

JERUSALEM, THE OLD CITY: ISLAMIC POTTERY FROM NEAR DAMASCUS GATE

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The salvage excavation conducted near Damascus Gate (‘Adawi 2021) yielded very little in the way of ceramic material. Furthermore, all the specimens originated from unstratified fill contexts that were associated with neither floors nor architectural features. Therefore, the small corpus from the site is presented by vessel type in order to illustrate the typo-chronological range of forms revealed in the excavation. The assemblage consists of bowls and basins, a chamber pot, a store jar and a terracotta water pipe (i.e., *tubulus*), jugs or *ibriqs*, as well as special ceramic finds, including a brazier and a tripod stand associated with ceramic production (Fig. 1). Taken together, these vessels range in date from the Umayyad through the late Ottoman periods (mid-seventh to nineteenth centuries CE).

Bowls and Basins (Fig. 1:1–4)

Three bowls are presented here. The bowl in Fig. 1:1 is of the well-known underglaze painted ware, which was produced in Raqqa in northern Syria from the mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth centuries CE. The vessel has a ledge rim, which is slightly upturned at its terminus. It has white (5Y 8/1) soft-paste fabric, but, like most of the examples of this ware recovered from Jerusalem, the glaze has completely worn off, leaving the fine black (N2.5) painted linear and geometric decoration on its interior and exterior exposed. This ceramic family was first categorized as Ḥama Types VII–VIII (Poulsen 1957) and dated to the thirteenth century CE, and it conforms to the well-known Avissar and Stern (2005:26–28, Fig. 9:4–11) Type I.2.3.1, Soft-Paste Ware Painted in Black under Transparent Colorless Glaze. Although no exact parallel for this vessel could be found, a similar bowl with the same rim form and some of its decorative elements was recovered from an Ayyubid context (mid-twelfth–mid-thirteenth centuries CE) at the Armenian Garden in the Old City of Jerusalem (Tushingham 1985:144, Fig. 44:1).

The vessel in Fig. 1:2 is a ring-base bowl which also dates from the mid-twelfth through the mid-thirteenth centuries CE. Its fabric is reddish yellow (5YR 6/6), it bears a thin white slip and is covered with a yellowish brown gritty glaze. The form corresponds to Avissar and Stern (2005:8, Fig. 2:2) Type I.1.2 Bowls with Gritty Glaze. A close parallel for this bowl was uncovered at Khirbat Ka‘kul in the Jerusalem hinterland (Boas 2006: Fig. 12:90).

The third bowl is represented by a body sherd of slip-painted ware (Fig. 1:3) covered with a yellow transparent glaze. It has a reddish brown (5YR 5/3) fabric with calcite inclusions, a white slip-painted decoration and a yellow transparent glaze. It corresponds to Avissar and Stern (2005:19) Type I.1.6.1. This ware family is a hallmark of the Crusader/Ayyubid ceramic repertoire from Jerusalem and the

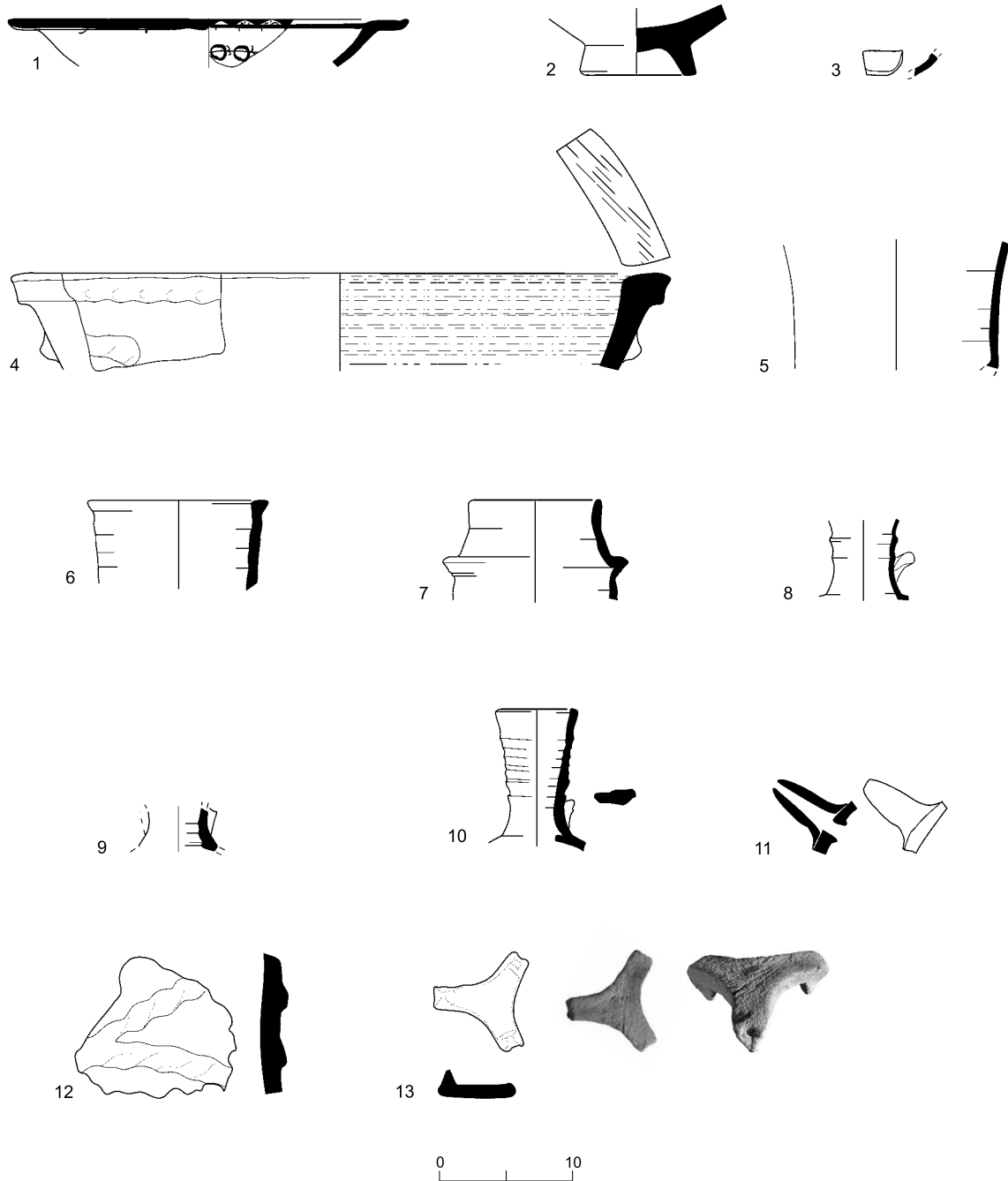


Fig. 1. A sample of the pottery corpus from the excavation.

◀ Fig. 1.

No.	Vessel	Locus	Basket	Description	Date (CE)
1	Bowl	100	1000	White (5Y 8/1) soft paste fabric, glaze completely worn off, fine black (N2.5) painted decoration	Mid-12th–mid-13th c.
2	Bowl	103	1003.9	Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6) fabric, thin white slip, yellowish brown gritty glaze	Mid-12th–mid-13th c.
3	Bowl	104	1020	Reddish brown (5YR 5/3) fabric, calcite inclusions, white slip-painted decoration, yellow transparent glaze	Mid-12th–mid-13th c.
4	Basin	105	1012.2	Coarse light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) fabric, dark gray (5YR 4/1) core, numerous grits, large chert inclusions, burned out organic temper, reddish brown (5YR 4/3) painted design on rim top, burnished int., impressed rope decoration on ext. below the rim	Mid-12th–mid-14th c.
5	Chamber pot	103	1003.11	Yellowish red (5YR 5/6) fabric, numerous tiny calcite inclusions, thin white slip, shiny green glaze on interior	15th to early-16th c.
6	Store jar	105	1012.1	Very pale brown (10YR 8/3) fabric, numerous grits, large calcite inclusions	Mid-7th–mid-8th c.
7	Water pipe	103	1003.13	Light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) fabric, dark reddish gray (2.5YR 5/1) core, knife-pared burnishing and plaster remains on ext.	9th–10th c.
8	Ibriq (Jug)	111	1013.3	Very dark gray (5Y 3/1) fabric, remnants orange-painted decoration on exterior	19th c.
9	Ibriq (Jug)	111	1013.4	As No. 8	19th c.
10	Ibriq (Jug)	102	1002.3	Light red (10R 6/8) fabric, dark gray (5YR 4/1) core, numerous tiny calcite inclusions	18th–19th c.
11	Ibriq (Jug)	103	1003.14	As No. 10 (same vessel)	18th–19th c.
12	Brazier	103	1003.10	Coarse light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) fabric, chert inclusions, burned-out organic temper, appliqué rope pattern on ext.	14th–15th c.
13	Tripod stand	107	1025	Reddish gray (2.5YR 7/1) fabric	14th–early-16th c.

surrounding area. A similar bowl was uncovered in Area X-2 at the Jerusalem Cardo, where it was dated to the mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries CE (Avisar 2012: Fig. 10.1:7).

Only one basin (Fig. 1:4) was uncovered. It has a coarse light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) fabric and a dark gray (5YR 4/1) core. The fabric is rich with grits, large chert inclusions and burned-out organic temper. It has a rounded and out-turned rim, with remnants of a reddish brown (5YR 4/3) painted linear design on the rim top. The basin's interior is highly burnished, and its exterior has an impressed rope decoration just below the rim zone. In addition, there is a thick layer of white plaster on the vessel's exterior; it has been suggested that this was "a temporary and simple means of repairing the vessels" (Boas 2006:76). Basins such as these are commonplace in Jerusalem and the surrounding area, including Cardo Area X-4 (Avisar 2012: Fig. 10.6:7) and Cistern E in the Armenian Garden (Tushingham 1985: Fig. 41:47); the closest parallel, which also has a thick plastered exterior, was found at Khirbat Ka'kul (Boas 2006: Fig. 3:20). In the well-stratified assemblage from the Western Wall Plaza excavations, handmade bowls with burnishing first appear in Phase 1 (Miriam Avisar,

pers. comm.), where they are dated to the mid-twelfth through the mid-thirteenth centuries CE, and continue into Phase 2 (e.g., Avissar, in preparation [basin from L5233]), which spans from the mid-thirteenth through the mid-fourteenth centuries CE. This dating is supported by the recent finds from Stratum III (Crusader/Ayyubid) and Stratum IIB (Mamluk I) at Khirbat Beit Mazmil at the edge of today's neighborhood of Qiryat Ha-Yovel in Jerusalem ('Adawi and Dolinka 2021).¹

Closed Vessels (Fig. 1:5–7)

A few closed vessels were found in the assemblage, including a chamber pot, a store jar and a water pipe. The chamber pot is represented by a large, glazed sidewall fragment (Fig. 1:5). Although often unreported or unpublished, chamber pots—both glazed and unglazed—are fairly common in late Mamluk and early Ottoman ceramic assemblages from the Old City of Jerusalem. The example presented here is typical of the late Mamluk variety: the whole form most likely consisted of a ledge rim and a body with a single handle from just below the rim zone to just below the mid-point of the vessel. It was made of a yellowish red (5YR 5/6) fabric with numerous tiny calcite inclusions, covered with a very thin white slip and a shiny green glaze on its interior. A close parallel to this specimen was uncovered from Phase II at the Austrian Hospice (Kisilevitz 2013),² which dates from the late Mamluk period or the transition to the early Ottoman period (fifteenth to early-sixteenth centuries CE).

The store jar (Fig. 1:6), dating from the Umayyad period, has a rounded and slightly out-turned rim. Its fabric is a very pale brown (10YR 8/3) with numerous grits and large calcite inclusions. A very close parallel, also made of buff ware, was uncovered from Phase 1 at Khirbat Abu Suwwana, located to the west of Jerusalem (Finkelstein 1997: Fig. 4:1), where it was dated from the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth centuries CE.

The rim and shoulder fragment of a ceramic water pipe, or *tubulus* (Fig. 1:7), is of interest. Its fabric is well-levigated and light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) in color, with a dark reddish gray (2.5YR 5/1) core. The exterior exhibits dark horizontal bands from knife-pared burnishing and bears remains of plaster. Similar examples dating from the Roman–Byzantine period are known from excavations along the north wall of the Old City in Jerusalem (Hamilton 1940: Fig. 23:23, 30). However, water pipes from the Early Islamic period at Ramla (e.g., Cytryn-Silverman 2010: Pl. 9.9:10, 22; Tal and Taxel 2008: Fig. 6.10:3) are different, as they lack the protruding ridge below the rim zone. The closest parallel is from Khirbat el-Mafjar (Baramki 1944: Fig. 4:2), which occurs in the buff-colored Ware 6, dated by Whitcomb (1988:57) from the ninth to the tenth centuries CE. The fabric and surface treatment on our specimen are clearly a carryover from the Fine Byzantine Ware tradition, which continued into the Early Islamic period. It became an integral part of the fine burnished ware

¹ The ceramic finds from this excavation are being studied by the author.

² The author studied the ceramic finds from this excavation.

tradition of the Abbasid period in Jerusalem, which is also limited to bowls, jars and jugs (Reuven 2020:376, *passim*).

Ibriqs/Jugs (Fig. 1:8–11)

A small collection of late Ottoman *ibriqs* (spouted jugs) was recovered from the excavation. The first two illustrated here (Fig. 1:8, 9) are of the Black Gaza Ware, and both have a very dark gray (5Y 3/1) fabric and barely visible remnants of an orange-painted decoration on their exteriors. These vessels conform to the Paint Decorated *Ibriq* Type 2 in the study by Y. Israel (2006:152, Fig. 132). Although that report offers the rather broad date range of 1700 to 1900 CE for this type, well-stratified excavations in Yafo have revealed that the Black Gaza Ware vessels with orange-painted designs (particularly the ‘tree of life’ motif) are indicative of the late-nineteenth century CE (A. de Vincenz, *pers. comm.*). While no parallel for the first *ibriq* could be found in the published literature on the subject, a very close parallel to the second specimen was uncovered at Ramat Ha-Nadiv, at the southern end of Mount Carmel (Boas 2000: Pl. I.19). The other two *ibriq* sherds (Fig. 1:10, 11) probably come from the same vessel, as their light red (10R 6/8) fabric with a dark gray (5YR 4/1) core and numerous tiny calcite inclusions would seem to indicate. A good parallel with a very similar fabric was uncovered at Kenyon’s excavations of the Ottoman defenses in the Old City of Jerusalem (Prag 2008:272, Fig. 176:12), where it is referred to as a flask and dated to the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries CE; it has a red gritty fabric and a gray core with calcite and fine quartz inclusions.

Special Ceramic Finds (Fig. 1:12, 13)

The horned brazier with an appliqué rope-pattern decoration (Fig. 1:12) is one of the rarest vessel types found in Mamluk contexts at excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem. This handmade vessel has a coarse light reddish brown (5YR 6/4) fabric with chert inclusions and burned-out organic temper. The fragment has an intersecting, crisscross rope appliqué pattern on its exterior. Parallels for this unique vessel type are uncommon, seem to be limited to the Old City only, and are so far unknown from the Jerusalem hinterland. Close examples were found at the Armenian Garden (Tushingham 1985: Fig. 45:19), in Area D of the Nea Church (Avissar 2012:311, Fig. 10.14:10), and at 12 Ha-Qimronot St. in the Muslim Quarter (Dolinka 2012: Fig. 5:10), as well as at unpublished excavations at the Austrian Hospice, the Gloria Hotel and Misgav Ladach St. 26.³ Finally, a complete example was recovered at the Western Wall Plaza (Miriam Avissar, *pers. Comm.*). With regard to chronology, these horned braziers appear in the fourteenth century CE and continue into the late Mamluk period or the transition into the early Ottoman period, sometime in the early- to mid-sixteenth century CE.

The final ceramic item presented here is a tripod stand (Fig. 1:13) made of reddish gray (2.5YR 7/1) fabric. As has been previously noted, these small stands “were placed between bowls in the kiln to prevent the glaze of one vessel from adhering to the next. The stands generally had pointed

³ These unpublished assemblages have all been studied by the author.

ends in order to leave as small a mark as possible on the surface of the vessel, but quite often these marks are clearly visible on the interiors of glazed bowls” (Boas 1994:107, Fig. 4). Research on the so-called Zeuxippus Ware has indicated that the use of tripod stands was introduced to the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean regions from China in the early-thirteenth century CE (Megaw 1968:87). Such tripods, which were used in pottery production, have been recovered from excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem in the Armenian Garden (Tushingham 1985:120, Fig. 37:6); at Bet Eliyahu (Abu Raya 1997: Fig. 110), where it was found along with a coin of Qānsūh al-Ghūri dating to 1502 CE; and more recently, at ‘Aqabat es-Saraya Street in the Muslim Quarter (Dolinka 2020). The latter were found alongside kiln rods and wasters from monochrome green-glazed bowls of a fourteenth-century CE type, and the stands had actually melted through the bases of two such vessels and pierced them. The present data would seem to suggest that the Jerusalem evidence ranges in date from the fourteenth to the early-sixteenth centuries CE.

CONCLUSIONS

Taken together, despite originating in fill contexts that were not associated with any floor levels or architectural elements, the pottery presented here nevertheless provides a small window into the occupational range of the excavation area from the Umayyad through the late Ottoman periods.

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