

MISCELLANEOUS FINDS FROM THE MAGEN AVRAHAM COMPOUND, YAFO (JAFFA)

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INTRODUCTION

The excavation at the Magen Avraham Compound yielded a small collection of miscellaneous finds, most of which date to the Ottoman–British Mandate period (Strata III–I). Some of these objects were uncovered in mixed pre-Ottoman contexts and can only be tentatively dated. This assemblage largely comprises items of daily use and of modest value.

THE FINDS

Pre-Ottoman Contexts

Three items were found in soil accumulations containing Byzantine and Early Islamic pottery in different locations of the excavation.

Lead Weight(?) (Fig. 1:1).— A small, roughly bell-shaped and flat-bottomed lead item probably served as a weight; a knob on its curved top is likely the stub of a ring for tying it. Similar weights from Yafo were found in excavations at the Flea Market (Raphael 2017:238–239; Fig. 13.19), the Ottoman Military Compound (Qishle; Raphael, in press: Pl. 20.25) and Me-Raguza Street (Arbel and Rauchberger, this volume [a]: Fig. 27:13).

Bronze Object (Fig. 1:2).— A small bronze bowl may have been used as a scale pan. Such pans were known throughout antiquity and used in shops for weighing precious metals, spices and pharmaceutical and cosmetic substances. Examples of such pans are known from the Iron Age at ‘En Gedi (Stern 2007), and from the Hellenistic period at the Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem (Tushingham 1985:346, Fig. 72:7). An additional example from a mixed context at ‘En Gedi (Chernov 2007:519, Fig. 50, Pl. 6:6) was dated to the fourth century CE, based on a parallel from Jalame (Berry 1988:241). A similar item was also found at Yafo’s Flea Market (Raphael 2017:238–239, Fig. 13.18).

Copper/Bronze Object (Fig. 1:3).— Another metal object from the same stratigraphic context is crescent-shaped and made of copper or bronze; it may have been used for



Fig. 1. Metal items from pre-Ottoman contexts.

No.	Item	Locus	Basket	Dimensions
1	Lead weight	680	6580	Length 1.8 cm Base diam. 1.2 cm Weight 18 g
2	Bronze scale pan	531	5133	Height 1.5 cm Base diam. 5 cm Weight 35 g
3	Copper/bronze object	518	5079	Diam. 6 cm Thickness 0.7 cm Weight 13 g

personal adornment. This object is roughly oval in cross-section, thick at the center and gradually narrowing at both its ends. A similar object from Khirbat es-Suuyagh, a Byzantine monastery in the Judean Shephelah, was tentatively identified as a bracelet or a handle (Taxel 2009:163, Fig. 5.6.11).

Late Ottoman–British Mandate Contexts

Silver Beaker (Fig. 2:1).— A Russian silver beaker was found in a soil accumulation below the modern asphalt bedding on Reish Galuta Street (Area F). It dates to the late Ottoman or British Mandate periods, and is unique among the finds from these periods in Yafo. Such beakers were commonly used in the Jewish *Kiddush* ritual (the sanctification blessing over wine on the Sabbath and Holidays), although similar cups were also used for vodka drinking.¹ The vessel was found nearly intact, yet heavily mangled; this damage prevented the measurement of the beaker's top diameter. The exterior face of the beaker's body is engraved with images of buildings, a common decorative element on such cups. Several

¹ Information on such beakers was found on several websites, accessed on May 22, 2017: for the meaning of the identifying marks, see <http://www.925-1000.com/Frussia.html>; for examples of *Kiddush* silver beakers and goblets, see <http://www.russiansamovars.com/kiddush-cups.php> and <http://www.imexco.com/antiques/imx-judaica-kiddush.html>.



Fig. 2. Metal items from late Ottoman–British Mandate contexts.

No.	Item	Locus	Basket	Dimensions
1	Silver beaker	351	3500	Height 4.8 cm Top diam. 5 cm Bottom diam. 2.3 cm Weight 25 g
2	Bronze/copper ring	544	5162	Diam. 1.1 cm Weight 1.6 g
3	Silver earring	125	1076	Length 2.8 cm Disk diam. 2 cm Weight 1.1 g
4	Bronze inlay with gold coating	350	3547	Length 2.5 cm Ring diam. 1 cm
5	Bronze inlay(?)	544	5172	Diam. 0.8 cm Weight 0.5 g
6	Bronze inlay(?)	667	6623	Length 2 cm Top triangle width 1 cm Weight 2.4 g
7	Bronze inlay(?)	106	1587	Length 3.6 cm Spheroid end diam. 2.5 cm
8	Lead <i>bulla</i>	8117	800	1.6 × 1.0 cm Weight 5 g
9	Iron horseshoes			

standard stamped identifiers appear on the bottom of the beaker, adhering to Russian government regulations of the time.

Top Mark: These are the worn initials of the master silversmith, either in Latin or Cyrillic letters.

Central Frame, Top: These are the initials of the assayer, AA, letters which are identical in Latin and Cyrillic, above the year of production, 1888. This assayer was Anatoly Apollonovich Artsybashev (Анатолий Аполлонович Арцыбашев), of Moscow, active in 1888–1898.

Large Number on Right: This stamp, 84 [zlotnik], specifies the weight of the beaker. A zlotnik is an obsolete Russian weight measure with a maximal value of 96, the number 84 indicating 84/96, or 875/1000 pure silver.

Symbol on the Right of the Number: The town mark, usually an element from the coat of arms of the town of manufacture; this one is too worn to be identified.

Silver objects such as the beaker described here were not commonly discarded and therefore, it is likely that this beaker was lost to its owners, probably close to its findspot. While the identity of the owners remains unknown, it can be conjectured that they were Jewish residents of the area, perhaps during the British Mandate or even post-Mandate period, or possibly local Russian residents or pilgrims en route to Jerusalem.

Bronze/Copper Ring and Silver Earring (Figs. 2:2, 3).— The head of a ring, in which a dark stone was set (Fig. 2:2), and a disk-shaped earring (Fig. 2:3) were the only jewelry items found in the excavation. The ring, of which the band is broken and only the head survives, is made of bronze or copper, thinly coated in gold. Similar rings were found in grave contexts at the Qishle in Yafo (Raphael, in press: Figs. 20.6–20.12; for other Ottoman-period examples of such rings, see Eakins 1993: Pls. 98–101; Taxel 2007:94, Fig. 6.7.3; Peleg-Barkat and Tepper 2014:67, Fig. 12).

In the Ottoman period, jewelry was worn by both men and women, although more commonly by women (Pierotti 1864:144–147; Rogers 1865:101, 251), and in some cases was buried with the owner despite the religious prohibition of this custom in Islam (Halevi 2007:188).

Bronze Inlays(?) (Fig. 2:4–7).— Four bronze objects appear to have been inlays or decorative elements for jewelry boxes, chests or other fine furniture or small containers. One of the items has a somewhat robust shaft, a ring at its end and a thin gold coating (Fig. 2:4); bits of wood are still attached to this item. Another such inlay was fashioned as a diminutive flower (Fig. 2:5), similar to items that were found at the Qishle and the Ruslan Street excavations (Raphael, in press: No. 29, Fig. 20.18).² A bronze or copper object with

² The excavation on Ruslan and Mifraz Shelomo Streets was directed by the author (Permit Nos. A-5883, A-6115), and the metal finds were studied by Kate Raphael. The publication of this excavation is presently in preparation.

a cylindrical body and narrow center has one triangular end and is broken on its other end (Fig. 2:6). This item somewhat resembles two late Ottoman-period objects from the Elisabeth Bergner Compound, situated in the grounds of the northern Muslim cemetery of Yafo (for a preliminary description of these items, see Arbel 2017b); however, the present item is more likely to have been an inlay. The last bronze object exhibits a high quality of workmanship and state of preservation. It is spheroidal, vertically ribbed object with a crenellated bottom attached to a thin rod that thickens at the point of attachment (Fig. 2:7); only 8 mm remain of the broken rod. This was most likely a decorative item.

Lead Bulla(?) (Fig. 2:8).— A small and roughly circular lead object appears to be a late Ottoman-period *bullae*. *Bullae* were used in the Ottoman period, much as they have been for millennia, to seal documents. No inscription could be identified on the *bullae*, either because it has worn away or the *bullae* never carried one. Well-preserved inscribed *bullae* were found in Yafo, comprising an Austrian Lloyd *bullae* from an excavation on Ha-Zorfim Street (Arbel 2014) and a *bullae* that may have belonged to the Lafarge Company from an excavation in the Greek Market.³ Two other objects, roughly resembling *bullae*, were found in late Ottoman-period contexts in other parts of the excavation in the Magen Avraham Compound.

Iron Horseshoes (Fig. 2:9).— Five iron horseshoes, one of them broken, were found in the topsoil layer of the excavation, four of them of an open U-shape and one closed. Although closed horseshoes were widely used in the region since the Crusader period (Avitsur 1976:151; Rosen 2000), other horseshoe collections exhibiting a predominance of the open type were found at the Flea Market (Raphael 2017:236–238, Figs. 13.12–13.14) and the Qishle (Raphael, in press: Figs. 20.1–20.4). The Qishle horseshoes were probably used for the horses of police and military forces of the Ottoman and British Mandate periods. The Magen Avraham horseshoes are more likely to have been used in a civilian context, and likely lost when worn or discarded with the replacement of carts and riding animals with motorized automobiles.

Bone Combs (Fig. 3:1, 2).— Two combs were found in the late Ottoman-period well-house complex (Areas X and XW; see Arbel and Rauchberger, this volume [b]). Both combs are made of flat bone, probably cut from sheep/goat scapulae or pelvis. One of the combs (Fig. 3:1), which is better-preserved, is a double-edged, convex-sided artifact, which appears to have been broken intentionally, as it has a straight fracture line. The teeth of this comb are coarse and widely-spaced on one side, and fine and densely-spaced on the other, possibly intended for delousing. Sixteen fully preserved teeth and the bases of nine additional ones

³ The excavation in the Greek Market was directed by the author (Permit Nos. A-6772, A-7100), and its publication is presently in preparation.



Fig. 3. Bone and stone items from late Ottonam–British Mandate contexts.

No.	Item	Locus	Basket	Dimensions
1	Bone comb	25	70	8.3 × 6.3 cm
2	Bone comb	21	99	10.0 × 6.5 cm
3	Slate whetstone	50	520	9.5 × 6.5 cm
4	Slate whetstone	35	100	7.5 × 5.6 cm
5	Bone and bronze domino game piece	352	3501	4.5 × 2.6 cm
6	Stone musket(?) balls			Diam. 1.4–1.6 cm weight 3.1–4.0 g

were counted on the side with the widely-spaced teeth. The side with the densely-spaced teeth comprises 33 complete teeth and the bases of approximately 35 others. Two straight lines are incised on both sides of the comb, apparently meant to mark the sawing limit for the preparation of the teeth.

The other item (Fig. 3:2) appears to have been a single-row comb, its back slightly wavy, in which all the teeth appear to have been intentionally broken, perhaps in order to alter the function of the artifact. A straight line was incised on both faces of the comb to mark the sawing limit for the preparation of the teeth. Minute unevenly distributed punctures on one face of the handle are due to post-deposition damage.

Other excavations in Yafo have yielded combs from the Crusader and Ottoman periods (Arbel 2016: Fig. 10.2; Jakoel 2017:77). Similarly-shaped combs, albeit made of wood, are known from first-century CE sites at Jerusalem (Shurkin 2004:49), the Cave of Letters in the Judean Desert (Yadin 1963:130, Pl. 36: No. 17-I.2; Fig. 51) and Masada (Yadin 1966:149). Other such finds include a fourth-century CE comb from a tomb at Migdal Ha-'Emeq (Tatcher and Gal 2009: Fig. 20.9); a Persian–Late Roman-period comb from Ben Zakkay, near Yavne (Ben-Ari 2011); and combs from undated contexts at Caesarea (Ayalon 2005:47–48, Fig. 16:158).

Slate Whetstones (Fig. 3:3, 4).— Two small whetstones, also found in the well-house complex, have very smooth surfaces and appear to have been made of slate. One of the two items is complete (Fig. 3:3), one of its ends having straight-angled corners, while the corners on the opposite end are roughly, yet evenly rounded. A groove was cut across the width of the two stones between the two rounded corners; this groove is deeper and smoother in the stone with one broken end (Fig. 3:4). A whetstone found in a Crusader-period context at the Qishle was of similar material, form and dimensions, including a groove incised approximately at the same distance from the end (Sidi, Talmi and Geri-Dayan, in press: Fig. 23.13). The groove on the whetstones probably served to tie the stone to a belt. Such objects, made of the same material and of the same form, were used in various periods (for Early Islamic examples, see Messika 2006:104, Fig. 21:4, 5; Tal and Taxel 2008:193, 195, Fig. 6.130:2–4).

Bone Game Piece (Fig. 3:5).— A single domino game piece is made of thin (0.2 cm), semi-translucent rectangular-cut bone of a typical size for such contemporary game pieces. The surviving part of the piece bears twelve dints, representing the number of the domino piece. Part of a small copper or bronze pin, that originally fastened the preserved part of the domino piece to a piece of wood of the same dimensions, was found attached to the item; the piece of wood, which did not survive, added solidity to the game piece and concealed its number from other players. Eleven such domino game pieces were found at the Qishle (Sidi, Talmi and Geri-Dayan, in press: Table 25.5, Figs. 5.1–5.11), and similar examples were also uncovered at Caesarea, in all likelihood having been used by the residents of the short-lived Bosnian village that existed at the site in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Stone Musket(?) Balls (Fig. 3:6).— Seven small rounded stone items were found in mixed contexts in various parts of the excavation. They resemble musket balls in terms of their form

and dimensions, although the latter are made of lead and somewhat heavier. Their perfect spherical shape could only have been manufactured artificially, the material appearing to be hard limestone or marble. Such items may have been used as game pieces, perhaps marbles, as abrading material in some local industrial process or as improvised bullets.

CONCLUSIONS

The small number of miscellaneous finds from the Magen Avraham excavation is not surprising, considering the location of the site outside the urban area of Yafo prior to the British Mandate period. During Yafo's urban expansion in antiquity, the lower city extended to the area of the Flea Market (Arbel 2017b), but not as far as the Magen Avraham Compound. This area belonged to the city's agricultural hinterland during most periods, and at times, it appears to have been used also as a burial site.

With the exception of the silver beaker, all of the objects described in this report belong to relatively common types, with similar examples have been found at other sites in Yafo. The assemblage of these miscellaneous finds, by and large, comprises common and inexpensive items, such as would be expected in the context of a modest residential quarter that was sparsely settled until a century ago.

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