

# *Khirbet Birzeit Research and Excavation Project 1996*

## *The Pottery*

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*While no complete vessels were recovered from either of the excavated squares, the ceramic finds included Early Islamic, Crusader, Ayyubid, and Mamluk sherds. Most of the pottery came from fills on or beneath floors (see Nashef in this volume, Arabic Section, pp. 23-25). There appear to have been more than one floor belonging to the Early Islamic period (Figs. 1-2), sealed by foundation floors related to the medieval period (Figs. 3-6). The catalogue of pottery presented below indicates two occupational phases of the excavated area, and represents a preliminary selection of pottery types in use at the site.*

### Phase I

The majority of the pottery sherds from this period are characterized by high firing. The color ranges from light buff to light red and pink, light brown and gray.

#### Small Bowls (Unglazed)

Only very few sherds of small bowls dating to the Umayyad and Abbasid periods were found in Square 2.

One sherd of a small deep bowl (Fig. 1:1) was found in Square 1 in the Umayyad period fill. This type of

deep bowl has slightly incurving high walls, a slightly inverted rim, and a flat base. Its metallic ware is well fired and has light reddish color, with brown burnished bands on the exterior part of the body. The type begins to appear early in the Umayyad period and continues through the later part of the Abbasid period. Similar bowls were reported at Abu Ghosh (de Vaux and Steve 1950:123-25, Pl. B: 1-3), and at Nessana (Baly 1962, Shape 36). Another type of bowl of pink ware with a round body and shallow base was also found (Fig. 1:2).

| No. | Object          | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description  |
|-----|-----------------|----------|-------|------|--|
| 1   | Small deep bowl | 52       | 24    | 1    | Rim and upper part of body; light brown, metallic; brown bands on body wheel ridges just below flaring rim |
| 2   | Bowl            | 59/1     | 32    | 2    | Base and lower part of body; pinkish clay  |
| 3   | Glazed bowl     | 67/1     | 32    | 1    | Rim and part of walls; cream clay, opaque green glaze  |
| 4   | Glazed bowl     | 67/2     | 32    | 1    | As No. 3   |
| 5   | Glazed bowl     | 67/3     | 32    | 1    | Base and lower part of body; red clay, green glaze on white slip   |

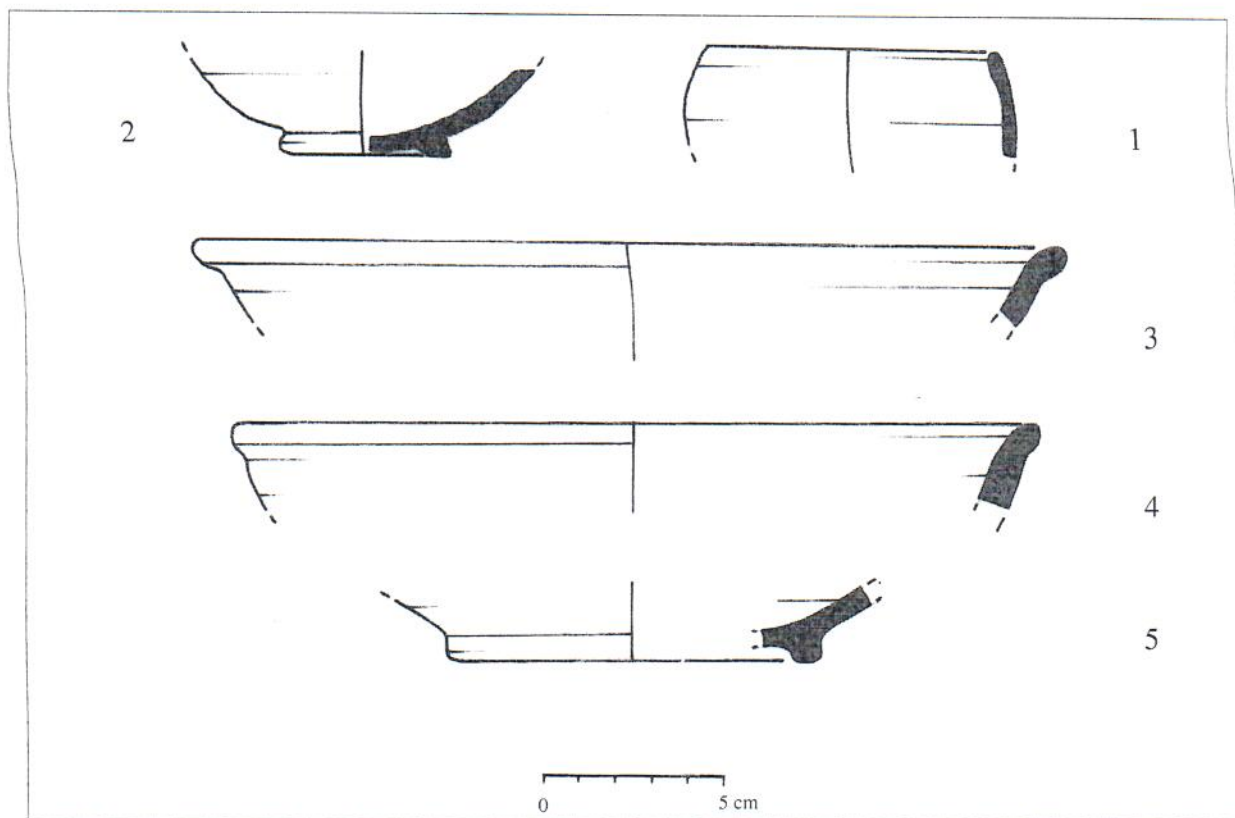


Fig. 1.1-5

### Glazed Bowls

Early Islamic glazed bowls of the 9th century were represented in both excavation squares only by 4 rims and one base (Fig.1:3-5). Fig. 1:3 represents a bowl with flaring walls and rim, while Fig. 1:4 has slightly rounded walls and a slightly everted rim. The bowls are coated with opaque green glaze on white slip on the interior and just below the flaring or everted rim on the exterior. This type usually has a shallow ring base (Fig.1:5). The ware is soft cream buff clay. Similar pieces, dated to the Early Islamic period, were found at Abu Ghosh (de Vaux and Steve 1950, fig. 33: 5, 12), and at Tell Qaymun (Ben-Tor, Avissar, and Portugali 1996: fig. XIII: 13, 1-2).

### Storage Jars

This type of jar (fig. 2:6) is common at the end of the Byzantine period and continues through the end of the Umayyad period. One sherd of a rim was found beneath Umayyad Floor 32 of Square 2. The type is made of whitish cream to buff clay and is well fired. It has a slight curve just below the short neck and pointed rim. There are ridges at the base of the neck. Similar jars were found in Jerusalem (Aharoni 1964, fig. 24:1, 7; Tushingham 1985, fig. 32: 25). Fig. 2:7 represents a hole-mouth jar, for which Saller 1957, p. 211:fig.41, 2832 is a parallel.

### Cooking Pots

A sherd of a cooking pot lid (Fig. 2:8) was found in Square 2 beneath the Umayyad floor of Locus 32. It is made of reddish clay and the type is ribbed. Similar lids were reported at Khirbet el-Mafjar (Baramki 1940, fig. 13, 15). Fig. 2:9 is a cooking pot with a hemispherical body and flat rim with practically no neck. The ware is well-levigated dark reddish brown. This type of cooking pots is dated to the second part of the Byzantine till the end of the Umayyad period (Saller 1957:246-247, fig. 47-48; Loffreda 1983, fig. 9:16).

### Mold-made Wares: Oil Lamp

An oil lamp fragment (Fig. 2:10) was found in Square 1 within an Umayyad fill. The type is decorated with bunches of grapes in low relief. The lower and upper parts of this type of lamp usually meet in an angular joint, and it always has a flat base and a small lug-handle. It is made of cream to whitish clay. It is similar to lamps found at Abu Ghosh (de Vaux and Steve 1950, fig. 33:5, 12).

### Jug

Only one piece (Fig.2:11) of mold-made jugs was found. Such jugs have usually a cylindrical neck, a

| No. | Object          | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description  |
|-----|-----------------|----------|-------|------|--|
| 6   | Storage Jar     | 59/2     | 32    | 2    | Rim, wheel-ridges at base of the neck and part of shoulder; whitish to cream ware, nearly metallic |
| 7   | Hole-mouth Jar  | 74       | 29    | 1    | Rim and upper part of body, thumb decoration below rim; gray clay, well fired                      |
| 8   | Cooking Pot Lid | 59/3     | 32    | 2    | Rim and part of ribbed shoulder; light red clay  |
| 9   | Cooking Pot     | 22       | 7     | 2    | Rim and part of body; reddish ware, metallic   |
| 10  | Oil lamp        | 67       | 32    | 1    | Upper part, molded floral pattern; cream clay  |
| 11  | Jug             | 15       | 7     | 1    | Rim, mold-made, part of neck; whitish to creme ware  |

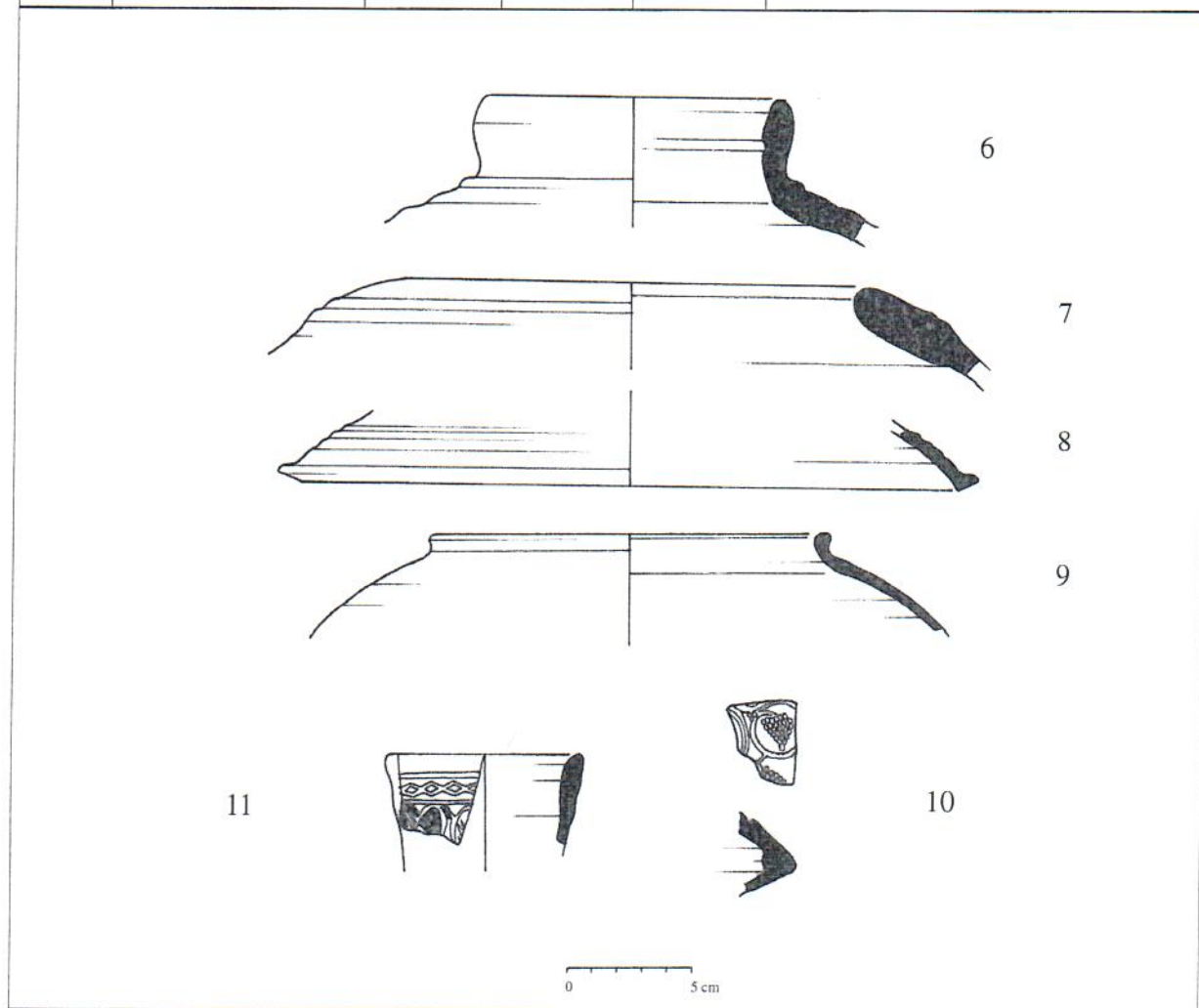


Fig. 2. 6-11

| No. | Object     | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description   |
|-----|------------|----------|-------|------|---|
| 12  | Jar        | 26       | 9     | 2    | Rim and neck; pinkish to light red ware, painted dark brown on the exterior                         |
| 13  | Jar        | 88       | 44    | 1    | Handle of jar; buff ware, smooth surface, painted dark brown net pattern                            |
| 14  | Large bowl | 81       | 52    | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; pink, buff clay, poorly fired   |
| 15  | Bowl       | 57       | 25    | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; light brown ware, painted red on the interior                           |
| 16  | Bowl       | 93       | 57    | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; light brown ware, painted red on the interior and exterior              |
| 17  | Bowl       | 20/2     | 9     | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; buff ware, painted dark brown with geometric designs on the interior    |
| 18  | Bowl       | 92       | 39    | 2    | Base and lower part of body; greenish buff ware, painted with dark brown decoration on the exterior |

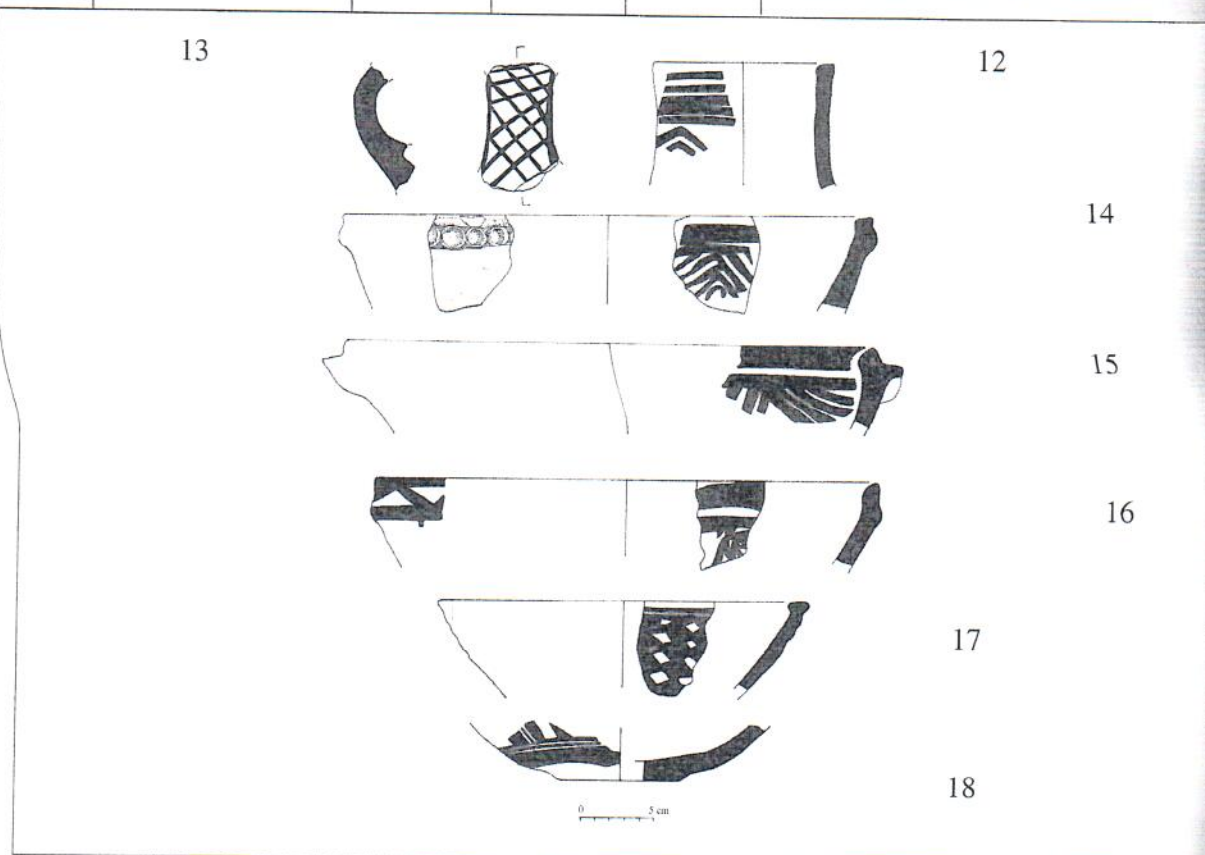


Fig. 3. 13-18

spherical body and a flat base. Similar jugs were found at Khirbet el-Mafjar (Baramki 1944, fig. 14:2,3; Pl.20:P1-2; Brosh 1985:67: fig. 1.7).

## Phase II

This phase stretches from the mid-13th to the end of the 13th century AD.

### Handmade Painted Forms

These forms are represented by pottery sherds found in Square 2, and one from Square 1.

### Painted Jars and Bowls

A painted jar (Fig. 3:12) was found in a 13th century fill in Square 2. Jars of this type are made of pinkish to light red clay, with a slightly curved neck and flat thickened rim. It is poorly fired and its exterior is smooth and painted light brown with wavy lines. The painted handle represented by Fig. 3:13 belongs to this type. The handle has a red or dark brown net pattern painted over a cream burnished surface. Similar painted handles were reported at Afula (Dothan 1956, fig. 5:15).

### Painted Bowls

Handmade bowls with painted geometric decoration are attested at Khirbet Birzeit from the

middle 13th until the end of the 14th century (Fig. 3:14-18). No. 14 represents a large bowl with thickened walls and a thickened plain rim. The bowl has a finger- or thumb intended band on the outer part of the rim. It is painted with dark brown lines on the interior. These bowls are made of light brown clay mixed with straw and are poorly fired. The forms range from basins to bowls characterized by a thickened hemispherical body, thickened inverted rim, and ledge handles, with a geometric pattern of red and dark brown paint on the burnished surface of the interior and on top of rim. Fig. 3:17 represents a bowl with a thickened flat rim and a smooth interior surface painted with a dark brown geometric pattern on a creamy background.

Handmade painted bowls are attested in Palestine at Afula (Dothan 1956, fig. 5:9), St. Mary of Carmel (Pringle 1984, fig. 4: 21-22),



Mamluk Pottery (No. 18)

| No. | Object     | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description   |
|-----|------------|----------|-------|------|---|
| 19  | Basin      | 25       | 9     | 2    | Rim and part of walls; light gray ware  |
| 20  | Basin      | 34       | 48    | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; light brown ware, wavy decoration on the exterior |
| 21  | Basin      | 20       | 9     | 2    | Rim and part of body; light gray ware   |
| 22  | Bowl       | 84       | 55    | 2    | Rim and part of body; calcite; light brown ware                               |
| 23  | Bowl       | 13       | 6     | 2    | Rim and part of body; light brown clay  |
| 24  | Large Bowl | 68       | 44    | 2    | Rim and parts of walls; gray to light brown, well-fired                       |
| 25  | Bowl/Basin | 82       | 51    | 2    | Base; pink buff clay  |
| 26  | Bowl/Basin | 79       | 51    | 2    | As No. 24   |

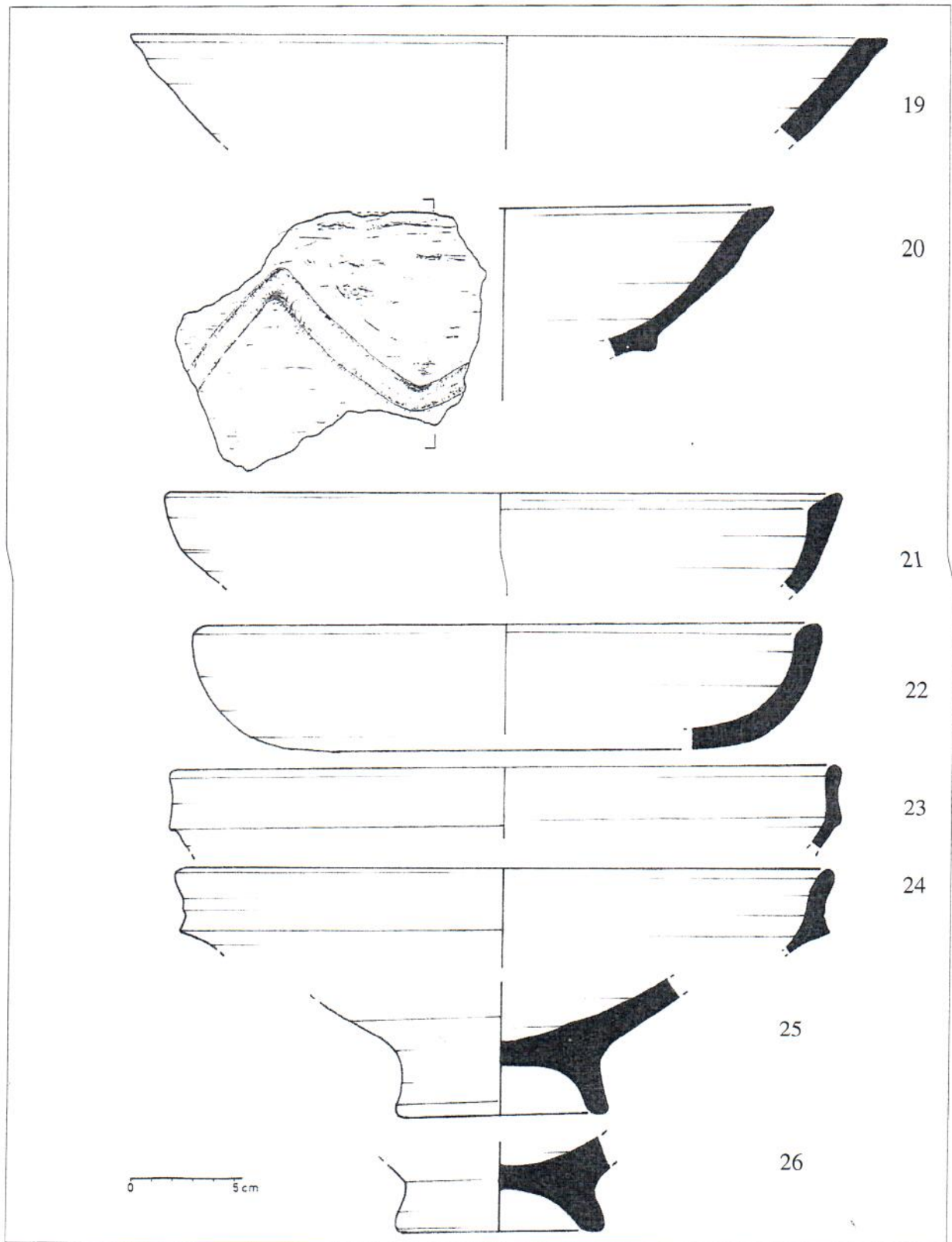


Fig. 4. 19-26

Jerusalem (Tushingham 1985, fig. 45:13), and Emmous Qubeibeh (Baggati 1993, fig. 32:9-10); and elsewhere in the Levante at Khirbet Faris in Jordan (McQuitty and Falkner 1993, fig. 20: 34),

and Tell Arqa in Lebanon (Thalman 1978:31,1). Fig. 3:18 represents a disc-base of a painted handmade bowl of greenish buff ware, the exterior of which is nearly smooth and painted with dark brown lines.

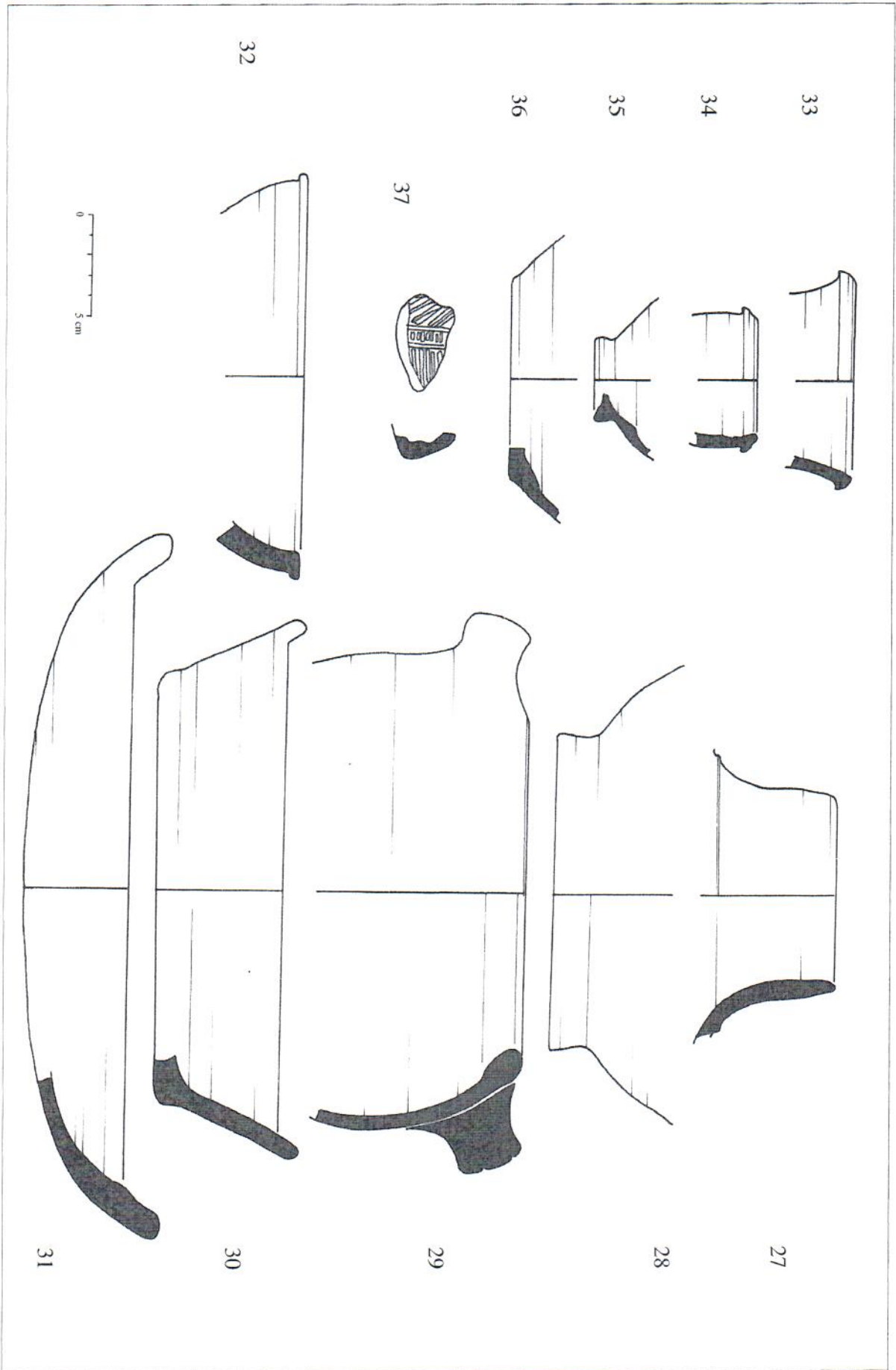


Fig. 5. 27-37

| No. | Object      | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description   |
|-----|-------------|----------|-------|------|---|
| 27  | Jar         | 87       | 24    | 2    | Rim and part of shoulder; light brown clay, well fired                                  |
| 28  | Cooking pot | 91       | 37    | 1    | Rim and part of shoulder; light brown clay, calcite; voids visible in section           |
| 29  | Cooking pot | 28       | 11    | 2    | Rim and part of body, two loop-handles; calcite and large number of voids, black fabric |
| 30  | Cooking pot | 50       | 23    | 2    | Rim, handle, and part of body; light brown clay, white grits, medium-fired              |
| 31  | Cooking pot | 26       | 9     | 2    | Handle and part of body; light brown buff clay, medium-fired                            |
| 32  | Bowl        | 69       | 45    | 2    | Rim and part of body; light brown buff clay   |
| 33  | Jug         | 46       | 24    | 2    | Rim and part of neck; light brown clay  |
| 34  | Jug         | 58       | 33    | 2    | Rim and part of neck; greenish buff clay  |
| 35  | Jug         | 39       | 21    | 1    | Base and lower part body; gray buff clay  |
| 36  | Jug         | 91       | 37    | 1    | Base and lower part of body; red-orange clay  |
| 37  | Oil lamp    | 26/2     | 9     | 2    | Fragment of upper part; pink to light red clay  |

### Unpainted Bowls: Open Form

The types presented below are from Square 2; Square 1 produced only a few diagnostic sherds. These types are made of light brown, gray, and buff clay. They have coarse surfaces, are poorly fired, and were found in fills dated to the 14th-16th centuries.

Large bowls or basins with an inverted rim: This type of large handmade basin (Fig.4:19-21) is characterized by a coarse surface and gray clay. It consistently has thickened flaring walls and a thickened flat rim, and sometimes a wavy decoration line on the exterior (Fig. 4:20). Similar large basins were found at Burj el-Ahmar (Pringle 1986, fig. 41:2) and at Khirbet Faris in Jordan

(McQuitty and Falkner 1993, fig. 20:33). The basins have a hemispherical body and thickened rim (Fig. 4:21), similar to those found at Emmous Qubeibeh (Baggati 1993, fig. 32:15).

Fig. 4:22 represents a large coarse cooking bowl with curved sides, flat rim, and base similar to bowls from Emmous Qubeibe (Baggati 1993, fig. 32:15) and 4:24 a wheel-made bowl with carinated walls, and slightly everted thickened rim with ridges on the shoulder and beneath the rim. Fig. 4:25-26 represents highfooted bases, probably from large deep basins or bowls of poorly fired buff to pinkish ware.

One sherd of wheel-made bowl (Fig.4:23) with carinated walls, rounded rim, and a disc-base (compare Saller 1957, p. 285:fig.57, 2).



## Closed Forms (Jars, Cooking Pots, and Jugs)

**Storage jars:** Three rims of this type (such as Fig. 5:27) were found in Square 2 in Mamluk fills. Such jars are made of light brown clay and are characterized by an elongated neck and pointed rim and ridge at the base of the neck. Similar storage jars were found at Emmous Qubeibeh (Baggati 1993, Fig. 24: 8). The type is common during the 13th century.

**Cooking pots:** One rim of a cooking pot made of light brown clay was found in Square 1 (Fig. 5:28). This type has a rounded body and almost no neck, the rim thickened and slightly outwarded. It has parallels those at Emmaous Qubeibe (Baggati 1993, fig. 29: 4). These cooking pots begin to appear in the Frankish period and continue through the Mamluk period. A cooking pot (Fig. 5:29) from the later part of the Mamluk period through the Ottoman period was found in Square 2, Locus 11. It is characterized by a hemispherical body and a rounded inverted rim, and usually has a horizontal loop handle. It is made of dark gray clay (the fabric is black) containing a large amount of calcite. The ware is coarse and poorly fired. This type was found at Taannek (Ziadeh 1995: 232, fig. 10,4).

## Open Form Cooking Pots (Handmade)

Three types of handmade cooking pots were found in Mamluk fills in Square 2. One is a cooking pot (Fig. 5:30) with flaring walls, two vertical handles at the top of a flattened rim, this type of cooking pan usually has a flat base. It is made of medium-fired light brown clay. This cooking pan is found within the late Mamluk and Ottoman layers. Only one sherd of this type was uncovered, and no exact parallels could be found. The second is a cooking pan (Fig. 5:31), which appears to be an imitation of the glazed cooking pan type. The clay is light brown to buff and it has earhandles and a flat base. Furthermore this type has been found within the later fill, which belongs to the late Mamluk and the Ottoman period. The second is represented by a hemispherical cooking bowl (Fig. 5:32), of which three rims were found. This type is made of medium-fired light brown clay. The surface is smooth and it has a flat or plain rim and a flat base. In this case, too, there are no exact parallels.

## Jugs

The two rims and two bases from Square 2 are of medium-fired greenish buff or light brown ware.

The type is characterized by a flaring neck and outturned rim (Fig. 5:33) or a straight neck with everted rim (Fig. 5:34), and usually have a curved disc base (Fig. 5:35) or flat base (Fig. 5:36). Similar jugs were reported at Emmous Qubeibeh (Baggati 1994, fig. 26:6).

## Moldmade Ware

**Oil Lamp:** Fig. 5:37 represents a fragment of the upper part of a slipper oil lamp. The ware is medium-fired and has pink to light red color. The lamp is decorated with geometric lines and the type usually has one handle touching or pressed against the body of the lamp. There are parallels from several sites in Palestine: Jerusalem (Tushingham 1985, fig. 45: 1, 2, 3); Emmous Qubeibeh (Baggati 1993, Pl. 28, photo 60: 1, 2, 3); and St. Mary of Carmel (Pringle 1984, fig. 5:9). This type of oil lamp begins to appear in the second half of the 13th century and continues until the beginning of the 14th century, that is, into the Mamluk period.

## Glazed Pottery

The glazed pottery presented below belongs to the second half the 13th to the middle of the 14th century. The assemblage also reflects a local pottery tradition.

Bowls coated with brown and green glaze on the interior and exterior (Fig. 6, 38-41): This type is of highly-fired red ware, with carinated walls, slightly curved just below the thickened rounded rim. There are no parallels.

Bowls with monochrome glaze and sgraffito decoration (Fig. 6: 42). This type has a high outturned rim with a slight curve below it. It is coated with green gritty glaze on the interior and exterior. Similar bowls were found at Tell Qaymun (Ben-Tor, Avissar, and Portugali 1996: Fig. XIII, 24: Type 36,4).

Monochrome glazed bowls with thickened inverted rim. The type is characterized by a well-melted deep green glaze covering the interior and exterior of the body (Fig. 6: 43). Similar bowls were excavated in Jerusalem (Tushingham 1985, fig. 41: 25, 27).

Bowls with a high ring-base, with a green glaze over a white slip coating on the interior are represented by Fig. 6:44. The ware is red and highly fired.

The assemblage includes two rims of slightly carinated bowls with a slightly everted rim, coated with a light green glaze (Fig. 6:45). The ware is red, highly fired. There are no parallels.

Yellow slip under brown glaze. These bowls have a triangular rim and a yellow slip under brown glaze on the interior and brown glaze below the rim on the exterior (Fig. 6: 46). The type has a shallow concave ring-base (Fig.6:47). Similar

glazed pieces were uncovered at Tabaqat Fahl (Smith 1973:172, 494, 1019).

Monochrome bowls with triangular rims, coated with yellow glaze on the interior and exterior (fig. 6:48).

| No. | Object | Reg. No. | Locus | Area | Description  |
|-----|--------|----------|-------|------|--|
| 38  | Bowl   | 18       | 06    | 1    | Rim and part of body; red clay, brown-green glaze on interior and exterior   |
| 39  | Bowl   | 90       | 58    | 2    | Rim and part of body; as Nos. 42, 43   |
| 40  | Bowl   | 69       | 45    | 2    | Rim and part of body; gray clay, brown-green glaze on interior, and below the rim on exterior                              |
| 41  | Bowl   | 76       | 49    | 2    | Rim and part of body; light red clay, deep green glaze on interior and exterior  |
| 42  | Bowl   | 17       | 6     | 2    | Rim and part of body; red- brown clay, <i>sgraffito</i> glaze under transparent green glaze on interior and over the rim   |
| 43  | Bowl   | 81       | 52    | 2    | Rim and part of body; light red clay, green glaze on interior and exterior   |
| 44  | Bowl   | 53       | 31    | 2    | Base and lower part of body; reddish brown clay and green glaze with white slip  |
| 45  | Bowl   | 62       | 36    | 2    | Rim and part of walls; brownish clay coated with light green glaze   |
| 46  | Bowl   | 14       | 6     | 2    | Rim and part of body; reddish-brown clay, yellow slip under transparent brown glaze  |
| 47  | Bowl   | 49       | 25    | 2    | Rim and part of body; buff light brown clay; yellow glaze on interior and exterior   |
| 48  | Bowl   | 29       | 19    | 2    | Base; as No.51   |
| 49  | Bowl   | 86       | 57    | 2    | Rim and part of body; gouged bands filled with brown glaze, under yellow-light green glaze on interior and over top of rim |
| 50  | Bowl   | 65       | 42    | 2    | Rim and upper part of body; painted black under turquoise  |

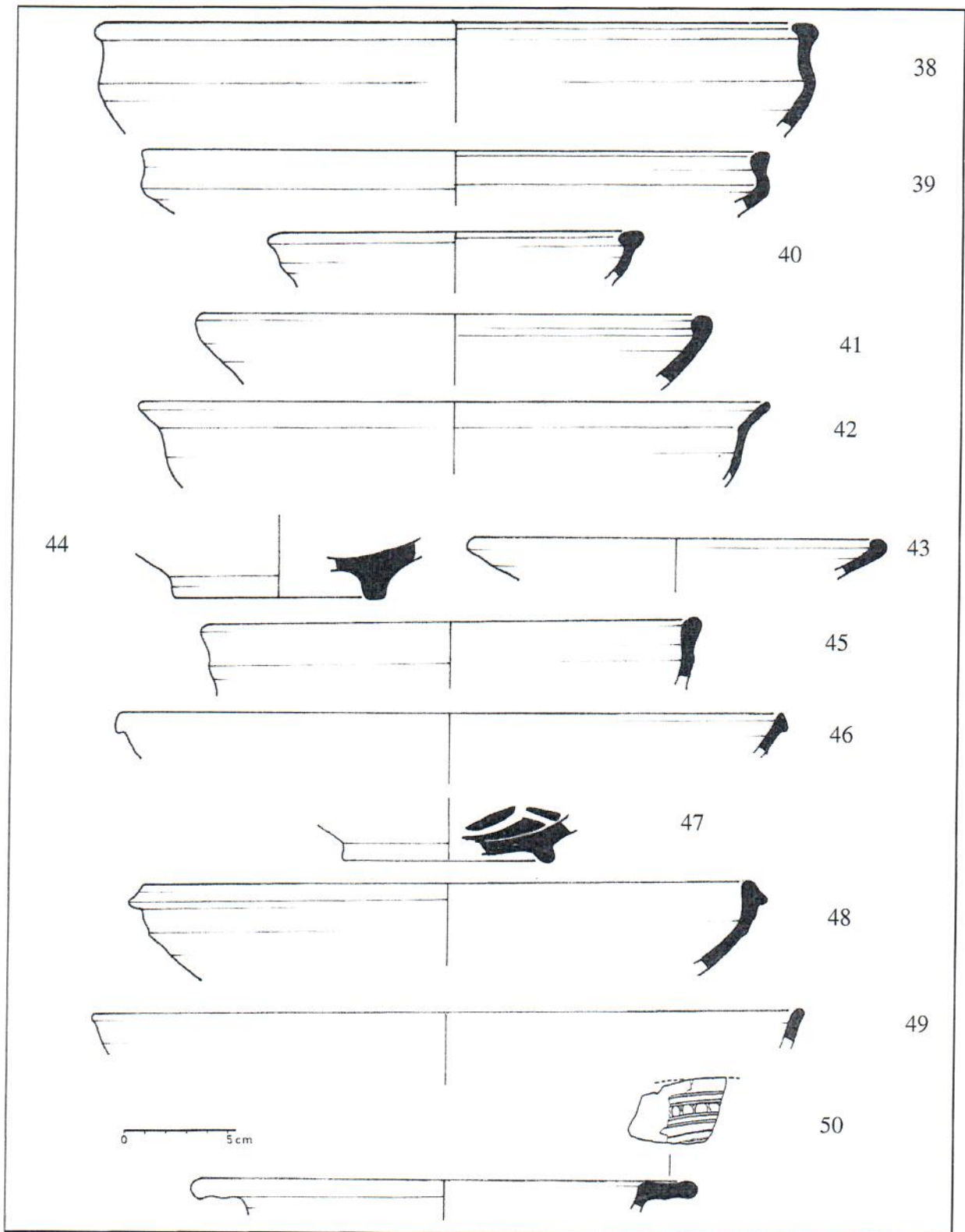


Fig. 6. 38-50

Gouged sgraffitto ware: Two rims of this type dated to the second half of the 13th century (Pringle 1984, pp. 106-107, fig. 8: 69-71), were found in the upper fills of the two excavated squares. The ware is made of red clay and is medium-fired. Fig. 6:49

represents an open bowl with a flaring rim. It has a gouged pattern on light green glaze over a white slip on the interior.

Black-painted under turquoise glaze. One rim of this type (Fig. 6:50) was found in a Mamluk fill in Square

2. The type is hemispherical with a flanged rim, on which there is a black paint under a turquoise glaze. It has a turquoise glaze, under which is a black paint on the flanged rim on the interior and exterior.

Similar bowls were found at St. Mary of Carmel (Pringle 1984, fig. 9: 76). The type is common from the end of the 13th through the 14th century (Pringle 1984, p. 107).

## Conclusions

*Despite the fact that only two squares were opened in the first excavation season, the following tentative conclusions could be drawn. The pottery assemblage indicates that the settlement at Khirbet Birzeit was continuously occupied from the middle of the 8th through the 14th century AD. The main period of occupation appears to have been from the 12th through the middle of the 13th century AD. It seems that the site was abandoned early in the 15th century, when the inhabitants probably moved to settle in the town of Birzeit.*

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