slip are represented at Faḥl, but owing to the highly fragmentary and somewhat limited

⁶²Brown, "Late Islamic Ceramic Production and Distribution in the Southern Levant," 456.

⁶³As is the case at Ḥisbān, for example, Bethany J. Walker and Øystein S. LaBianca, "The Islamic Qusur of Tall Hisban: Preliminary Report on the 1998 and 2001 Seasons," *ADAJ* 47 (2003): 443–71. A recent survey in northern Jordan has revealed a situation closer to that at Faḥl, with high proportions of monochrome glazed bowls: Bethany J. Walker, "The Northern Jordan Survey 2003," 79. Palestinian sites that include abundant material include Belmont Castle: Richard P. Harper and Denys Pringle, *Belmont Castle: The Excavation of a Crusader Stronghold in the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology no. 10 (London, 2000), esp. the sections by Anthony Grey, "The Unglazed Pottery," 87–100, and Katherine Knowles, "The Glazed Pottery," 101–16; Tall Qaymūn (Tel Yoqne'ām), Avissar, "The Medieval Pottery," 96ff.; and Za'rin, Anthony Grey, "The Pottery of the Late Periods from Tel Jezreel: an Interim Report," *Levant* 26 (1994): 60.

⁶⁴Marcus Milwright, "Trade and Patronage in Middle Islamic Jordan: the Ceramics from Karak Castle" (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1999), 170. Comparanda are too numerous to list here; this ware is well attested in Bilād al-Shām and further afield from the twelfth century, continuing at many sites well into the Mamluk period. In the Damascus Citadel excavations there is a locally distinctive development of this ware from the twelfth century through the Mamluk period: Stephen McPhillips, "Pottery of the Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries from the Citadel of Damascus" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sydney, 2004), 241–42, 251–52; Véronique François, pers. comm.

⁶⁵Denys Pringle, *The Red Tower (al-Burj al-Aḥmar): Settlement in the Plain of Sharon at the Time of the Crusaders and Mamluks, A.D. 1099–1516* (London, 1986), 149–50, fig. 50.



nature of the material, it has not been possible to divide this group into more detailed categories present at sites where it is more common.⁶⁶ The majority of this group possess simple geometric patterns incised into a white slip under a green or yellow glaze,⁶⁷ with a smaller number having much broader incised lines (gouged ware) or large areas without slip at all (reserve slipped ware). A few sherds exhibit more than one glaze color, and may be considered as part of the "splashed glazed" family. Incised ware fabrics are not readily distinguishable from those of the slipped glazed group, and indeed it is probable that incised vessels have been registered with the monochrome group as large parts of incised ware bowls were left undecorated.

STONEPASTE WARES (48, FIG. 19)

Stonepaste or fritware pottery is characterized by a siliceous white or off-white pottery body with a make-up of ten parts quartz, one part glass frit or glass fragments, and one part fine white clay.⁶⁸ It occurs infrequently within the Area XXIII assemblage and consists entirely of fine bowls and a small number of small jars. The white body is covered by a transparent alkaline glaze, colored by mineral additions, such as copper for turquoise in the case of the pottery of this group from Faḥl, which otherwise have a colorless glaze. A slip was not required as a base for applying painted decoration, as the stonepaste body itself fulfilled this function and reflected light through the glaze to highlight its color and any underglaze decoration. The Faḥl stonepaste pottery is highly fragmentary, but geometric or

⁶⁶At Za‘rin (Tall Jezreel), a site of similar size to Faḥl in the Marj ibn ‘Āmir (Jezreel Valley), a range of incised wares are represented: Grey, "Pottery of the Late Periods from Tel Jezreel," 57–59. It is interesting to note that the author observes a relatively limited presence of glazed incised material in relation to monochrome glazed pottery at Tall Qaymūn (Tel Yoqne‘am) during the Mamluk reoccupation of the site from the beginning of the fourteenth century; Avissar, "Medieval Pottery," 96.

⁶⁷In the Damascus Citadel excavations, this material is typical of the Mamluk period; twelfth-century and earlier incised lead glazed wares are both finer walled and possess a more lightly applied incised decoration; McPhillips, "Pottery of the Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries from the Citadel of Damascus," 251–52; Véronique François, pers. comm. Tushingham has suggested a similar distinction at the Armenian Garden in Jerusalem; Tushingham, *Excavations in Jerusalem*, 143.

⁶⁸See James Allan, "Abu ‘l-Qasim’s Treatise on Ceramics," *Iran* 11 (1973): 113–14. James Allan, L. R. Llewellyn, and F. Schweizer, "The History of So-called Egyptian Faience in Islamic Persia: Investigations into Abu ‘l-Qasim’s Treatise," *Archaeometry* 15, no. 2 (1973): 165–73; Alan Caiger-Smith, *Lustre Pottery: Technique, Tradition, and Innovation in Islam and the Western World* (London, 1985), 199; Robert Mason and Michael Tite, "The Beginnings of Islamic Stonepaste Technology," *Archaeometry* 36 (1994): 77–78. The treatise of Abū al-Qāsim, written in Iran at the beginning of the fourteenth century, is of interest owing to its descriptions of the manufacture of fritwares and techniques of underglaze painting.



vegetal painted decoration is discernible in several combinations of color: black, cobalt blue or turquoise under a colorless glaze, and black or cobalt blue under a turquoise glaze. The fabric is consistently granular and off-white in color. The sherds of this ware are often considerably degraded or very small due to their fragile nature. There are good parallels for this material, particularly at urban sites in Bilād al-Shām, with production probably occurring at Damascus and in central and northern Syria. The range of stonepaste exhibited in the Faḥl group is consistent with Syrian wares of the Mamluk period.⁶⁹

MOLDED WARES

RELIEF MOLDED GLAZED WARE (FIG. 20)

Five sherds of this ware were catalogued, all from bowls with pronounced incurving rims and epigraphic relief molded decoration on the exterior surface. The glazes are glassy, thick, and generally made to a higher standard than those of other lead-glazed ceramics above. In color they are yellow, green, and brown, while in section they are pale red and fine. This ware is likely to have been produced at Jerusalem,⁷⁰ and is relatively prominent at certain urban sites in southern Bilād al-Shām such as Karak and Tell Ḥisbān,⁷¹ but is rarer elsewhere.

CONCLUSION ON THE CERAMICS

The range of pottery excavated in Area XXIII at Faḥl offers a reflection of the socioeconomic realities at an agricultural settlement in the Jordan Valley that also served as a local hub and transit point in the early Mamluk period. At a time when the Jordan Valley had become a highly developed area of large-scale agriculture, Faḥl—with its abundant water resources, fertile soils and strategic location—was well positioned to play a role in the massively expanded economic activity of the area during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The association of a significant

⁶⁹Archaeological evidence for the dating of these families of stonepaste wares to within the Mamluk period is provided by the Damascus Citadel excavations (pers. comm., Véronique François) and by work in northern Syria, such as at Qal'at Ja'bar: Cristina Tonghini, *Qal'at Ja'bar Pottery: A Study of a Syrian Fortified Site of the Late 11th–14th Centuries*, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology, vol. 11 (London, 1998), 52–55. Similar material to that from Faḥl can be found from a range of published Mamluk contexts in the southern Bilād al-Shām, such as at Tall Qaymūn (Tel Yoqne'am): Avissar "The Medieval Pottery," 113–16, and at al-Burj al-Aḥmar: Pringle, *The Red Tower*, 150–53. For a thorough survey of the distribution of Mamluk stonepaste wares, see Tonghini, *Qal'at Ja'bar Pottery*, 52–55 (fritware 3).

⁷⁰Avissar, "Medieval Pottery," 102; Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1980), 255, fig. 302.

⁷¹Milwright, "Trade and Patronage in Middle Islamic Jordan," 184; Walker and LaBianca, "Islamic Qusur of Tall Hisban," 464–66.



proportion of the pottery with the manufacture of sugar has been remarked on above.⁷² Furthermore, the range of ceramics in the corpus can be paralleled to those of other rural sites in Palestine and northern Jordan, but less so to rural sites further to the south.⁷³ The presence of a considerable proportion of glazed wares that are well-documented in the wider region also underlines the full integration of Faḥl into the economy of the region. Unglazed wheel-made wares and monochrome lead glazed pottery, along with the slip painted and incised sub-groups, are well known at Palestinian and larger Jordanian sites, to which Faḥl was readily accessible owing to its location near the intersection of two valleys, the Jordan and the Marj ibn ‘Āmir (Jezreel), at a point where coastal and highland routes met. The stonepaste and relief glazed wares found at Faḥl are likely to have been imported from Damascus and Jerusalem respectively, and are a reminder of the position of the village close to the road between these two cities where it crossed the Jordan river. The hand-made wares from Faḥl are similarly well-represented at other rural sites in Bilād al-Shām, but are more likely to have been manufactured in closer proximity to the site. It is interesting to note that all ceramic cooking vessels belong to this group. Studies of the Ottoman *daftar*s, although from the sixteenth century, provide some parallel indicators of the nature of the local economy and population in the immediate proximity of Faḥl.⁷⁴

⁷²Mamluk or Middle Islamic sites have been identified in the vicinity of Ṭabaqat Faḥl, particularly the sugar production sites in the Jordan Valley such as Khirbat al-Maḥrūqāt at the base of the Wādī al-Yābis: Jonathan Mabry and Gaetano Palumbo, "Survey in the Wadi el-Yabis (Irbid District, Jordan), 1987," *Syria* 65 (1988): 425–27; idem, "The 1987 Wadi el Yabis Survey," *ADAJ* 32 (1988): 296–302; and a large number of other sites on the valley floor: Kareem, *The Settlement Patterns in the Jordan Valley*, 181–204; Cherie Lenzen, Jum‘a M. H. Kareem, and S. Thorpe, "Jisr Sheikh Hussain Regional Survey," in *The Archaeology of Jordan II.1*, ed. Denyse Homès-Fredericq and Basil Hennessy (Leuven, 1989), 66–67; Ibrahim, Sauer, and Yassine, "East Jordan Valley Survey, 1975 (Part One)," 41–66; Yassine, Sauer, and Ibrahim, "East Jordan Valley Survey, 1976 (Part Two)." Further Middle Islamic sites have been identified higher up the eastern side of the Jordan Valley from Faḥl: S. Mittmann, *Beiträge zur Siedlungs- und Territorialgeschichte des Nördlichen Ostjordanlandes* (Wiesbaden, 1970), 39–94, as well as the better known Baysān: G. M. Fitzgerald, *The Beth Shan Excavations, 1921–23, The Arab and Byzantine Levels* (Philadelphia, 1931) and al-Himneh: Adrian Boas, "Late Ceramic Typology," in *The Roman Baths of Hammat Gader*, ed. Yizhar Hirschfeld (Jerusalem, 1997), 382–95.

⁷³Hand-made wares, including HMGPW, represented the majority of the wares collected in the rural settlements of the Arḍ al-Karak (the agricultural lands around Karak) of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, which contrasts strikingly with the situation inside the castle itself; Brown, "Late Islamic Ceramic Production and Distribution in the Southern Levant," 240–41.

⁷⁴Taxes were levied on wheat, barley, sesame, goats, honey, and watermills; nine heads of family (or bachelors) are recorded as residing here at this later era: Hütteroth and Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Jordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century*, 167. The *Faḥl al-Taḥta* referred to in the *daftar*s may correspond either to Ṭabaqat Faḥl or to another settlement



There is no firm evidence in this corpus for pottery from periods immediately prior or posterior to the Mamluk centuries, except the possible late twelfth- to early thirteenth-century (Ayyubid) Red Painted Hand-made Ware, represented by only a few sherds in the corpus. Otherwise, both the dates of the excavated coins, even taking into account fluctuating supply levels over the period, and the range of wares represented within this group of pottery indicate that it is consistent with an interpretation of a date from around the middle part of the thirteenth century to the first part of the fifteenth century. The absence of Ottoman material is in line with Schumacher's observation that there was no permanent settlement on the tell in the late Ottoman period, with the pre-1967 village being built no earlier than the start of the twentieth century.⁷⁵

AL-DIMASHQĪ, AL-QALQASHANDĪ, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The social and economic reconstruction of Jordan, resolutely pursued by the Ayyubid and especially Bahri Mamluk elites following the Crusader interregnum, included an active program of mosque and shrine building among other activities, especially at sites of particular religious significance such as Mu'tah, Māzar, al-Kahf, 'Amatah (Abū 'Ubaydah), and Jabal Hārūn. Faḥl, surely remembered for the decisive Battle of Fiḥl that drove a wedge between Jerusalem and Damascus in 635, may have been a beneficiary of this policy, bringing advantages in addition to its administrative role in the Mamluk province of Dimashq. The archaeological evidence points to the existence of a settlement of some note during Mamluk times, and a community honored by the erection of a mosque equipped with a minbar. As the ceramics also indicate, the presence of glazed wares in some numbers, including Relief Molded Glazed Ware from Jerusalem and stonepaste wares from Damascus or further north, suggest Faḥl was something more than an isolated agricultural settlement in early Mamluk times, with contacts that extended outside the immediate area. Likewise, the coins show Faḥl's involvement in a broader monetary economy, and together the finds could be taken to suggest that Faḥl was one of the more important sites in the Jordan Valley during early Mamluk times. It may have functioned as a focal point for the local community and served as a way station on east-west routes from the valley into the Jordanian mountains, especially the 'Ajlūn road.

Can these discoveries assist in understanding al-Dimashqī as a source, even in

at the base of the valley, perhaps in the vicinity of modern al-Masharia': Walmsley, "Settled Life in Mamluk Jordan," 142.

⁷⁵In the early nineteenth century two British naval commanders visited "Tabathat Fahkil" during a journey through the region, and described the ruins of a village on the tell, clearly corresponding to Khirbat Faḥl: C. L. Irby and J. Mangles, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria and Asia Minor; During the Years 1817 and 1818* (London, 1823), 304; see also Schumacher, *Pella*, 51.



the smallest way? Generally, al-Dimashqī has been judged as a less than critical scholar who incorporated earlier material in his work without exercising any rigorous editorial control.⁷⁶ The contradictions found in his geographical work would seem to confirm this, for instance by placing Amman, al-Salt, al-Zarqā', and the Balqā' in both Karak and Dimashq provinces. However, the extensive archaeological evidence from Mamluk Faḥl would indicate that al-Dimashqī's sources were rooted in an historical reality, and that the inclusion of Fiḥl as an *iqḷīm* in Dimashq was not an historical relic of much earlier times, but reflected a current, or near-contemporary, situation.⁷⁷ Hence archaeology may serve to confirm the usefulness of al-Dimashqī as a source on the geography of early Mamluk Bilād al-Shām.

⁷⁶Dunlop, "Al-Dimashkī."

⁷⁷If this reasoning is correct Bayt Rās, also listed by al-Dimashqī as another *iqḷīm* of Dimashq, should reveal evidence for significant Mamluk-period occupation, including a mosque.



APPENDIX: INVENTORY OF CERAMICS: FIGURES 10 TO 20

Figure 10. Hand-Made Geometric Painted Ware

1. Jar, Cat. No. 16903, Area XXIII E 7.8; core 7.5YR 5/1, surface 10YR 6/1; brown paint 2.5YR 4/2; gray fabric with infrequent fine red, white, and gray grits and organic temper
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16910, Area XXIII E 8.2; slipped and burnished interior surface; core 7.5YR 7/6, surface 7.5YR 8/2 and 7.5YR 8/4; dark brown paint 5YR 3/2; reddish yellow fabric with abundant coarse white grits and organic tempering, some finer red and gray inclusions
3. Bowl, Cat. No. 16628, Area XXIII D 1.4; burnished interior and exterior surface; core 7.5YR 7/4, int. surface 2.5YR 7/8, ext. 2.5YR 6/6 and 5YR 7/4; dark red paint 7.5R 4/3; pink fabric with infrequent gray, red, and white grits and some organic temper

Figure 11. Hand-Made Coarse Ware

1. Lid, Cat. No. 16672, Area XXIII D 1.14; core 10YR 7/3, surface 10YR 8/2; pale brown fabric with gray, red, and white grits
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16658, Area XXIII D 1.8; self-slipped; core 10YR 8/3, surface 10YR 8/2, 10YR 8/4 and 5YR 7/4; pale brown fabric with white and gray grits and organic temper
3. Cooking Jar, Cat. No. 16645, Area XXIII D 1.5; self-slipped with traces of burnishing exterior; core 10YR 4/1, surface 10YR 6/2 and 10YR 8/2; pale brown fabric with abundant mineral inclusions (quartz?) and organic temper

Figure 12. Sugar Pot Ware

1. Jar, Cat. No. 16775, Area XXIII D 6.46; core 2.5YR 6/8, ext. surface 2.5YR 6/6 and 10YR 8/3, int. surface 2.5YR 6/6 and 5YR 6/8; dense light red fabric with gray and white grits and abundant chaff
2. Jar, Cat. No. 16841, Area XXIII E 3.4; core 10YR 7/4, ext. surface 5YR 8/4 and 7.5YR 8/4, int. surface 5YR 6/3 and 7.5YR 8/4; pale brown soft lightweight fabric with gray grits and organic tempering

Figure 13. Plain Unglazed Ware

1. Jug or jar with neck filter, Cat. No. 16403, Area XXIII E 3.9; core 5YR 7/6, ext. surface 2.5Y 8/3 and 10YR 8/3, int. surface 7.5YR 8/4; light red fabric with very fine gray, white, and red grits
2. Jar, Cat. No. 16604, Area XXIII D 1.3; core 10YR 8/4, surface 7.5YR 8/4; porous pale brown fabric with prominent white grits
3. Jar, Cat. No. 16632, Area XXIII D 1.4; core 7.5YR 5/1, ext. surface 10YR 8/3,



int. surface 5YR 6/4; porous pale brown fabric with reddish brown, gray, and white grits

4. Bowl, Cat. No. 16431, Area XXIII E 3.11; core 10YR 5/1, margins and surface 7.5YR 8/4; fabric as Fig. 13.3

Figure 14. Red Ware

1. Jug, Cat. No. 16967, Area XXIII E 1.9; core 2.5YR 5/6, surface 5YR 5/4; dense red fabric with infrequent fine grits
2. Jar, Cat. No. 16972, Area XXIII D 6.46; core 2.5YR 5/6, surface 5YR 5/4; fabric as Fig. 14.1
3. Basin, Cat. No. 16948, Area XXIII D 6.20; core 10YR 7/2, surface 10YR 6/1; fabric as Fig. 14.1, although pale gray in color

Figure 15. Thin Painted Ware

1. Closed form, Cat. No. 16457, Area XXIII D 6.26; core 10YR 7/4, surface 2.5YR 8/3; parallel diagonal lines of black paint exterior (7.5YR 5/1); fine pale brown fabric with frequent fine gray and white grits
2. Jar, Cat. No. 16425, Area XXIII D 100.2; core 10YR 5/1, surface 7.5YR 8/4; dribbles of black paint exterior (7.5YR 5/1); fine porous light gray fabric with reddish brown, gray, and white grits
3. Jar, Cat. No. 16419, Area XXIII D 7.13; core 2.5YR 6/6, surface 2.5YR 8/4 and 10YR 8/2; dribbles of black and dark red paint exterior (7.5YR 5/1); fine light gray fabric with gray and white grits

Figure 16. Monochrome Glazed Ware

1. Bowl, Cat. No. 16704, Area XXIII D 1.34; creamy white slip interior and to ca. 40mm below exterior lip, dark green glaze interior and dribbles exterior, dark brown in color where it has dripped over unslipped surface; core 5YR 6/6, surface 2.5YR 4/4; fine reddish yellow fabric with occasional mineral grits
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16570, Area XXIII D 5.28; pale yellow slip over interior surface and to ca. 27mm below exterior rim, covered by thick mustard glaze; glaze drips exterior; core 10YR 7/4, ext. surface 2.5Y 8/2 and 7.5YR 7/3; hard pale brown fabric with frequent rounded black, gray, and white grits
3. Bowl, Cat. No. 16815, Area XXIII E 1.10; yellow glaze with black speckling on exterior foot, spots of very pale brown slip exterior and some glaze drips interior foot; core 7.5YR 8/4, ext. surface 7.5YR 6/4 and 10YR 8/3; fabric as Fig. 16.2

Figure 17. Slip Painted Ware

1. Bowl, Cat. No. 16819, Area XXIII E 2.1; pale yellow glaze exterior, appears



- pale yellow over slip and light red on remaining surface; core 2.5YR 4/4, surface 2.5YR 4/4; fine light red fabric with occasional mineral grits
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16627, Area XXIIID 1.4; green glaze over a white slip producing crosshatched motif; core 2.5YR 6/6, surface 2.5YR 7/6; fabric as Fig. 17.1

Figure 18. Glazed Incised Ware

1. Bowl, Cat. No. 16920, Area XXIIIE 101.3; pale yellow glaze to rim, green glaze splashed on rim and interior, horizontal incised bands and areas in reserve incised into cream slip on interior surface; core 2.5YR 6/6, surface 2.5Y 8/3; fine light red fabric with occasional mineral grits
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16935, Area XXIIIE 100.2; green glaze and white slip interior and dripped on lower exterior surface, incised floral motif interior; core and surface: 7.5YR 7/2; fine pinkish gray fabric with occasional white and red grits
3. Bowl, Cat. No. 16829, Area XXIIIE 2.2; yellow glaze with splashes of pea green glaze and white slip interior, unslipped (reserve) zones appear reddish brown; core and surface: 2.5YR 6/8; fine light red fabric with occasional white and red grits

Figure 19. Stonepaste Ceramics

1. Ledge rimmed bowl, Cat. No. 16727, Area XXIIID 5.16; turquoise glaze entire surface over black underglaze painted geometric motif interior and pairs of parallel stripes exterior; core 10YR 8/2; friable off white stonepaste fabric
2. Ledge rimmed bowl, Cat. No. 16882, Area XXIIIE 4.10 and 6.3; colorless glaze entire surface over black underglaze painted geometric motif interior and pairs of parallel stripes and band at rim exterior; core 10YR 8/2; friable off white stonepaste fabric
3. Small bowl, Cat. No. 16682, Area XXIIID 1.24; colorless glaze entire surface over black and cobalt blue underglaze painted geometric motif interior and cross-hatched black bands exterior; core 10YR 8/2; friable off-white stonepaste fabric
4. Jar, Cat. No. 16696, Area XXIIID 1.32; thick turquoise glaze exterior, dripped to foot, colorless glaze interior surface; core 10YR 8/2; friable off white stonepaste fabric

Figure 20. Relief Molded Glazed Ware

1. Bowl, Cat. No. 16925, Area XXIIIE 102.8; thick dark green glaze entire surface, relief molded vegetal motif exterior; core 5Y 7/1; soft light gray fabric with very fine white and black grits
2. Bowl, Cat. No. 16928, Area XXIIID 100.2; thick dark green glaze exterior



surface, yellow interior; sharp molded fluting exterior; core 7.5YR 8/6; soft reddish yellow fabric with very fine white and black grits

Thanks to Judith Sellers for original pencil drawings of the hand-made and glazed vessels with surface decoration.



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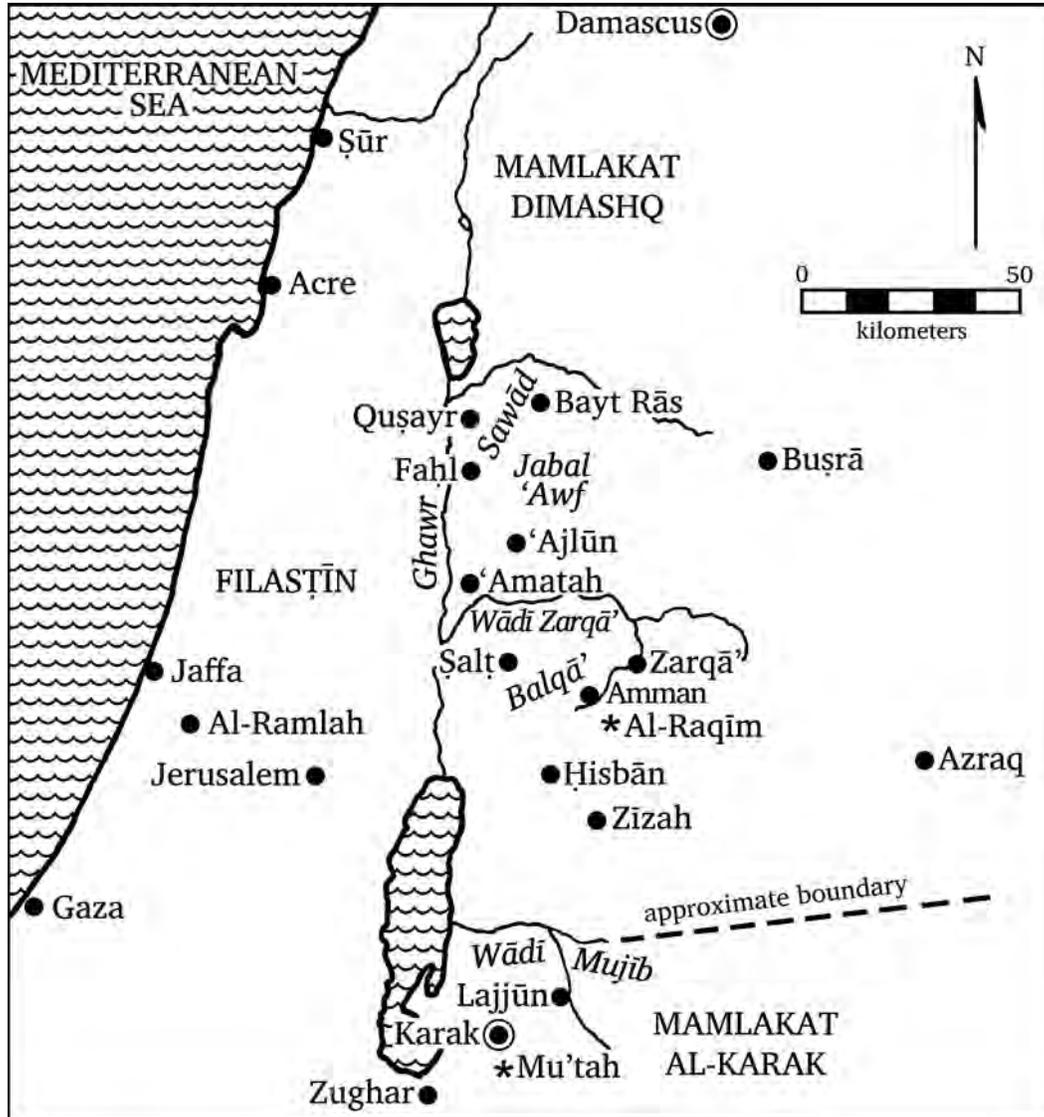


Fig. 1. Generalized map of Jordan and Palestine in Mamluk times



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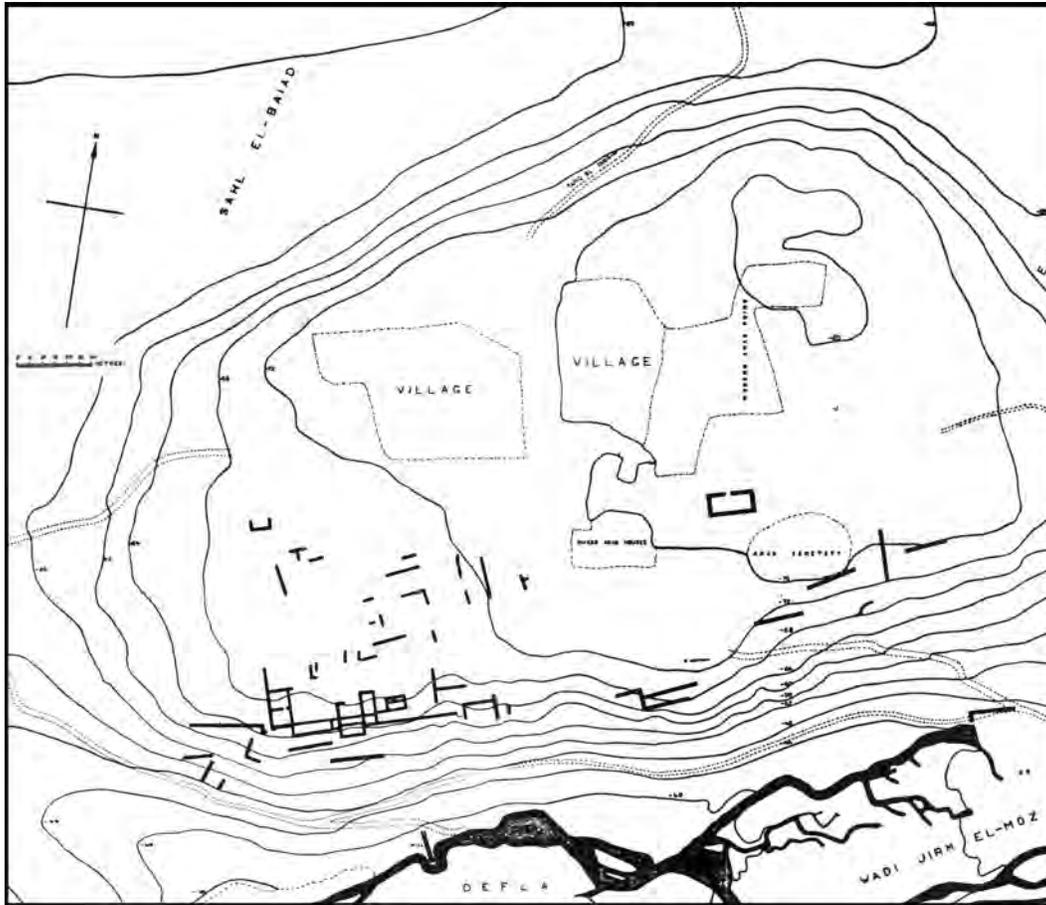


Fig. 2. The main mound at Fahil as depicted in the map of Richmond, "Khirbet Fahil," pl. 5



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Fig. 3. View of the top of the main mound at Fahl in 1977 (Walmsley)



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Fig. 4. Photograph of a lintel from Richmond described as "reused in abandoned mosque. Summit of Khirbat" (Richmond, "Khirbet Fahil," pl. 3 fig. 2)

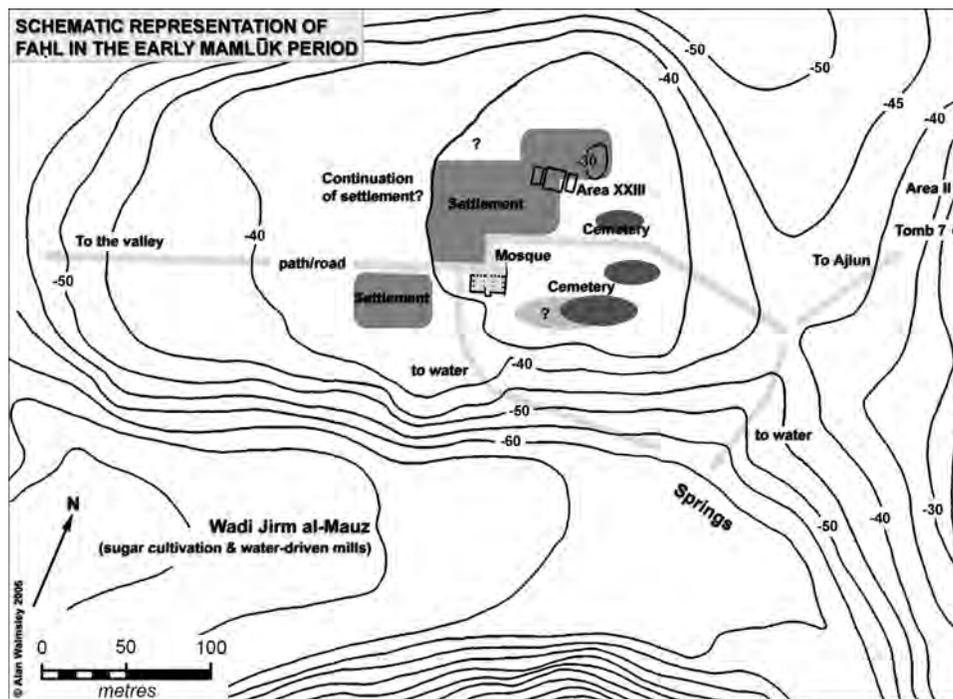


Fig. 5. Reconstructed plan of Faḥl in early Mamluk times



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Fig. 6. View of the Mamluk mosque before excavation (Walmsley 1981)

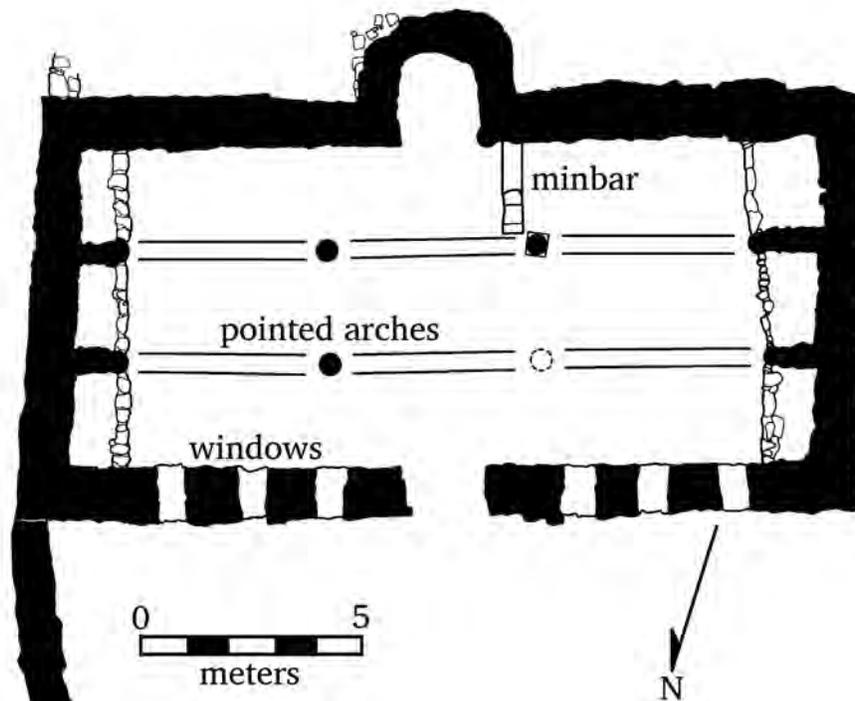


Fig. 7. Plan of the Mamluk mosque of Faḥl (T. Hart)



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Fig. 8. View of the mihrab and minbar following excavation (Pella Project 1982)



Fig. 9. The hall of the Azraq mosque, after 1236, showing the arcades and mihrab. Photograph by T. E. Lawrence, courtesy of The Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London



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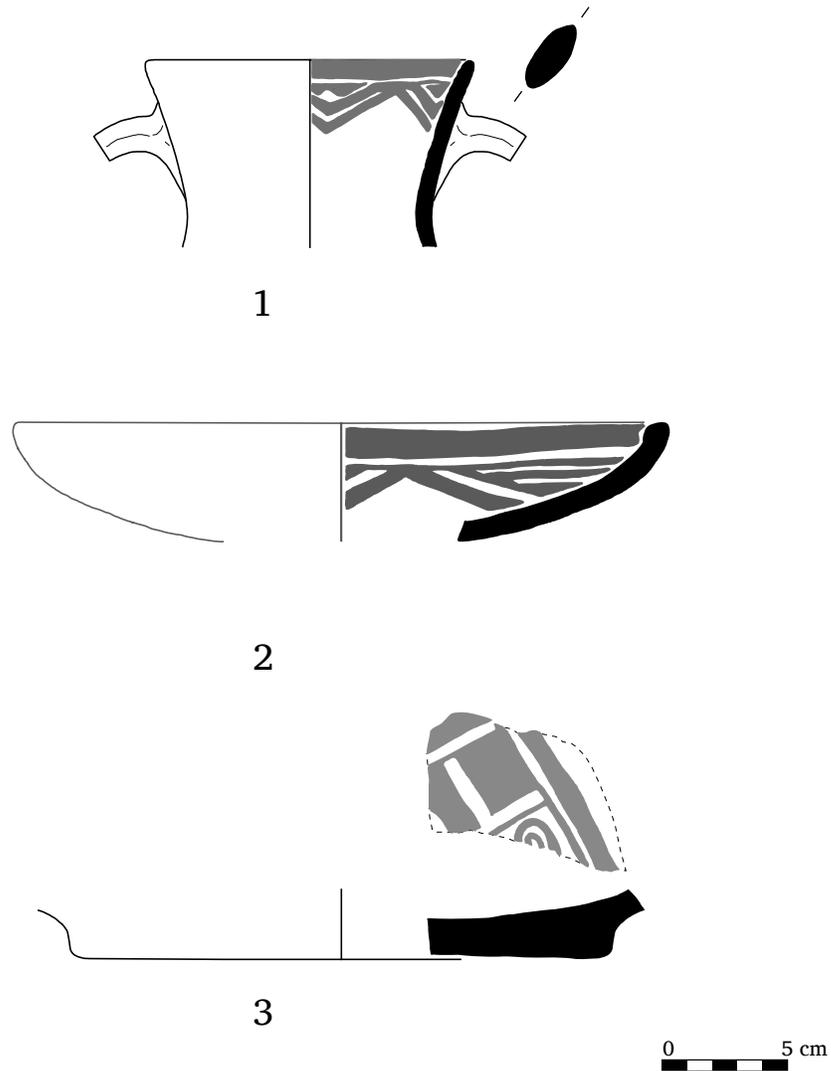


Fig. 10. Hand-Made Geometric Painted Ware: jar (1) and bowls (2–3)



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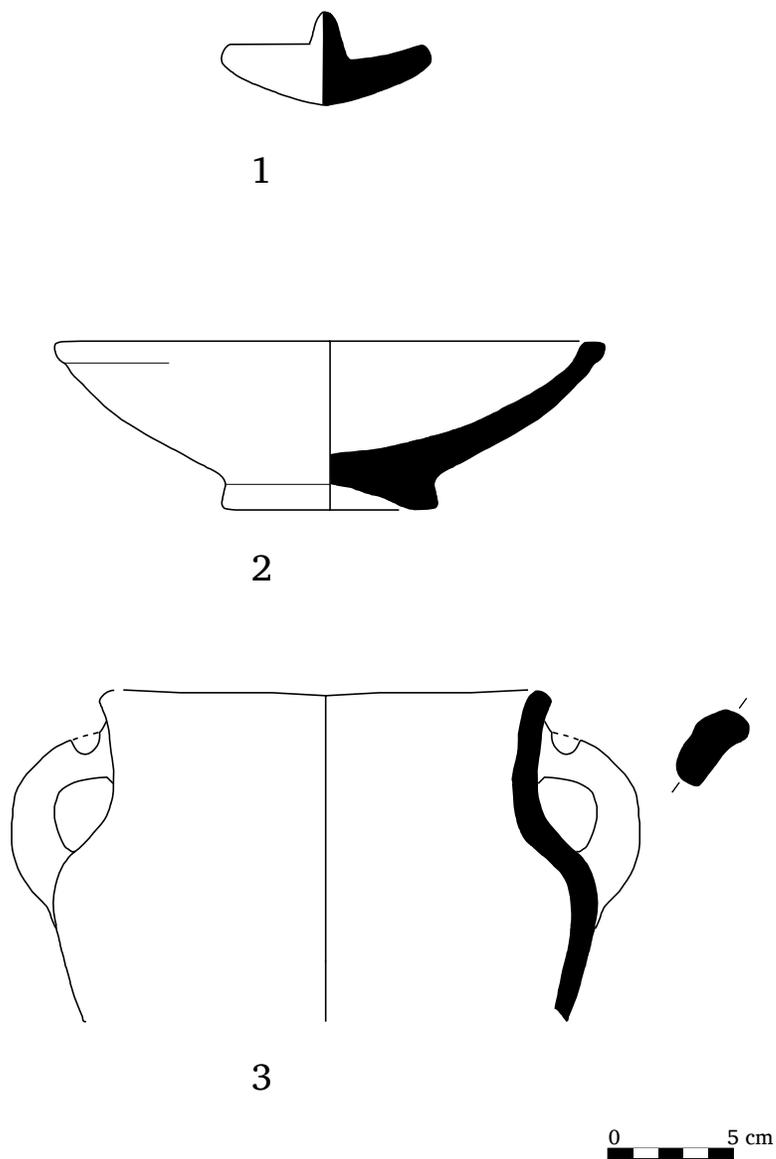


Fig. 11. Hand-Made Coarse Ware: lid (1), bowl (2), and cooking jar (3)



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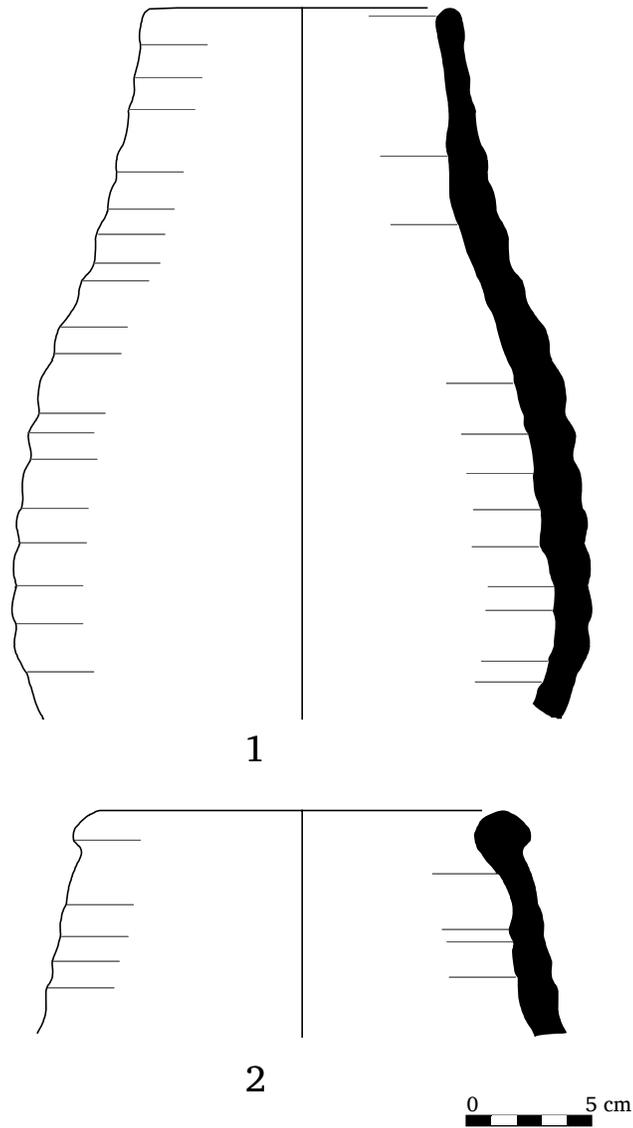


Fig. 12. Sugar Pot Ware: jars (1–2)



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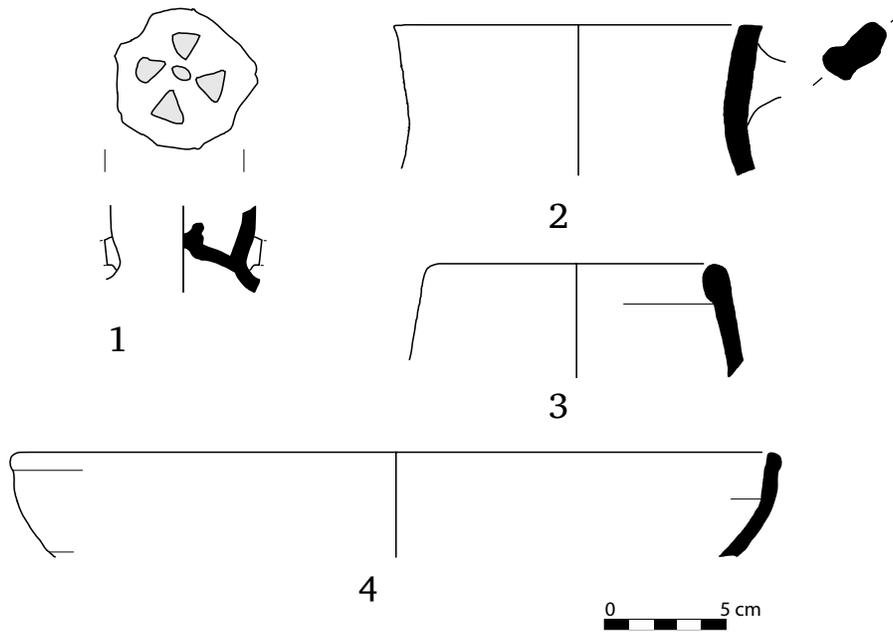


Fig. 13. Plain Unglazed Ware: closed forms (1–3) and bowl (4)

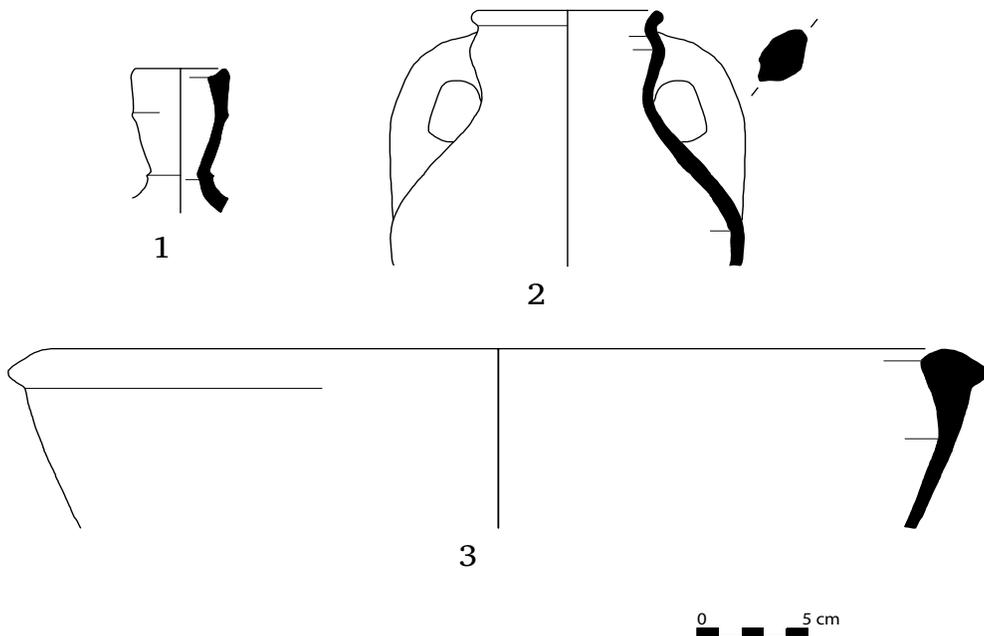


Fig. 14. Red Ware: closed forms (1–2) and basin (3)



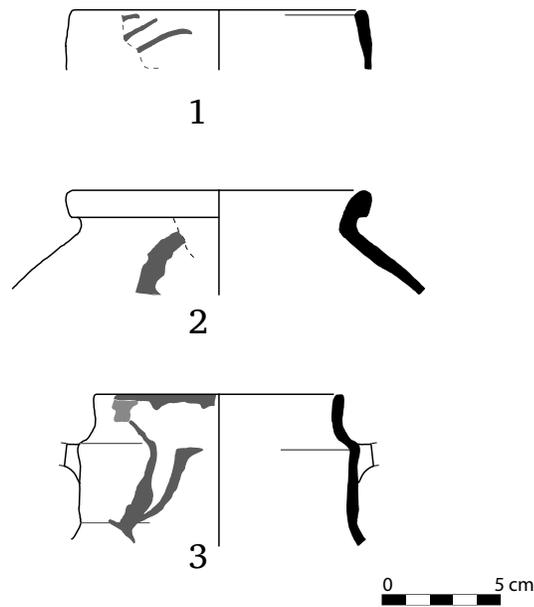


Fig. 15. Thin Painted Ware: jars (1-3)

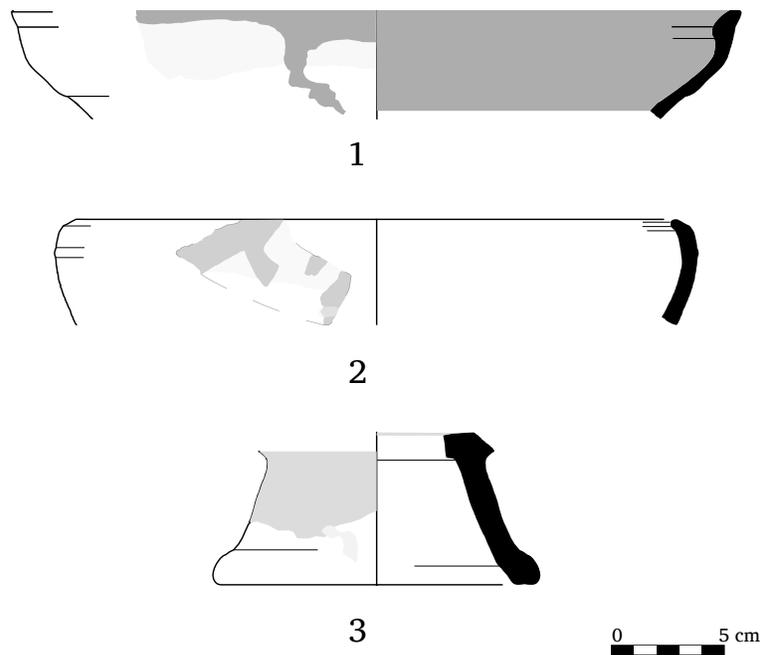


Fig. 16. Monochrome Glazed Ware: bowls (1-3)



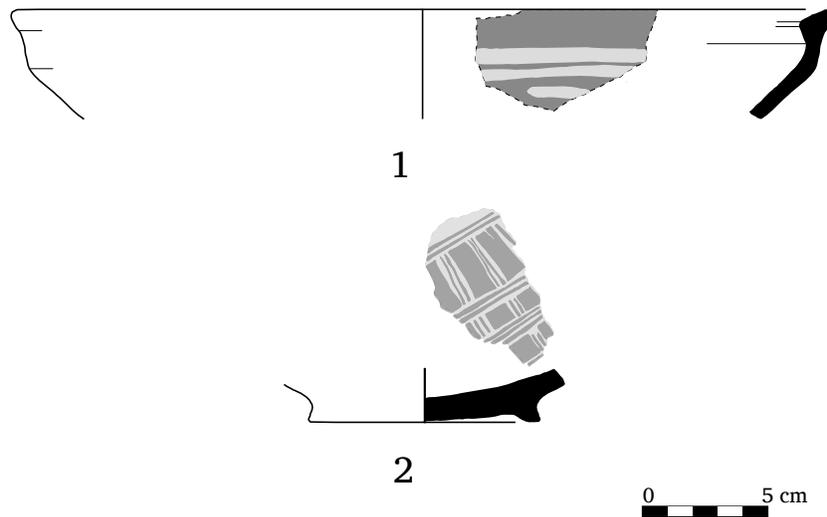


Fig. 17. Slip Painted Ware: bowls (1–2)

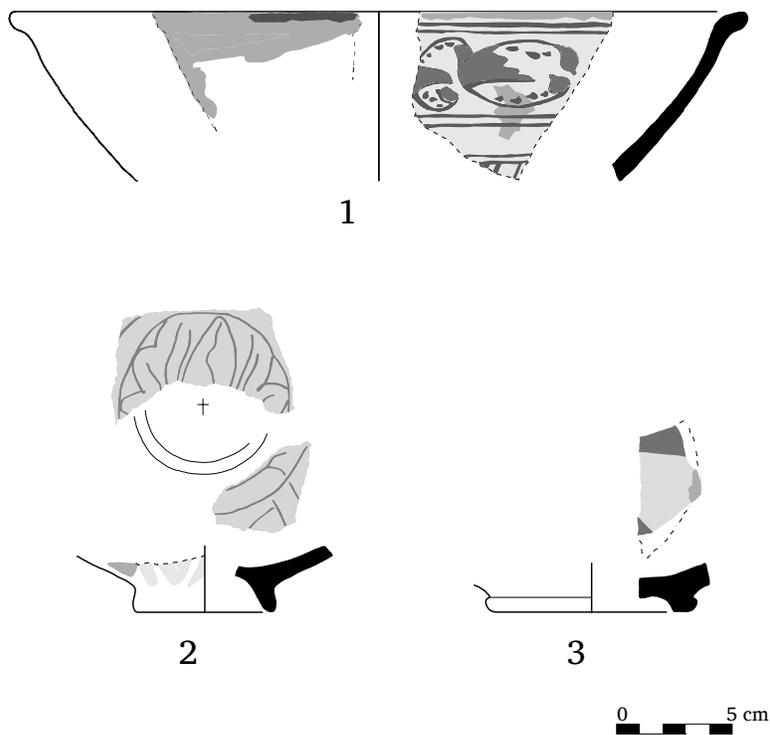


Fig. 18. Glazed Incised Ware: bowls (1–3)



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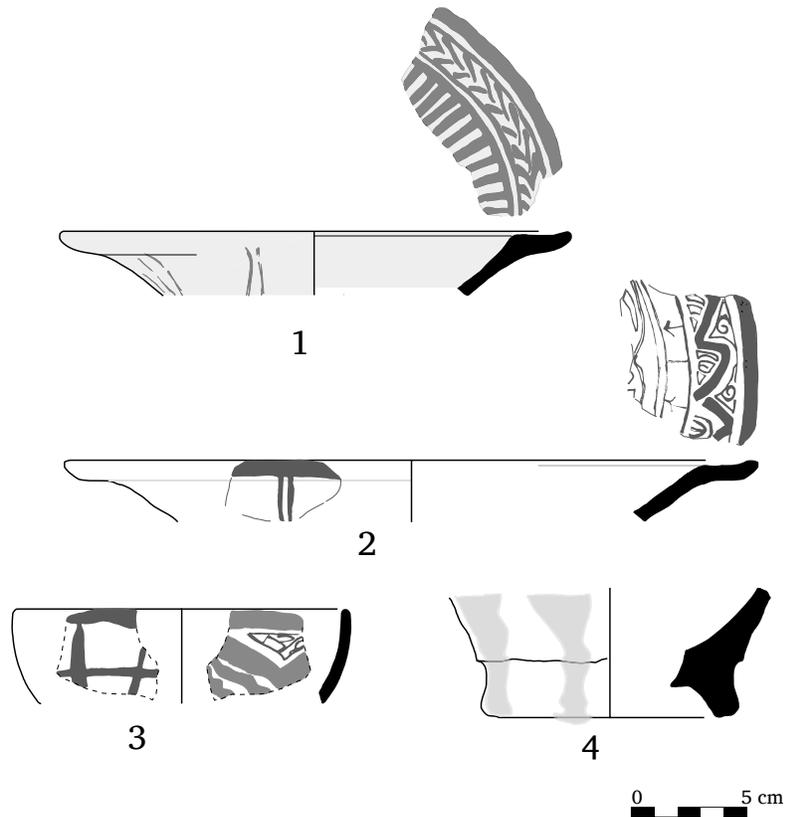


Fig. 19. Stonepaste Ceramic: bowls (1–3) and jar (4)

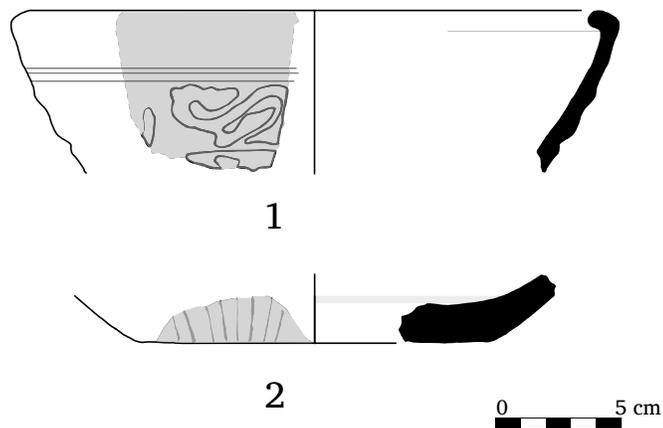


Fig. 20. Relief Molded Glazed Ware: bowls (1–2)



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