

## EVIDENCE OF A LATE BYZANTINE PERIOD EARTHQUAKE AND A MONASTIC STABLE AT 'AVEDAT (OBODA)

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### INTRODUCTION

In 2012, salvage excavations were carried out in three areas in 'Avedat National Park (Fig. 1), near and within the acropolis (Areas A, B; map ref. 178250/522720) and at the foot of the site's western slope (Area D; map ref. 178188/522584).<sup>1</sup> The excavations were initiated to facilitate restoration work (Area A) and following damage to the site when electric lines were dug to provide lighting for the acropolis (Area B).

Area A was opened in the western half of a room in a building located at the northwestern end of the main street of the 'Roman Quarter' (henceforce, 'Roman/Byzantine Quarter'). Area B (50 sq m) was located along the northern exterior of a building south of the acropolis, near the South Church. Here, an exterior courtyard with a baking oven and pantry (Room 2) and the remains of another room (Room 1), were uncovered; all collapsed due to an earthquake sometime in the early seventh century CE. The probe in Area D was conducted along the southern exterior of a wall covered with red-painted *dipiniti*, built in front of a cave.

#### *History of Research*

*The Architectural Remains.* The ancient town of 'Avedat (Greek: Oboda; Arabic: Abdeh), located along the Petra–Gaza road (popularly referred to as the 'Incense Route'), shows evidence of seasonal occupation by the Nabataeans in the third–second centuries BCE, with

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<sup>1</sup> The excavations (Permit No. A-6391) were directed by the author, on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, and were funded by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA), who also provided the workers. The probe in Area D was also conducted by the author on behalf of the IAA and was underwritten by DePaul University. It was part of a documentation project carried out by the author and Scott Bucking (DePaul University), who assisted in the excavation in front of the collapsed cave in Area D. Assistance was provided by Mark Kunin and Avraham Hajian (surveying), Natalia Zak (drafting), Irena Lidski-Reznikov (pottery drawings), Lena Kupersmidt (cleaning of metal finds), Donald T. Ariel (numismatics) and Yael Gorin-Rosen (glass analysis). Photographs are by the author and Scott Bucking (Area D). I wish to thank the park manager, Nili Dvash, and the INPA Southern District Archaeologist, Orit Bortinik, for their aid and support.

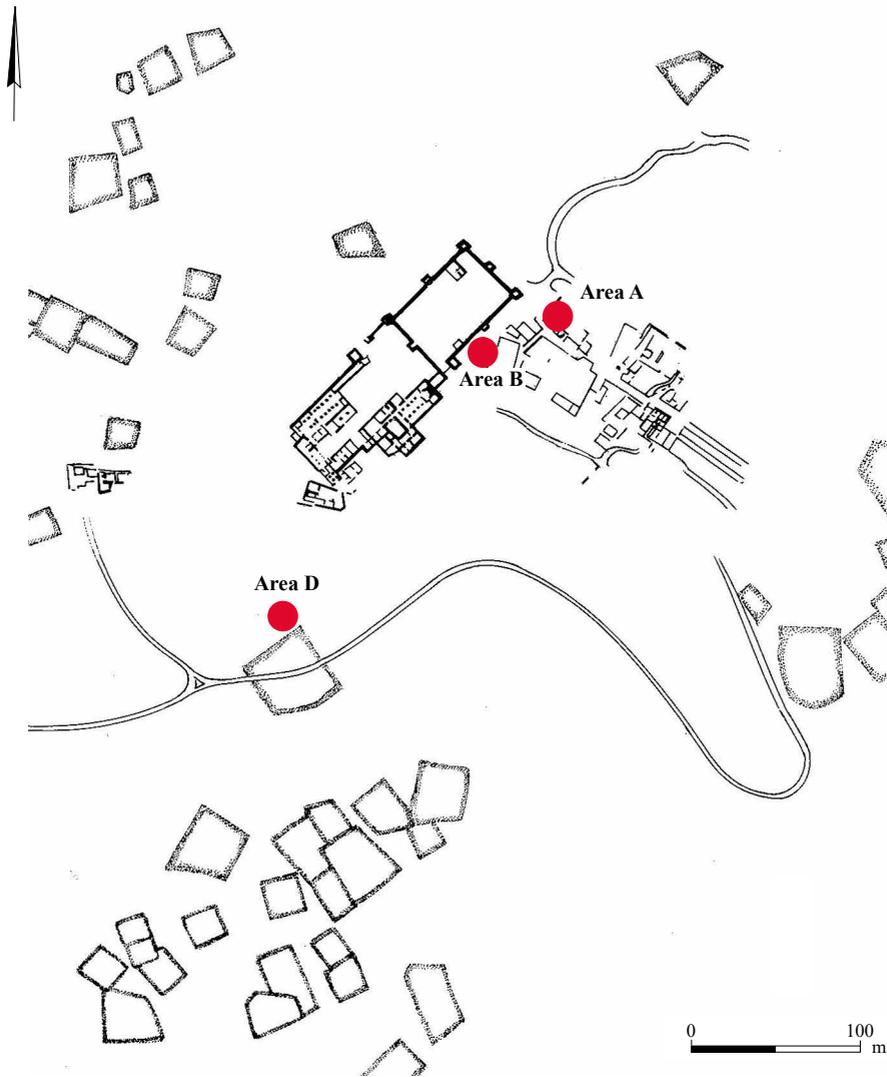


Fig. 1. The excavation areas.

extensive remains on the upper plateau overlying bedrock. In the late first century BCE, the Nabataeans built a temple dedicated to the deified king Obodas at the western end of the upper plateau, and a town was established on the eastern and southern parts of the site. Hundreds of caves were hewn into the western slope of the site, which was apparently a necropolis in pre-Christian times.

Following an earthquake in the early fifth century CE, settlement in the town shifted westward and many of the caves were converted for use as dwellings and stables. In the late Byzantine period (fifth–seventh centuries CE), two churches were built on the acropolis, where the earlier Western Temple had stood. In this period, a wall was built around the town and a citadel was added to the temenos area of the acropolis (Negev 1997:6–9).

'Avedat was visited in 1838 by Robinson and Smith (1874), and later in 1870, by Palmer and Drake. In 1902, the Czech explorer Musil (1907) extensively documented the site. Further documentation was published by Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent (1904; 1905). In 1914, Woolley visited the site as part of the survey of the Negev he conducted with Lawrence (Woolley and Lawrence 1914–1915:9, 28, 93–107, Pls. XXIII:2–XXV).

'Avedat was first excavated in 1937 by the Colt Expedition. These excavations were largely unpublished except for one area in the acropolis described as the 'Hellenistic Building' that appeared in Volume I of their report on Nizzana (Nessana) (Colt 1962:45–47, Pl. LXVIII).

In 1958, the National Parks Authority initiated excavations at the site under the direction of Avi-Yonah, with the assistance of Negev, on behalf of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Negev carried out extensive excavations throughout the site between 1958 and 1961. A number of structures were excavated by Negev in the southern end of the so-called 'Roman Quarter' in the early 1960s (Negev 1997:63); however, only the tower was fully published (Negev 1997:64–72).

In 1977, Negev and Cohen, of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums (from 1990, the Israel Antiquities Authority), conducted excavations at the site. In 1989, Negev returned to excavate the acropolis; the pottery and the architecture of the site were published (Negev 1986; 1997).

In 1992, Tahal (1995) and Katz (Permit No. A-1923) of the IAA uncovered a number of rooms along the southeastern end of the street in the Roman/Byzantine Quarter. Tahal also excavated a large winepress south of the South Church (1994:113–114, Fig. 130). In 1999, the Roman army camp, located in the northwestern part of the site, was excavated by Fabian and the author (Erickson-Gini 2002).

Evidence of destruction by earthquake, leading to the abandonment of the town in the seventh century CE, was exposed by Fabian in 1993 south of the acropolis in Building T (unpublished; Permit No. A-1991; but see Fabian 1996). In 1999, the author uncovered evidence of an early fifth-century CE earthquake destruction in a residential quarter situated east of the acropolis and the Middle Byzantine (450–550 CE) town wall (Erickson-Gini 2010:91–95).

*The Caves.* The man-made caves of 'Avedat first attracted study in the twentieth century, beginning with Musil in 1902 (1907:127–151, Figs. 65, 96–119). The caves and some *dipinti* were documented by Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent (1904; 1905), who were the first to suggest that they had been re-used for habitation. In 1914, Woolley visited the site and proposed that the caves initially served as Nabataean tombs, followed by a phase of re-use as dwellings in the Byzantine period (Woolley and Lawrence 1914–1915:99–100).

The most extensive excavation of a cave dwelling in 'Avedat was carried out in the 1960s by Negev (1997:157–169), who exposed a large, multi-roomed complex on the lowest terrace of the western slope, referred to as the 'Saints' Cave', due to a *dipinti*-intensive wall in one of the rooms featuring images of Saint George and Saint Theodore. These *dipinti* led

Figueras to suggest in his 1995 gazetteer of monastic sites that the ‘Saints’ Cave’ may have been inhabited by a monastic community (1995:434). Negev differed, holding that the cave served a general population only, for ordinary habitation. He proposed that some of the other caves at the site originally functioned as tombs, possibly from the Middle Nabataean (Early Roman) period (Negev 1997:137).

## THE ARCHITECTURE

### *Area A*

In a structure at the end of the main street of the residential Roman/Byzantine Quarter, the western half of a room was excavated (Plan 1; 2.5 × 5.0 m) to facilitate the reconstruction of its western wall (W1); its exterior had been warped by earthquake damage that occurred in the early seventh century CE (Fig. 2; see Negev 1997:2, Fig. 1). The walls survived to an impressive height: the western wall (W1) stood 10 courses high (2.3 m), the northern wall (W2), 14 courses (2.3 m), and the southern wall (W3), 15 courses (2.8 m). In the southern part of W1 was a space that originally accommodated an arch springer, and in the northern part of the wall was the stone construction of a second springer and a pilaster (Fig. 3). The walls apparently supported an upper floor. Inside the room, in the upper layer of the excavation trench, where stone ceiling slabs and arch stones were uncovered, was evidence

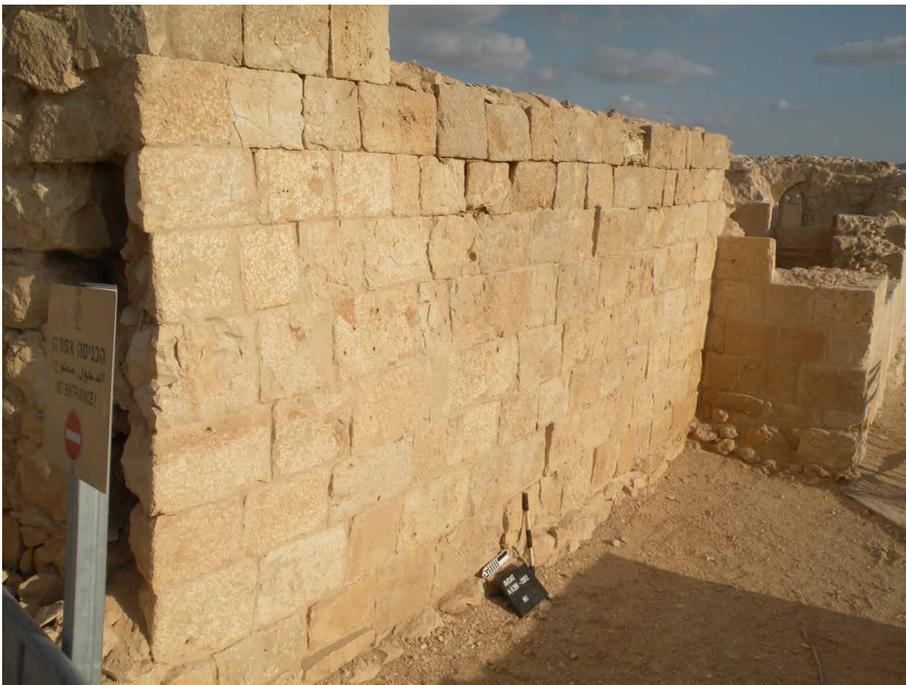
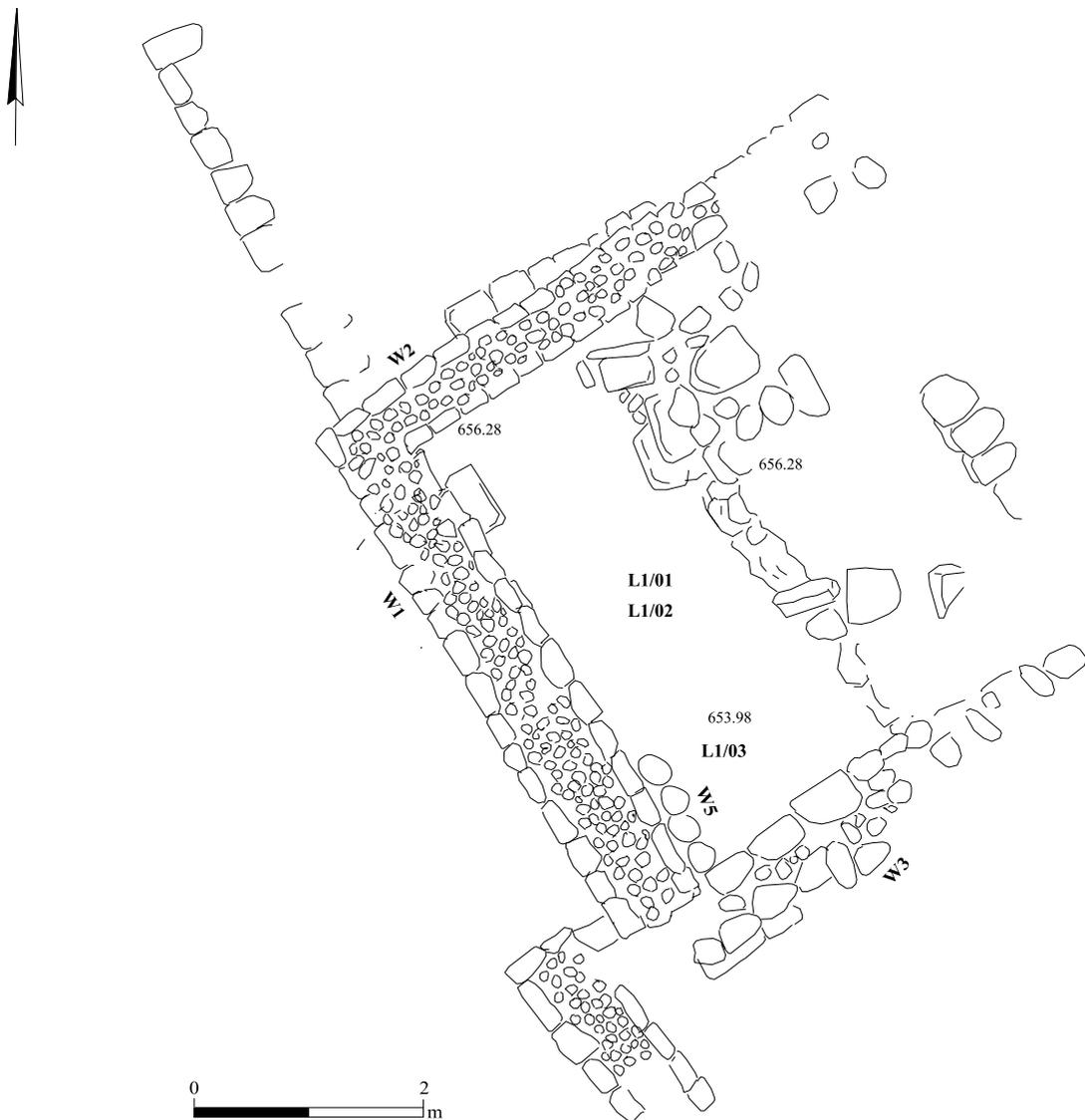


Fig. 2. Area A, the warped external western wall (W1), looking southeast.

of heavy earthquake collapse. A scant number of poorly preserved bronze coins from this layer (L1/02, B18) were found; they could not be identified but their size indicates that they may be sixth-century CE *nummi* (Donald T. Ariel, pers. comm.).

A probe in the southwestern corner of the room revealed that W1 was built over the remains of an earlier wall (Fig. 4). Finds dated to the late Byzantine period were revealed at the bottom of W1. Below the foundations of W1, in L1/03, flush with the lowest courses of the southern wall (W3), were finds from the fourth century CE, indicating that the original building was constructed sometime in the early Byzantine period. The probe also revealed



Plan 1. Area A.

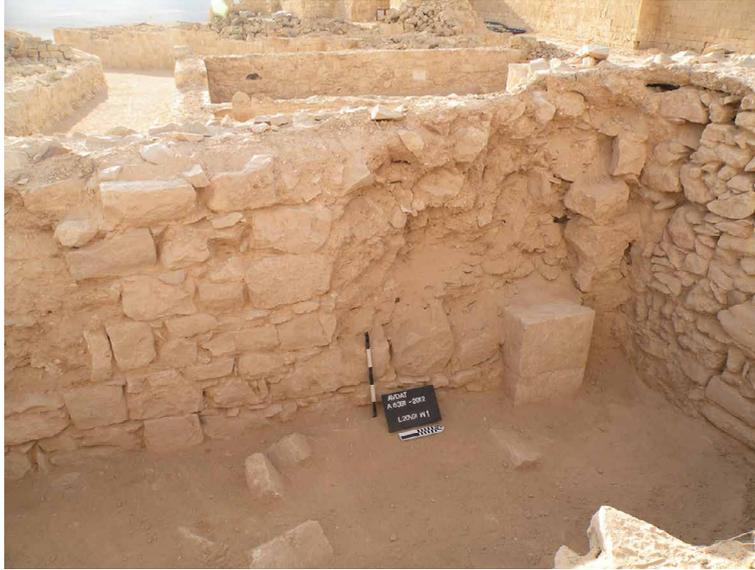


Fig. 3. Area A, the arch springer along the northern interior of W1, looking northwest.



Fig. 4. Area A, remains of earlier wall over which W1 was constructed and the line of stones (W5), looking west.

floor slabs, apparently from an upper floor, and archers from an earlier collapse (Fig. 5). A line of stones (W5; length 1.1 m) was roughly parallel to W1 at a depth of 2.25 m; it may be the remains of a stone course that had collapsed from original W1 in the early fifth



Fig. 5. Area A, the southern wall (W3) and the foundation of original western W1 on the right, looking south.

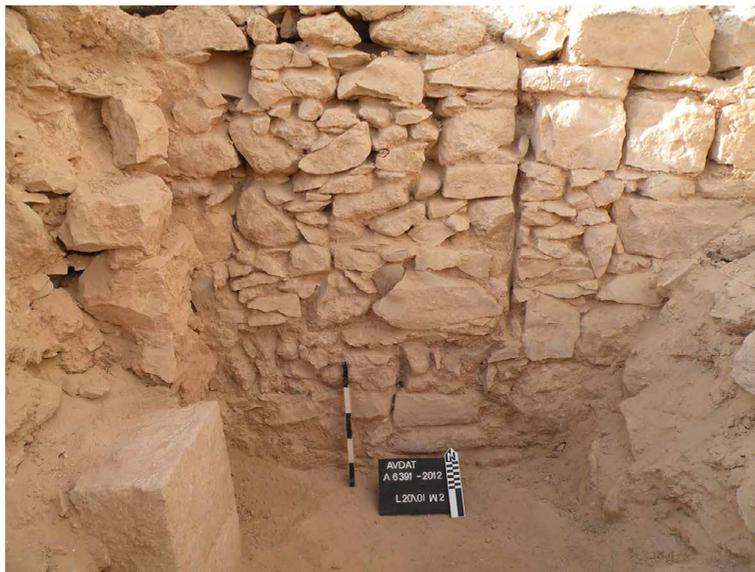


Fig. 6. Area A, repairs in the northern wall (W2), looking north.

century CE. These correspond to a blockage in the northern wall (W2; Fig. 6) in the early fifth century CE, when the site was damaged by a local earthquake, evidence of which was discovered by the author in the Roman/Byzantine Quarter nearby (Erickson-Gini 2010:91–95; 2014:100).

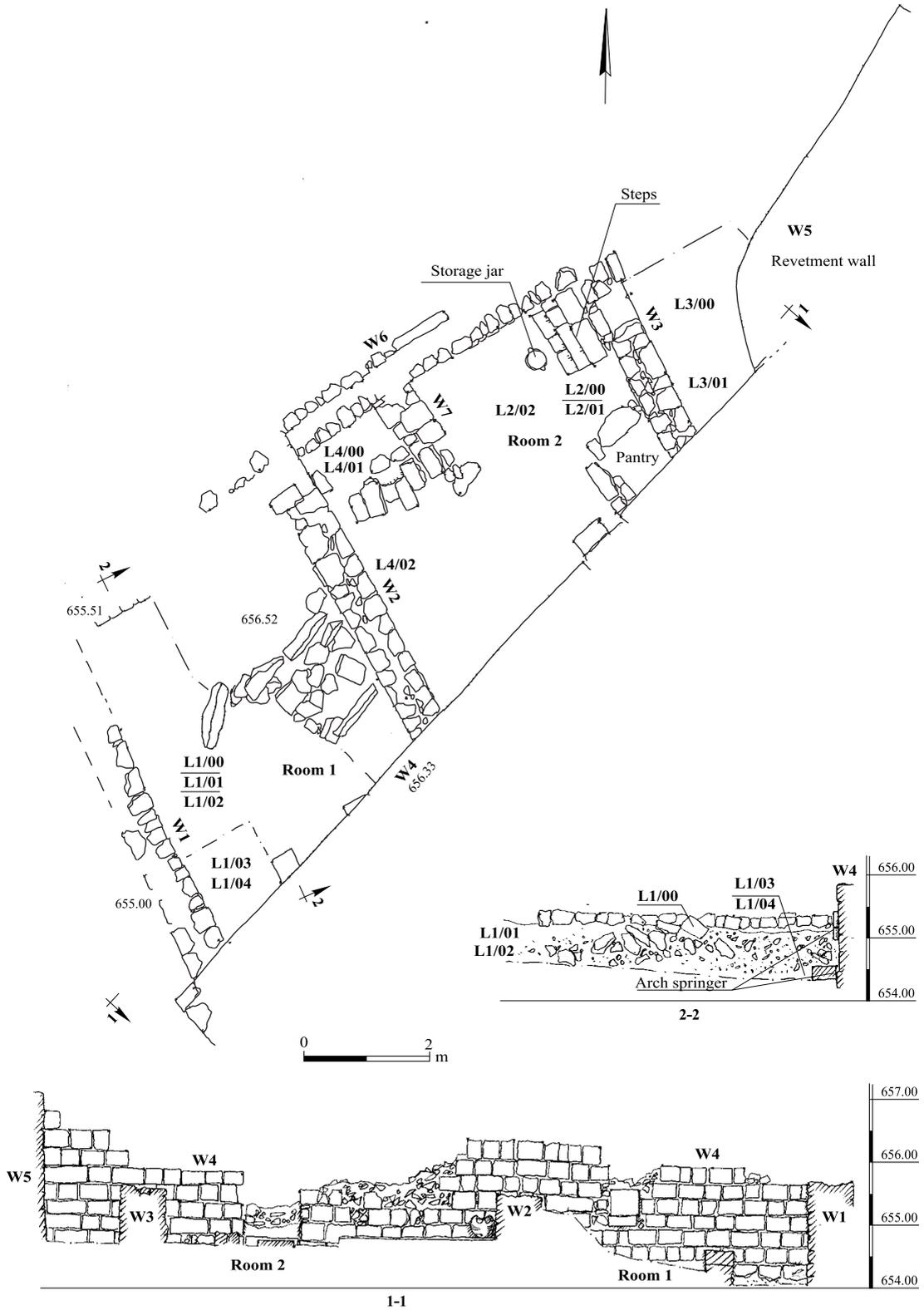
*Area B*

The excavation here revealed an open courtyard and a room situated along the northern exterior of a large structure east of the winepress excavated by Tahal (1995:113–114, Fig. 130) and south of the main entrance of the citadel on the acropolis. The building is part of the Roman/Byzantine Quarter and at least two revetment walls were built against the long part of its northern wall (W5) and its eastern corner (Negev 1997:5, Photograph 7). The revetment walls confirm that like the structure in Area A, repairs and additions to the building were carried out in the early fifth century CE. The exterior courtyard (Room 2) was built against the northern wall, between the northern revetment (W5) and a small room (Room 1) discovered in a collapsed state further west, near the northwestern corner of the structure.

Both Room 1 and the courtyard (Room 2) were built along pre-existing ashlar W4, which extends 12.3 m from the northwestern corner of the building to revetment W5 (Plan 2). Wall 4 was renovated to insert an arch springer and an arch pilaster in Room 1 (Fig. 7; Plan 2: Section 2–2). Room 1, slightly irregular in shape (c. 16 sq m), shares its northern



Fig. 7. Area B, the arch springer and arch pilaster built into original W4, looking south.



Plan 2. Area B, plan and sections.

wall (W6) with the courtyard (Room 2). Collapsed arches and ceiling slabs were discovered throughout the room (L1/00; Fig. 8) and the arch springer in W1 appears to have rotated slightly due to an earthquake (Fig. 9; Plan 2: Section 1–1). The arch stones uncovered in Room 1 were decorated with incised and red-painted frames (Fig. 10); one stone features incised and red-painted crossed lines (Fig. 11). A  $2 \times 2$  m probe below the collapse in the southwestern corner of Room 1 (L1/03, L1/04) revealed a dirt floor. The foundation of the building and W1 were built directly over bedrock (Fig. 12). Hellenistic- and Early Roman-period pottery was discovered directly above bedrock in this corner (L1/04). The excavation did not reveal an entrance into the room; access may have been by way of a stairway like that found leading into the courtyard, perhaps under the collapse.



Fig. 8. Area B, collapsed arches and ceiling slabs in Room 1, looking west.



Fig. 9. Area B, signs of rotation in the arch springer along W1 in Room 1.



Fig. 10. Area B, arch stone with incised, red-painted frame from the collapse in Room 1.



Fig. 11. Area B, arch stone with incised, red-painted lines and frame from the collapse in Room 1.

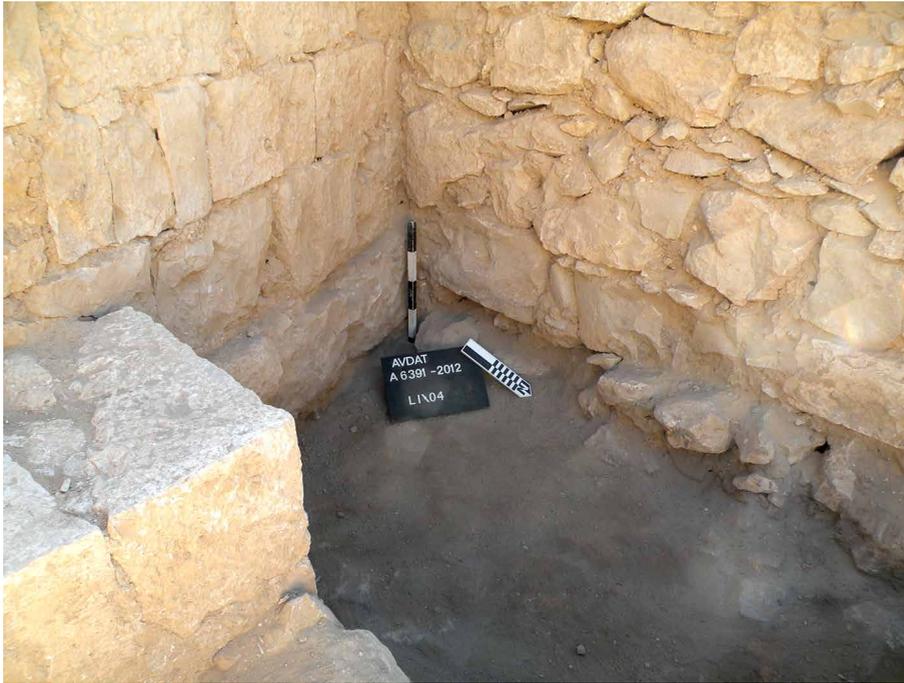


Fig. 12. Area B, probe in the southwestern corner of Room 1, looking southwest.

The courtyard (Room 2; c. 4 × 6 m; Plan 2) was accessed via three steps that descended from a higher level, outside the building, close to revetment W5 (Fig. 13). The lower part of a bag-shaped storage jar was found sunken into the floor, directly in front of the stairs. A stepped entrance into the main building, at the back of the courtyard along W4, led into an unexcavated area that also appears to have been an open courtyard (Fig. 14). In the southeastern corner of the courtyard (L2/01), the collapsed remains of a small pantry room (Fig. 15) were uncovered, containing several broken ceramic vessels, mainly cooking wares, as well as a late form of a Gaza wine jar, parts of a late Byzantine glass bottle and part of a marble paten with faded decoration (see below). A collapsed baking oven (L4/00, L4/01; c. 1.5 × 2.0 m), revealed in the northwestern corner of the courtyard, opposite the stairs, and its roof, appear to have been supported by a small limestone arch discovered in a collapsed state. The oven was built into the corner of the courtyard and may have had an opening in the oven's southern end. It is similar in plan to an oven of the early Byzantine period in Room 38 of the Roman/Byzantine Quarter (Erickson-Gini 2010:94). A nearly complete imported semi-fine-ware bowl was uncovered above the collapsed oven, and a large bag-shaped storage jar lacking its rim was found sunk into the floor south of the oven. The presence of the oven and storage jars sunk into the earthen floor of the courtyard indicate that the room served as a bakery where grain was stored for grinding.

No coins were found in Area B despite careful sifting of the material from the earthen floors in both rooms.



Fig. 13. Area B, steps descending to courtyard (Room 2) and revetment W5 built against main building W4, looking southeast.



Fig. 14. Area B, entrance into main building and step adjacent to W4, looking south.



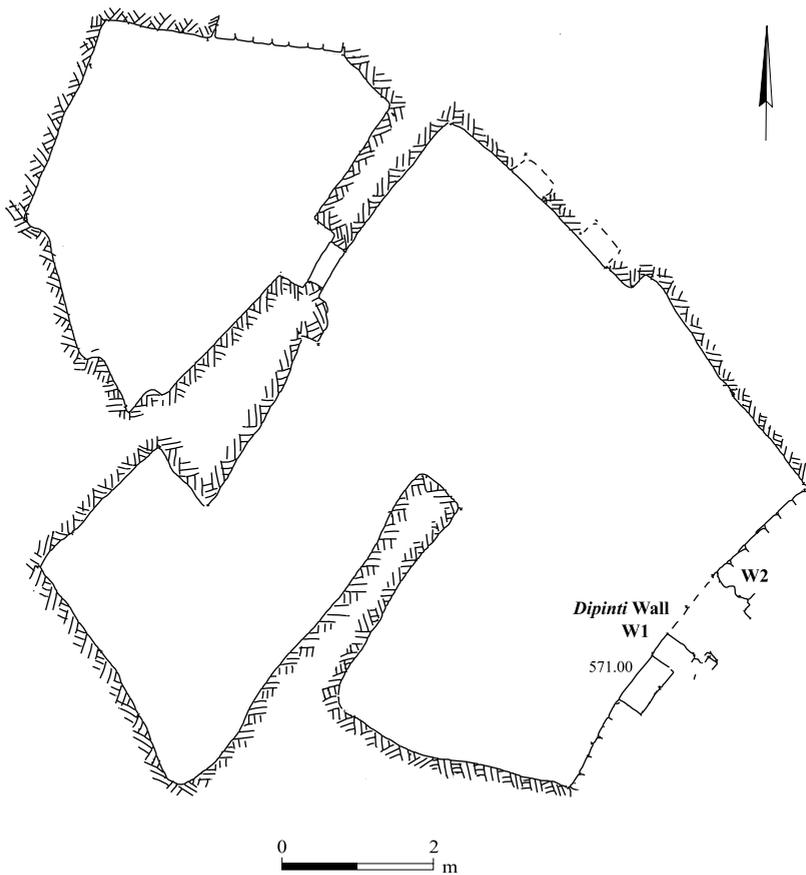
Fig. 15. Area B, remains of pantry in L2/01, looking southeast.

#### *Area D*

Area D was excavated on the southern slope of the acropolis, c. 15 m north of the modern access road. Evidence of massive earthquake debris was revealed, similar to that discovered on the western and northern slopes of the acropolis, where bedrock shelves above the front rooms of man-made caves had collapsed (Fig. 16). Facing south and founded on bedrock, the *Dipinti* Wall (8.7 m long, 0.77 m wide; Plan 3; Fig. 17) stands to its full height (2.92 m high) in front of rooms hewn into bedrock on the southern slope below the acropolis. A probe 0.7 m wide was excavated along the exterior of the *Dipinti* Wall, in an area covered with heavy collapsed debris from the bedrock shelf of the terrace above the cave (Plan 3; Fig. 18). The opening into the cave, in the middle of the wall, is 1.7 m high and 0.75 m wide; its threshold is 0.2 m above bedrock. The lower part of the entryway was found blocked with building stones to a height of 0.38 m (Fig. 19), apparently in the late Byzantine period, to prevent animals and debris from entering the cave. A niche (0.35 m wide, 0.38 m high, 0.15 m deep) in the wall, east of the doorway (Fig. 20), appears to have originally been a window that was blocked on the eastern side of the back of the *Dipinti* Wall when it was reinforced, possibly following damage by the earthquake in the early fifth century CE (see Erickson-Gini 2010:90–94). The later reinforcement of the interior wall incorporated limestone blocks, whereas the original wall had been constructed from a harder type of limestone. The average size of the hard stones used for the exterior face of the wall is  $0.42 \times 0.25 \times 0.14$  m. Four ‘slit’ windows are located near the top of the wall and the doorway (Fig. 21). The red-painted figure of a bearded man appears above the right corner of the niche and to the right of one of the slit windows (Figs. 22, 23) is probably a depiction of St. Theodore, a soldier saint for whom a cult was founded in the ‘Avedat South Church’ (Bucking 2017; Bucking and Erickson-Gini 2020:29). Red-painted *dipinti*, primarily in the



Fig. 16. Area D, collapsed bedrock shelf fronting the cave above the *Dipinti* Cave, looking north.



Plan 3. Area D, plan of the *Dipinti* Cave.



Fig. 17. Area D, western extension of *Dipinti* Wall exterior, looking northwest.



Fig. 18. Area D, eastern extension of probe in front of *Dipinti* Wall, looking east toward W2.

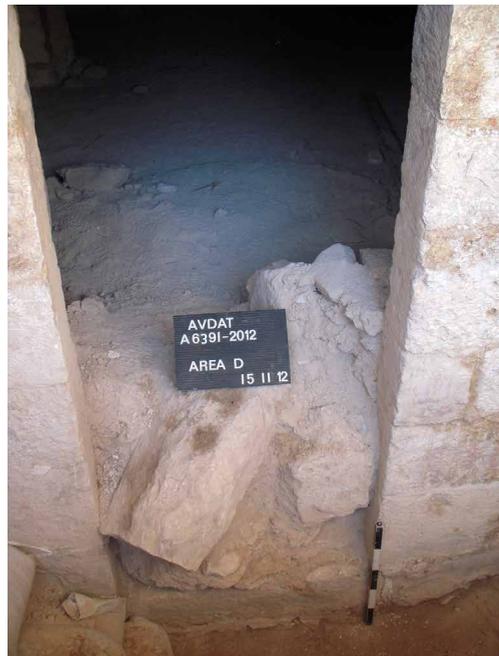


Fig. 19. Area D, blocked entrance of *Dipinti* Cave, looking north.



Fig. 20. Area D, niche (blocked window) to the right of entrance, along the *Dipinti* Wall, looking north.



Fig. 21. Area D, slit windows above entrance in *Dipinti* Wall, looking north.

form of crosses and crosses within circles, appear on the lintel and on either side of the doorway (Figs. 24–26). A red-painted figure, possibly of a man wearing a tunic and holding a sword, is to the left of the entrance (Fig. 27), together with representations of what may be a wagon (Fig. 28), a ship (Fig. 29) and a fringed object (Fig. 30).



Fig. 22. Area D, red-painted depiction of bearded man above niche and to right of a slit window on *Dipinti* Wall exterior.

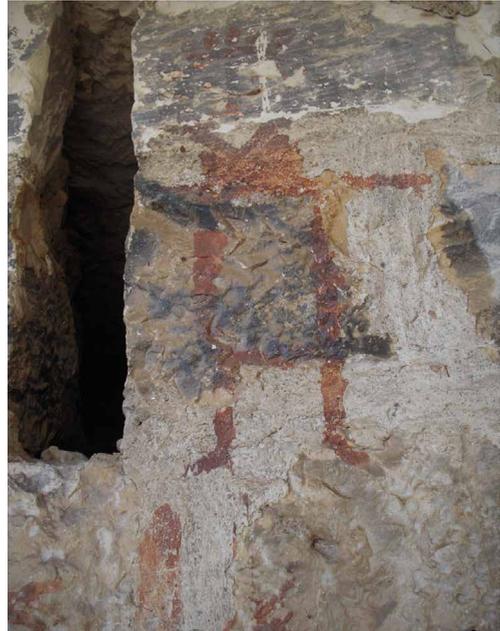


Fig. 23. Area D, detail of bearded man to right of slit window.



Fig. 24. Area D, red-painted *dipinti* decorations, including crosses, on the lintel and sides of the entrance, looking north.



Fig. 25. Area D, red-painted cross to right of entrance, looking north.



Fig. 26. Area D, red-painted cross to right of entrance, looking north.



Fig. 27. Area D, red-painted figure (holding a sword?) to left of entrance, looking north.



Fig. 28. Area D, red-painted wagon(?) to left of entrance, and a window slit, looking north.



Fig. 29. Area D, red-painted ship(?) left of entrance, looking north.



Fig. 30. Area D, red-painted fringed object left of entrance, looking north.



Fig. 31. Area D, niche at top of W2, looking east.

The exterior of the *Dipinti* Wall is somewhat perpendicular to W2, at its eastern edge. Wall 2 is the western side of an exterior wall in front of another cave, east of the *Dipinti* Cave. It was built on a high bedrock outcrop, 2.73 m above the surface in front of the *Dipinti* Wall, and exposed for 1.95 m of its length. At the top of W2 is a niche, directly under the bedrock shelf (Fig. 31). Mud-mortar mixed with large pieces of straw was found between the stones at the top of the wall to the right of the niche, well-protected by the bedrock

overhang. A red-painted cross within a circle is below the lower right corner of the niche in W2 (Fig. 32), and another red-painted cross within a circle is on the interior face of W2 in the second cave (Fig. 33).

The interior of the *Dipinti* Cave includes two rooms (Plan 3). The southern, main room (8.78 m wide east–west, 6.35 m long north–south, 2.22 m high) is partitioned by a hewn east–west wall (3.25 m long) on its western side, some 2.6 m from the back wall. The eastern side is decorated with red-painted *dipinti* (Fig. 34). A cupboard niche (0.72 m high, 0.33 deep), decorated with red-painted *dipinti*, was hewn on the interior of the *Dipinti* Wall, west (right) of the doorway (Fig. 35). It seems to have been large enough to accommodate a wooden shelf. Three carved niches (Fig. 36) surrounded by red-painted *dipinti* (Figs. 37, 38) were in the eastern wall, and a large triangular carved niche was in the western wall (Fig. 39). The niches



Fig. 32. Area D, red-painted cross in circle on W2 exterior, looking east.



Fig. 33. Area D, red-painted cross in circle on W2 interior within second cave, looking west.



Fig. 34. Area D, carved partition wall inside the *Dipinti* Cave, looking northwest.



Fig. 35. Area D, cupboard built into *Dipinti* Wall interior with red-painted decoration, looking south.



Fig. 36. Area D, carved niches along eastern interior wall of *Dipinti* Cave.



Fig. 37. Area D, carved triangular niche along western interior wall of *Dipinti* Cave.



Fig. 38. Area D, red-painted decorations on eastern interior wall of *Dipinti* Cave.



Fig. 39. Area D, red-painted decorations at the end of the partition wall in the front room of the *Dipinti* Cave, looking west.

and the decoration on the eastern wall may indicate that this room served as a place of worship for a monastic community (Bucking and Erickson-Gini 2020:32–33).

The irregularly shaped back room (3.71 m high) of the *Dipinti* Cave was accessed through a carved doorway (1.83 m high, 0.6 m wide, 0.64 m deep; Fig. 40). Carved slots on either side of the doorway for a bolt, and part of a carved frame at the doorway's bottom, reveal that it originally accommodated a wooden door (Figs. 41, 42). The southern wall (2.31 m long, preserved height 2.06 m) of the back room separates it from a large (probably Roman-period) plastered cistern that was accessed from the upper terrace (Fig. 43). This wall was partly hewn and partly built of heavy blocks.

A probe was conducted near the exterior face of the *Dipinti* Cave; the excavated soil was carefully sifted for pottery and other finds. The upper level of the collapse contained modern artifacts—scraps of newspapers in Hebrew, Arabic and English, as well as sherds of Black Gaza Ware, commonly found in the region during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries CE. The upper layer of debris contained finds from recent centuries and the Early Islamic period (eighth–ninth centuries CE) while below it were layers of organic debris including animal manure and finds from earlier periods (seventh century CE; late Byzantine and Early Umayyad periods). The upper layer extended above the level of the threshold of the doorway. A final layer of deposition (0.2 m deep) containing Roman material was revealed below this, extending down to bedrock. A shallow depression (0.46 × 0.20 m) hewn into the bedrock was found east of the doorway.

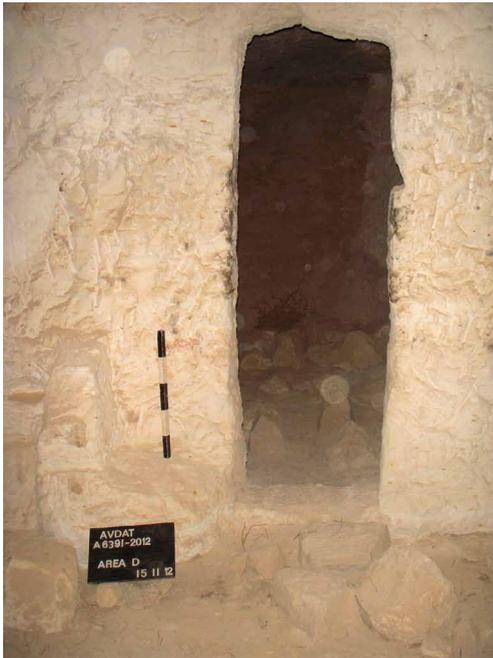


Fig. 40. Area D, carved entrance in back room of *Dipinti* Cave, looking north.

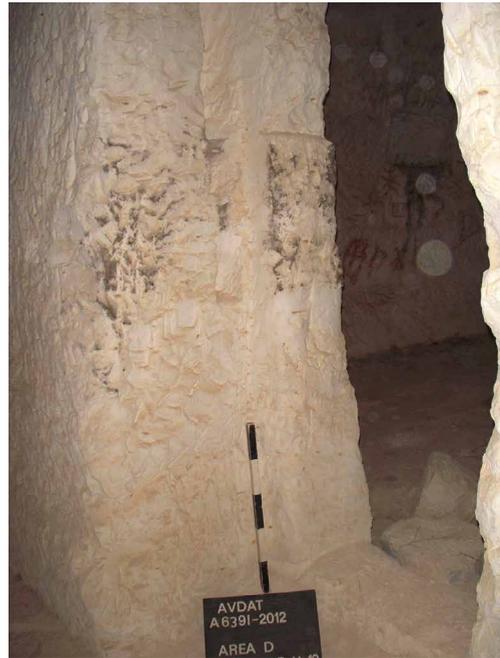


Fig. 41. Area D, carved bolt niches in doorway of back room of *Dipinti* Cave, looking southeast.



Fig. 42. Area D, carved bolt niches in doorway of back room of *Dipinti* Cave, looking south.

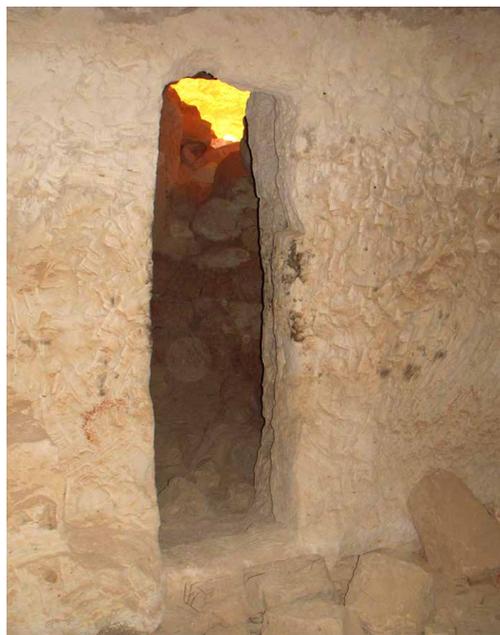


Fig. 43. Area D, partial view of cistern through doorway in back room of *Dipinti* Cave, looking north.

THE POTTERY

**Late Hellenistic and Roman Periods** (second century BCE–second century CE)

*Bowls*

Scant ceramic finds of the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods were retrieved. A sherd of a glazed bowl with molded leaf decoration, often referred to as a ‘Megarian’ bowl (Fig. 44:1), was found under the floor in Area B Room 1 and dates to the Late Hellenistic period (150–50 BCE; Gunneweg, Perlman and Yellin 1983:98; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995:369).

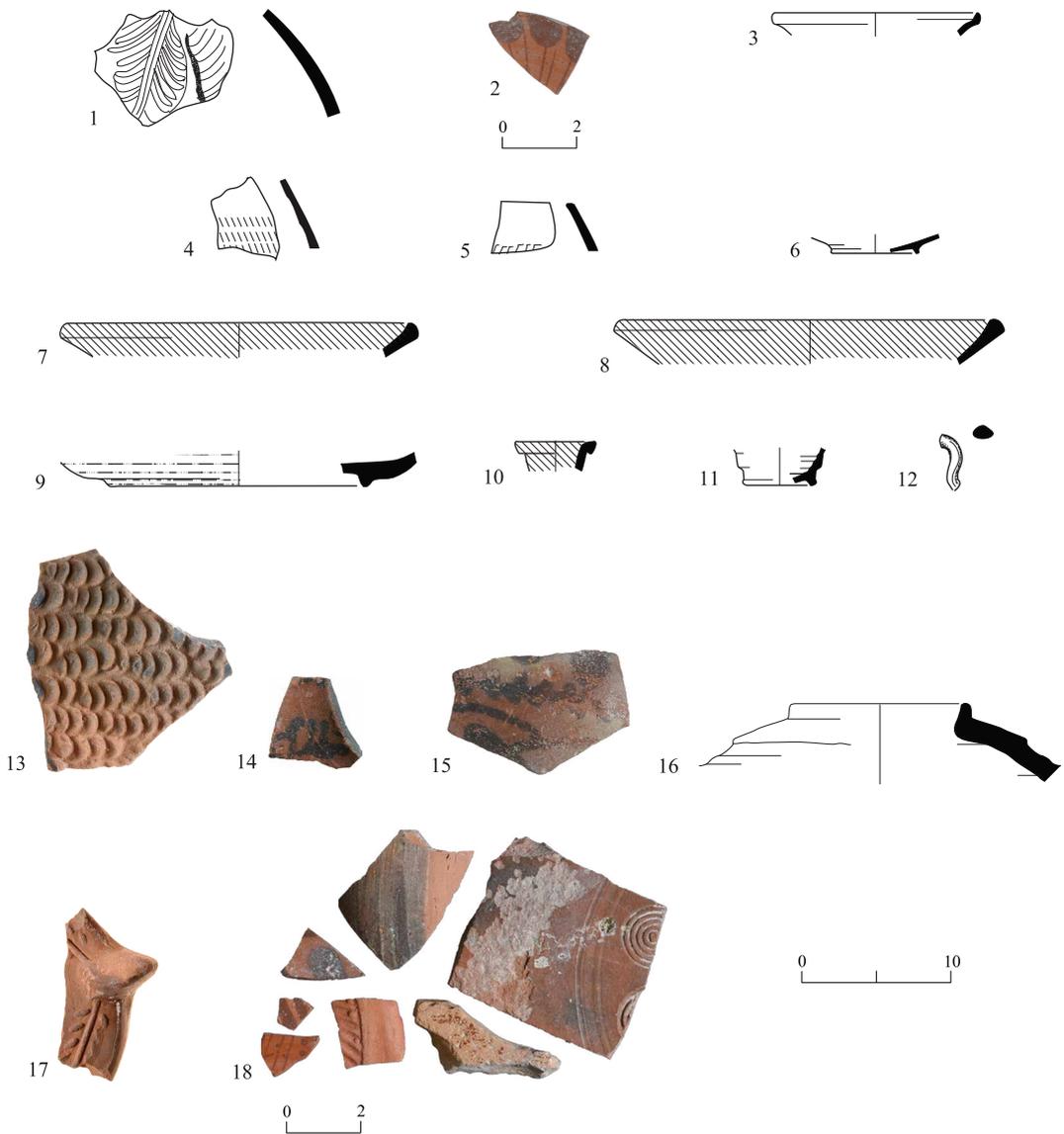


Fig. 44. Late Hellenistic and Early Roman-period pottery.

◀ Fig. 44

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Molded glazed bowl	B	1/03	11	Very pale brown (10YR 7/3), dark reddish brown burnish (2.5YR 2.5/4)
2	NPFW bowl	A	1/02	18	Red (2.5YR 5/6), red decoration (2.5YR 4/6)
3	NPFW bowl	B	1/04	14	Reddish brown (5YR 5/4), small white inclusions; faded dark brown decoration; pale slip on ext. rim
4	Nabataean rouletted bowl	B	1/04	14	Light red (2.5YR 6/8); red 2.5YR 5/8 burnish; rouletted decoration on ext.
5	Nabataean rouletted bowl	D	1/01	22	Red (2.5YR 5/6); gray core
6	Nabataean fine-ware bowl	D	1/00	21	Red (2.5YR 5/6); minute white inclusions
7	ESA bowl	D	1/00	21	Light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4); red (2.5YR 4/8) burnish
8	ESA bowl	D	1/00	21	Light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4); red (2.5YR 4/8) burnish; worn ext. rim
9	ESA bowl	D	1/03	24	Brown (7.5YR 5/4); reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4) burnish
10	ESA jug	D	2/00	25	Light brown (7.5YR 6/4); traces of red burnish (2.5YR 4/8)
11	Nabataean juglet	D	1/00	21	Red (2.5YR 5/6); dark gray core; fine ware
12	Nabataean fine ware juglet	D	1/00	21	Red (2.5YR 5/6); minute white inclusions
13	Molded fine-ware zoomorphic vessel	D	1/03	24	Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6); thick dark gray core
14	Nabataean painted ware jug/decanter	D	1/02	22	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white inclusions; gray core and int.; very dark gray decoration (2.5YRN 3/)
15	Nabataean painted ware jug/decanter	A	1/02	18	Red (2.5YR 5/6); numerous small white and occasional large white inclusions; dark gray decoration (2.5YRN 3/); pocked ext.
16	Gaza wine jar	B	1/04	14	Brown (10YR 5/3); tiny white inclusions; charred on int. and ext.
17	Southern lamp	D	1/03	24	Red (2.5YR 4/6)
18	Various sherds	D	2/00	25	

Several bowl fragments with this type of molded decoration were found at the site by Negev (1986:4–6; Nos. 3, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17).

A painted Nabataean fine-ware sherd (NPFW; Fig. 44:2), from the first century CE, was discovered in a mixed context in Area A. It corresponds in its decoration to Schmid's Type E18a 379 (Dekorgruppe 3a) from Zantur/Petra (Schmid 2000: Abb. 199–200). A rim of a Nabataean painted-ware bowl (not well-preserved; Fig. 44:3) of the post-annexation period (second–early third century CE) was uncovered on bedrock below Room 1 in Area B. This type of decoration appears on a bowl from another post-annexation context in 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 2.1; 285, No. 1) and on bowls with similar rim profiles from 'Avedat and Mezad Hazeva (Negev 1986:48, No. 350; Erickson-Gini 2010:285, No. 1). Sherds of Nabataean rouletted fine-ware vessels were found on bedrock in Area B Room 1 (Fig. 44:4) and in the probe in front of the *Dipinti* Wall in Area D (Fig. 44:5). Fine-ware vessels with rouletted decoration, usually on bowls but also on jugs, juglets and small jars, correspond to Schmid's Gruppe 9 (Schmid 2000: Abb. 62–65). These vessel types are particularly prominent in post-annexation contexts (Erickson-Gini 2010:103). The base of a Nabataean fine-ware bowl (Fig. 44:6) was discovered in Area D; a bowl of this type was uncovered in the past at 'Avedat in post-annexation contexts (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 2:16). Rims of imported fine-ware bowls (ESA ware; Fig. 44:7, 8), were recovered from the collapse layer in the upper level in Area D; they presumably fell from the upper terrace above the cave (for parallels, see Hayes 1985: Tav. VIII:13, 14). The base of an ESA bowl discovered on bedrock (Fig. 44:9) appears to be an early second-century CE type, similar to Hayes' ESA Forms 14, 16 (Hayes 1985: Tav. VII:14, 16).

#### *Jugs and Juglets*

In a lower layer of the dumps west of the *Dipinti* Cave were a number of sherds, including the rim and upper neck of an ESA ware jug (Fig. 44:10) and Nabataean fine-ware vessels, such as the base of a juglet (Fig. 44:11) and a juglet handle (Fig. 44:12).

#### *Zoomorphic Vessel*

A sherd of a molded zoomorphic vessel was found on bedrock (Fig. 44:13). While no exact parallels for this type of molded decoration are known to me, zoomorphic fine-ware vessels, such as a hedgehog, were produced in Petra in the Roman period (Tuttle 2009:562–563).

A late Nabataean painted sherd of a coarse-ware jug or decanter (Fig. 44:14) was discovered in mixed contexts in Area D; another sherd of this type was uncovered in mixed contexts in Area A (Fig. 44:15). Painted-ware jugs and decanters are known from early third century CE contexts at sites along the Incense Route such as Orhan Mor (Moyat 'Awad) and in early fourth century contexts at 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010:259, Nos. 1–4).

#### *Storage Jar*

Figure 44:16 is the rim of an early type of Gaza wine jar with an upright neck set in a groove; it was discovered on bedrock in Area B Room 1. This type, which corresponds to

Majcherek's Form 1 (Majcherek 1995: Pl. 4:2) and dates to the first–third centuries CE, was discovered elsewhere in 'Avedat in early third-century CE contexts (Erickson-Gini 2010: Figs. 2:55–57). In Ashqelon, at least two production sites were uncovered (Feder and Erickson-Gini 2012; Israel and Erickson-Gini 2013:174–176). The presence of this jar in 'Avedat signals the beginning of 'Avedat's role in the production and export of wine, which appears to have begun before the end of the Roman and the beginning of the early Byzantine periods (third century CE) (Erickson-Gini 2012:53).

#### *Molded Southern Lamp*

Part of a molded Southern Lamp (Fig. 44:17) produced in Judea during the Roman period was uncovered on the floor in front of the *Dipinti* Wall in Area D, together with the rim of a Roman-period glass bottle (see Gorin-Rosen, below: Fig. 53:1). The lamp, of red fabric, has a flattened rim decorated with a molded leaf and a plain handle lacking signs of perforation. Lamps of this type are dated to the period between 70 and 135 CE (Rosenthal and Sivan 1978:82; Israeli and Avida 1988: Nos. 99, 103, 104, 145, 167, 197–199, 205).

#### *Miscellaneous Sherds*

Figure 44:18 displays sherds from the Roman period discovered in the lower levels of the city dump west of the *Dipinti* Cave in Area D. Among these sherds are Nabataean painted-ware bowls of the first century CE (lower left corner) and the post-annexation period (upper left), the rim of a Southern Lamp, an ESA ware vessel and a plain Nabataean fine-ware bowl from the Early Roman period.

### **Early Byzantine Period** (fourth–mid-fifth centuries CE) (Fig. 45)

#### *Bowls*

Sherds of imported African Red-Slipped fine ware bowls from the early Byzantine period (fourth–mid-fifth centuries CE) were found in the dump west of the *Dipinti* Cave. These include a ledge rim of a bowl (Fig. 45:1) corresponding to Hayes' ARS Form 78 (Hayes 1972: Fig. 22:2), discovered in 'Avedat in early fifth-century CE contexts (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 6:2); a bowl base with incised decoration (Fig. 45:2) that parallels Hayes' Form 63 (Hayes 1972: Fig. 18); and a sherd (see Fig. 44:18, right-hand side) with a molded decoration that corresponds to Hayes' Form 59B (Hayes 1972: Fig. 15:17), dated between 320 and 420 CE. The same pattern is present on a bowl discovered in sealed contexts related to the 363 CE earthquake at Mezad Hazeva (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 4:5).

#### *Cooking Wares*

Additional early Byzantine-period vessels uncovered in Area B include a lid with dense ribbing (Fig. 45:3) and a casserole with flared sides and horizontal handles (Fig. 45:4), found above bedrock in Room 1. Both types were retrieved from 'Avedat in sealed contexts from the early fifth century CE (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 6:55).

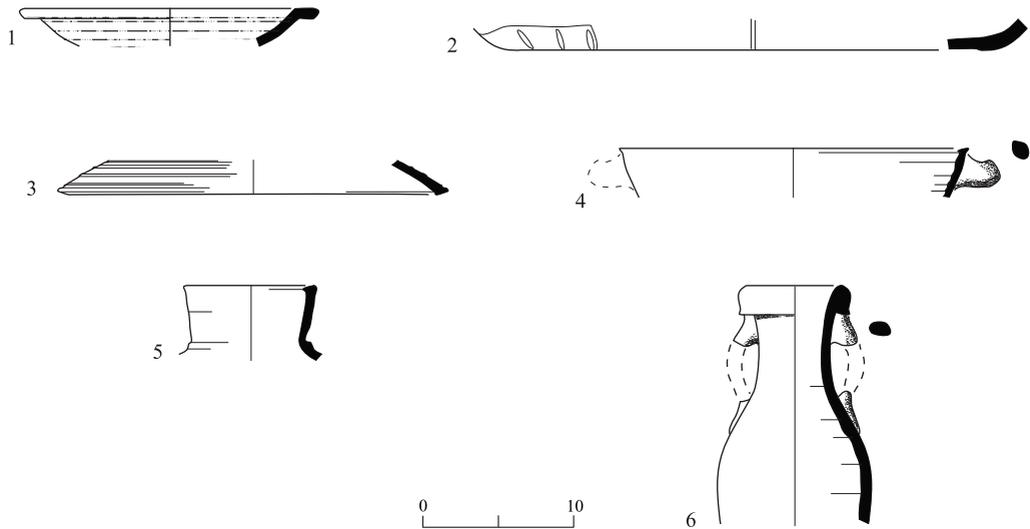


Fig. 45. Early Byzantine-period pottery.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	ARS bowl	D	2/00	25	Red (10R 5/6); red burnish (10R 4/8) on upper ext.
2	ARS bowl	D	2/00	25	Light red (2.5YR 6/6); red burnish (2.5YR 4/8)
3	Cooking ware lid	B	1/04	14	Red (2.5YR 4/6); dark gray core; minute white inclusions
4	Casserole	B	1/04	14	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray inclusions; charred ext.
5	Bag-shaped jar	B	4/02	15	Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6); minute white inclusions; traces of white slip on ext. neck
6	Imported storage jar	B	4/01	12	Light red (2.5YR 6/6); small to medium white and light gray inclusions and occasional large white inclusions; pink (7.5YR 7/4) on ext.; vertical knife-pared

### *Storage Jars*

Two jars were found below the living surface in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B. One is a bag-shaped jar with a tall neck set into a groove (Fig. 45:5) that corresponds to Magness' Form 3 (Magness 1993:223, Form 3), dated to the late third/early fourth–fifth centuries CE. The other is a 'Spatheion' jar (Fig. 47:6), a Tunisian olive-oil amphora paralleling Riley's LR Amphora 8a (Riley 1979:226–227, No. 364). This jar type was previously discovered in sealed contexts of the early fifth century CE at 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 6:37).

### **Late Byzantine Period** (sixth–early seventh centuries CE) (Figs. 46; 47)

The most significant ceramic finds were revealed in Room 2, the courtyard in Area B. The courtyard was sealed by earthquake debris in an event that took place in the early seventh century CE, sometime after 617 CE, the date of the latest burial at the site, discovered in the South Church (Negev 1997:9).

### *Bowls, Basins and a Cup*

A complete fine-ware bowl (Fig. 46:1) with a squared, everted rim and a low ring base was discovered *in situ* on the remains of a baking oven in Room 2. It appears to be an imported Egyptian Red-Slipped ware, parallel to Johnson's Form II, which was uncovered in Ashqelon (Johnson 2008:75, No. 239). According to Johnson, the form imitates ARS Form 105 No. 3, the earliest example of Form 105, from c. 600 CE. Hayes posits that Form 105 most typifies the final period of production in African factories in the first half of the seventh century CE (Hayes 1972:169). Illustrated in Fig. 46:2, 3 are examples of another imported fine-ware bowl found in Room 2—a late ARS form corresponding to Hayes' Form 104C (Hayes 1972:162: Fig. 62:14, 15), dated to 550–625 CE. Figure 46:3 bears a molded cross decoration with a double outline, within a double circle and other markings like a bowl uncovered at nearby Nizzana (Baly 1962: Pl. LIX, C4, C5; Hayes 1972:281).

In Area A, part of a deep bowl with an infolded rim was found (Fig. 46:4), a vessel type that appears mainly in buff fabrics during the late Byzantine period, after 550 CE. Recent excavations at Shivta and Ḥaluza (Elusa) revealed that it continues to appear in reddish fabrics in the Early Islamic period. Examples are found frequently in sites of the late Byzantine period in southern Israel, which adds to its diagnostic value (e.g., Nizzana—Baly 1962: Pl. LI:71; Ma'on—Levy 1960: Figs. 5:5; 6; Nahshoni and Seriy 2014, Fig. 11:4, 5; Rehovot-in-the-Negev—Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Pl. IV:171; Be'er Shema'—Erickson-Gini, Dolinka and Shilov 2015: Fig. 27:10; and Migdal Ashqelon—Nahshoni 1999: Fig. 4:8). Pottery wasters of buff-ware examples of the late Byzantine period were recently discovered at the site of Mefalsim (Tel Irit) in the western Negev (Davida Eisenberg-Degen, pers. comm.).

A basin found in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B (Fig. 46:5) conforms to Magness' Arch-Rimmed Basin, Form 3 (Magness 1993:209, Form 3, No. 4), a type found in the southern region, for example, at Ma'on-Nirim (Levy 1962: Fig. 5:4). This thick-walled vessel is decorated with vertical and wavy combing.

A Fine Byzantine Ware cup (Fig. 46:6), uncovered close to the baking oven in the courtyard (Room 2), has upright sides and a slightly everted rim. Although lacking the typical incised wavy decoration, the fabric and rim profile show a close affinity to Magness' FBW Form 1A (Magness 1993:194: Form 1A:3), a type that was unearthed at Ramot Nof near Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 3:2). Figure 46:7 shows a thick, incised sherd belonging to a vessel (basin?) made from a fabric produced in Ḥaluza. No parallels were found for this example.

### *Storage Jars*

Gaza wine jars include a middle Byzantine jar (Fig. 46:8) uncovered in Area A that corresponds to Majcherek's Form 3 (Majcherek 1995: Pl. 6:3), dated to the fifth–sixth centuries CE. This type was found almost exclusively in the dumps at Ḥaluza that appear to have ceased functioning by 550 CE (Bar-Oz, Weissbrod and Erickson-Gini 2016). Figure 46:9 displays a Gaza wine jar discovered in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B; it is the latest type of Gaza wine

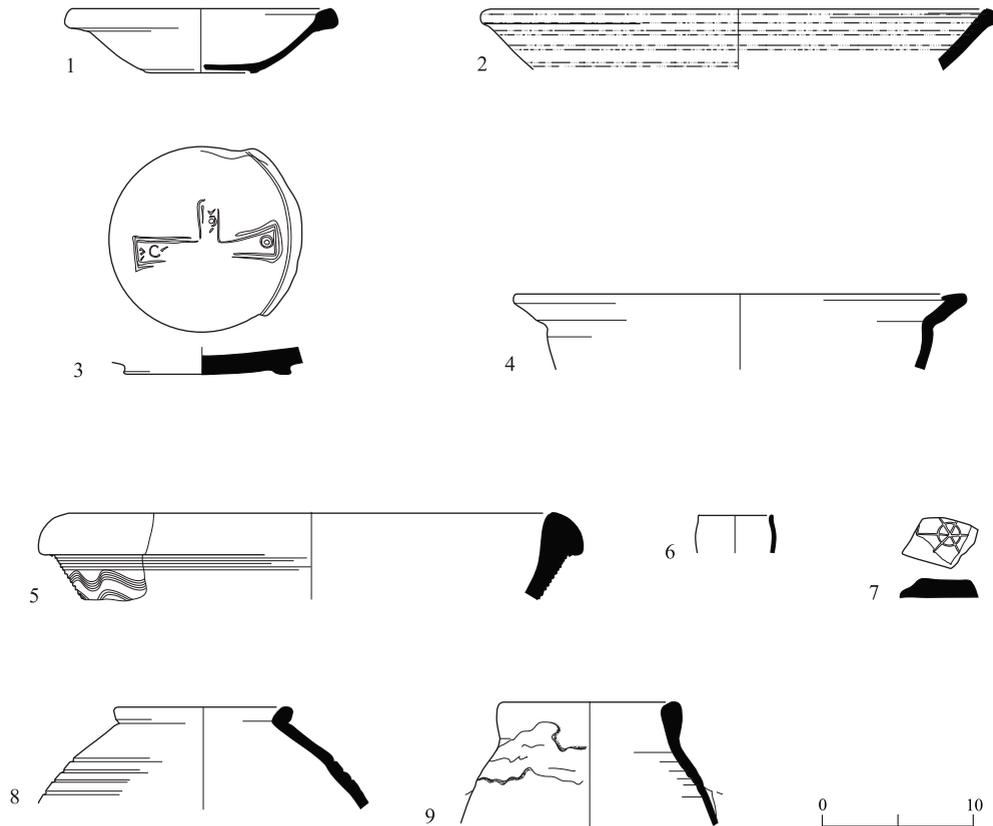


Fig. 46. Late Byzantine-period pottery.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Fine ware bowl	B	4/00	9	Red (10Y 5/8); minute occasional white inclusions
2	Fine ware bowl	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/8); minute white inclusions
3	Fine ware bowl	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/8); small to medium white inclusions
4	Bowl with enfolded rim	A	1/01	17	Pale yellow (2.5Y 7/3); occasional small white inclusions
5	Basin	B	2/01	4	Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6); pale yellow (2.5Y 7/3) slip
6	FBW cup	B	4/01	12	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white inclusions; partially pale ext. caused by firing on upper ext.
7	Incised Haluza Ware sherd	B	4/00	9	Pale yellow (2.5Y 7/4)
8	Gaza wine jar	A	1/02	18	Pink (7.5YR 7/4); tiny white inclusions; micaceous
9	Gaza wine jar	B	2/01	4	Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6); minute white and occasional large white inclusions; micaceous; pinkish gray (7.5YR 7/2) slip; pinkish gray (7.5YR 7/2) accretions and large chalk accretion on ext. below rim and accretions on rim; traces of vertical lines on ext. rim

jar. This jar type corresponds to a type found at nearby Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Pl. II:96), Majcherek's Form 4 (Majcherek 1995: Fig. 4).

The rim of a Ḥaluza Ware wine jar displayed in Fig. 47:1 was uncovered in Area A. Unlike the Gaza wine jars produced in the western Negev and the southern coastal plain, this jar was a local production from the town of Ḥaluza (Fabian and Goren 2002: Fig. 2:2). The jars appear to have been produced in both the middle and the late Byzantine periods and are particularly well-represented in dumps of the middle Byzantine period in Ḥaluza (Bar-Oz, Weissbrod and Erickson-Gini 2016: Fig. 5:15, 16). One jar was discovered in early Byzantine contexts in the Early Byzantine Residential quarter at 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 6:46).

The neck and carinated rim of an imported LRA 1 amphora (Fig. 47:2) was discovered in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B. Amphorae of this type were apparently produced in the northeastern Mediterranean throughout the Byzantine period and may have been used to ship wine (Pieri 2005); they also correspond to Peacock and Williams' Class 44 (Peacock and Williams 1986: Fig. 104, B), dated to the period between the early fifth and mid-seventh centuries CE. In the Negev sites, they appear frequently in late Byzantine contexts, for example at Ḥorbat Be'er Shema' in the western Negev (Erickson-Gini, Dolinka and Shilov 2015: Fig. 29:12, 13) and Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Pl. III:126–130).

Bag-shaped jars predominate in late Byzantine-period assemblages (550–650 CE) at sites in southern Israel. At Ḥaluza, this jar type largely displaced the ubiquitous Gaza wine jar in late Byzantine assemblages, making up more than 50% of the identifiable vessel types. In Area B, bag-shaped jars were found sunk into the dirt floor, where they were apparently used for storing grain that was ground and baked in the oven in the courtyard. Figure 47:3 is a bag-shaped jar produced from the pale-yellow ware frequently observed in vessels produced at Ḥaluza; another jar (Fig. 47:4) has a similar simple, upright neck and wide shoulders. The low, upright necks and simple rims indicate that both belong to Magness' transitional Form 5A (Magness 1993:226, Form 5A), found in great quantities at Negev sites in the Early Umayyad period, for example at Nizzana (Baly 1962: Pl. LV:2, 5) and at recent excavations conducted by the author. The bag-shaped jar shown in Fig. 47:5 has a tall neck set in a groove and narrow, closely ribbed shoulders. This type is very similar to a jar discovered in a late Byzantine monastery north of Be'er Sheva' at Ḥorbat Karkur 'Illit (Nikolsky and Figueras 2004: Fig. 40:1). The base of a bag-shaped jar (Fig. 47:6) also uncovered in Area A, corresponds in shape to a type found in Jerusalem, Magness' Storage Jar Form 5A (Magness 1993:226, No. 2) and at 'En Boqeq (Gichon 1993: Taf. 20:21).

### *Cooking Pots*

One of the latest forms of late Byzantine cooking pots (Fig. 47:7, 8), dated to the late sixth–early seventh centuries CE, was found in both Areas A and B. Both examples have a distinctive sharp, triangular rim profile and a short, incurved neck. Number 8, found in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B, has a closely ribbed globular body; it corresponds to Magness' Form 4B (Magness 1993:219–220, Form 4B:1, 2), which is very common

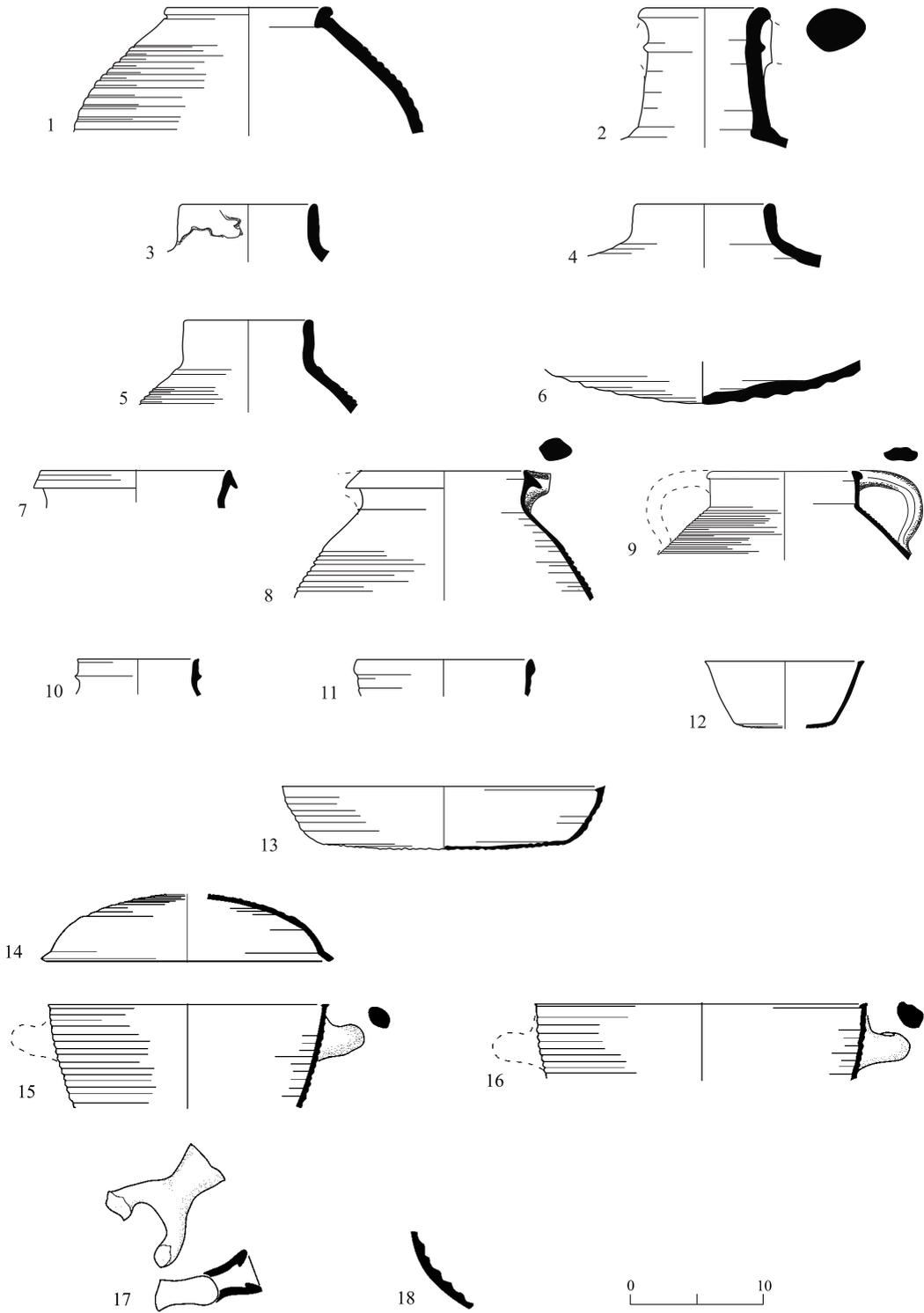


Fig. 47. Late Byzantine-period pottery.

◀ Fig. 47

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Ḥaluza Ware wine jar	A	1/02	18	Pale yellow (2.5Y 7/3)
2	Imported storage jar	B	2/01	4	Reddish yellow (5YR 7/6); occasional medium to large white inclusions; light brown core; pink (7.5YR 8/4) slip
3	Ḥaluza Ware bag-shaped jar	B	4/00	9	Pale yellow (2.5Y 7/3); occasional medium white inclusions; white accretions on ext.
4	Bag-shaped jar	B	4/00	9	Pale yellow (2.5Y 7/4); traces of grayish brown stripe on ext. below rim; dark gray accretions on int. below rim
5	Bag-shaped jar	B	2/01	4	Pink (7.5YR 8/4); very pale brown (10YR 8/3) slip
6	Bag-shaped jar base	A	1/02	18	Reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/6); occasional small white inclusions; pale yellow slip (2.5YR 8/3)
7	Cooking pot	A	1/01	17	Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4); dark gray core; tiny white inclusions
8	Cooking pot	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray inclusions
9	Cooking pot	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray inclusions
10	Cooking pot	D	1/02	23	Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4); minute white inclusions; brittle cooking ware fabric
11	Cooking pot	D	1/02	23	Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4); minute white inclusions; brittle cooking ware fabric
12	Cooking ware bowl	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); numerous small to medium white inclusions; brittle cooking pot fabric
13	Casserole	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray and occasional medium to large white inclusions
14	Cooking-ware lid	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray and occasional large white inclusions
15	Casserole	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray inclusions; charred ext.
16	Casserole	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray inclusions; charred ext.
17	Frying-pan handle	B	2/01	4	Red (2.5YR 4/6); minute white and gray and occasional white inclusions; charred upper ext.; perforation on int.
18	Sandal lamp	D	/01	22	Red (2.5YR 5/6); brittle cooking-pot ware

throughout southern Israel. The type appears in a number of diverse late Byzantine contexts, e.g., Ḥorbat Be'er Shema' (Erickson-Gini, Dolinka and Shilov 2015: Fig. 30:4), Nizzana (Baly 1962: Pl. LVI:14–19), Mamshit (Mampsis) (Erickson-Gini 1999: Fig. 21.3:1–4), 'En Boqeq (Gichon 1993: Taf. 40:35–54, 56–60, 62–68), Ḥorbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014: Fig. 15:4) and Ramot Nof, Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 6:15, 16).

Number 9, with an upright, slightly incurved neck and rounded, everted rim, strongly recalls earlier forms. It was uncovered in sealed contexts of the early seventh century CE

in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B and corresponds to Magness' Form 4A (Magness 1993:219, Form 4A:1). It has been discovered in other late Byzantine contexts at Ḥorbat Be'er Shema' (Erickson-Gini, Dolinka and Shilov 2015: Fig. 30: 5), as well as Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Fig. 6:14), Ḥorbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014: Fig. 16:18) and Ramot Nof, Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 6:14).

Another type (Fig. 47:10), uncovered in front of the *Dipinti* Cave in Area D, has a carinated neck and slightly everted rim, and is reminiscent of a late Byzantine-period cooking pot from Ramot Nof, Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 6:12). Cooking-pot rim No. 11, also discovered in front of the *Dipinti* Cave, has a closely ribbed upright neck and a pointed, slightly everted rim, rounded on the exterior. This type appears to be a transitional late Byzantine–Early Islamic type; it was uncovered at other sites in southern Israel, such as Ramot Nof, Be'er Sheva' (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 6:20–21), Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Pl. IV:187) and Ashdod-Yam (Raphael 2014: Fig. 12:1, 2). It corresponds to Magness' Form 4C (Magness 1993:220, Form 4C:3), dated between 650 and 750 CE. In the Early Islamic period, this type developed into a wide-shouldered pot with a tall, closely ribbed neck, found, for example, at Nizzana (Baly 1962: Pl. LVI: No. 135) and at the Early Islamic site of 'En Marzev ('En Yahav) in the 'Arava (Porat 2016: Fig. 57:5, 6). Vessel Nos. 10 and 11 were discovered in L1/02, B23, together with the rim of a glass bottle (see Gorin-Rosen, below: Fig. 51:3) dated to the early stages of the Umayyad period.

### *Cooking Wares*

Found in the pantry in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B were a variety of cooking vessels (Figs. 47:12–16). A small cooking bowl (Fig. 47:12) has thin, flaring walls ending in a slightly everted rim, and a ribbed base. This type of bowl shape seems to have been very common in the Byzantine period at Nizzana and Shivṭa (Baly 1962:291, Shape 44, Pl. L: No. 44: A1, A1a) and Ḥorbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014:11). At Ramot Nof, Be'er Sheva', it appears as a plain bowl and also, as a bowl with a wishbone handle (Ustinova and Nahshoni 1994: Fig. 6:2, 3).

Both shallow and deep casseroles were uncovered in the course of the 2012 excavations. The shallow casserole in Fig. 47:13 may be compared to earlier types. It has thin, incurved walls ending in a slight, flattened rim, in-turned to accommodate a lid with ribbed walls and base. Similar casseroles were discovered in late Byzantine contexts in the Negev, at Ḥorbat Karkur 'Illit (Nikolsky and Figueras 2004: Fig. 45:12) and Ḥorbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014: Fig. 11:12). Baly described the shallow casseroles found at Nizzana and Shivṭa as "extremely common" (Baly 1962:294, Pl. LII: No. 75:A2–A6).

A lid, elegantly shaped, ending in a banded, everted rim (Fig. 47:14) appears to belong to a deep casserole (Fig. 47:15). The lid is similar to a type found in Jerusalem (Magness 1993:215, No. 7), Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1988: Pl. IV: No. 187) and Ḥorbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014: Fig. 16:15). The casserole has thin, densely

ribbed walls, ending in a slightly everted rim and thick, horizontal handles that are somewhat up-turned. A third casserole (Fig. 47:16) is a wider variation of Fig. 47:13 and has horizontal handles. Both casseroles correspond to Magness' Form 1 (Magness 1993:212, Form 1), from Jerusalem. This tradition of deep casseroles clearly begins in the late Byzantine period and continues well into the Early Islamic period as revealed by casseroles found at sites dating to later periods, such as 'En Marzev in the 'Arava (Porat 2016: Figs. 57:7, 8).

The wishbone handle of a frying pan (Fig. 47:17) was found in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B. This type of handle appears at the end of the early Byzantine period (early fifth century CE) at 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010: Fig. 6:54). The wishbone handle appears on frying pans recovered from Jerusalem (Magness 1993:213, Form 2), as well as in the Negev, e.g., at Horbat Ma'on (Nahshoni and Seriy 2014: Fig. 11:12). A complete frying pan with a wishbone handle was discovered in Byzantine contexts at Nizzana (Baly 1962: Pl. LII, No. 76:1–3).

### *Sandal Lamp*

A sherd of a wheel-made sandal lamp was uncovered in the upper layers in front of the *Dipinti* Cave in Area D (Fig. 47:18). It is made of a distinctive thin, cooking-ware fabric, closely and finely ribbed, and corresponds to Rosenthal and Sivan's wheel-made 'sandal lamp' Variant A (Rosenthal and Sivan 1978:122–123, Nos. 506, 507). This lamp type is common throughout southern Israel and southern Jordan in the middle Byzantine period, after the mid-fifth century CE. It continued to be widely produced through the end of the late Byzantine period. At Nizzana, during the late Byzantine and Early Islamic periods, Rosenthal and Sivan's Variants A and B were the most common lamps (Colt 1962:63–64; Pl. XXVIII, Nos. 22, 23). They were apparently found there together with molded lamps of the Early Islamic period, which continue to appear as late as the eighth century CE (Colt 1962:63–64, Pl. XXVIII, Nos. 16–21). Variant A sandal lamps made of a thicker fabric still appear sporadically in Early Islamic contexts, for example in the caravansary at 'En Marzev in the 'Arava (Porat 2016: Fig. 57:17). Rahmani (1983:221) states that the production of this type begins in the sixth century CE, continues through the seventh century and disappears toward the eighth century.

### **Islamic to British Mandate Periods (Fig. 48)**

Several sherds that post-date the late Byzantine period and the destruction and abandonment of 'Avedat in the early seventh century CE were discovered in the upper layers of the probe in front of the *Dipinti* Cave in Area D together with a mixture of modern items and pieces of newspaper. These sherds indicate that the back of the cave was in use after 'Avdat was destroyed.

Early Islamic sherds of molded cream-ware vessels (Fig. 48:1), formerly referred to as Buff Ware, date to the Abbasid period (800–950 CE) (Stacey 2004:137, Fig. 5:49:4, 5; Whitcomb and Taha 2013:60). As 'Avedat was destroyed at the end of the late Byzantine



Fig. 48. Islamic and British Mandate pottery.

No.	Vessel	Area	Locus	Basket	Description
1	Molded Cream Ware sherds	D	/01	22	Light yellowish brown (2.5Y 6/3); pale yellow ext. (2.5Y 8/3)
2	Handmade sherd	D	/01	22	Brown (7.5YR 5/4) on int.; yellowish red (5YR 5/6 ext.); numerous small to medium white inclusions; dark gray core; charred ext.
3	Black Gaza Ware	D	/01	22	Gray (7.5YRN 3/); minute white inclusions

period, characteristic molded cream ware vessels are rare but they have been found in neighboring sites which continued to be occupied as late as the Abbasid period, such as Nizzana (Baly 1962:302, Pl. LXI, Ware XL:1–9) and in small quantities in recent excavations at Shivta (Tepper et al. 2018:133, Fig. 8). Cytryn-Silverman (1996:70) writes that the distribution of this ware in North Sinai was primarily in the coastal area of el-‘Arish-Rafah and that the ware may have been produced in the region of Ramla-Lod (Cytryn-Silverman 1996: n. 73; see also Cytryn-Silverman 2010:107).

Two Ottoman-period sherds were found in the upper layer of the probe in the *Dipinti* Cave—one of a handmade vessel (Fig. 48:2) and the other a Black Gaza Ware vessel (Fig. 48:3). The ware of Fig. 48:2 has numerous white inclusions; the author observed this ware in the medieval village of Bayda, north of Petra. Sinibaldi dated this ware to the eleventh–twentieth centuries CE (Sinibaldi 2013:70–174, 190; Fig. 1.1–4). The Black Gaza Ware sherd belongs to a group of Late Ottoman wares that continued to be produced during the British Mandate and beyond. This ware was found in many sites in the Negev, particularly those frequented by Bedouin, for instance the site of Naḥal Be’erotayim (West) (Saidel and Erickson-Gini 2014:141–142, Fig. 6).

#### MISCELLANEOUS SMALL FINDS

##### *Marble Paten*

A large piece of a marble paten (Fig. 49) was found in the pantry in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B. It was carved from white marble and appears to be quite similar to the marble

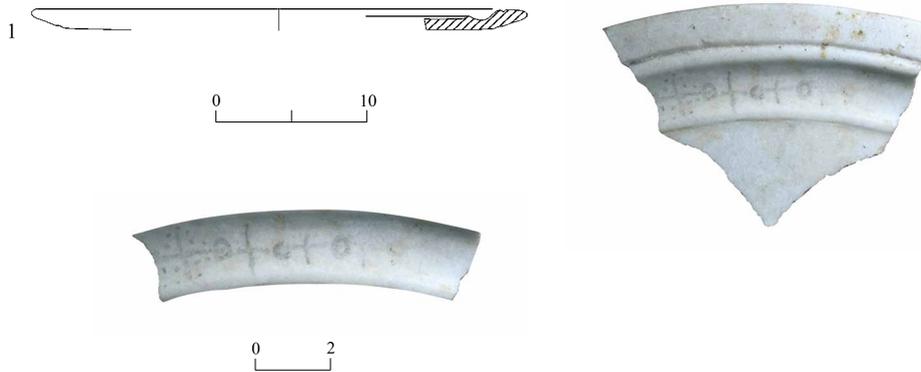


Fig. 49. Marble paten from the pantry in courtyard of Area B.

paten discovered years earlier in the South Church (Negev 1997:143, Photograph 221). Both are wide and shallow with a grooved ledge rim and a flat base. There is a deep groove between the rim and the vessel's interior. The paten from Area B was decorated with black painted *dipinti*, now faded, in the form of a chain of crosses and circles with dots. On the left side of the chain is a cross decorated with dots on four sides. Only one part of the paten was found in the pantry, suggesting that this was part of a broken vessel that the inhabitants may have kept for sentimental or apotropaic reasons. Patens were used in Byzantine churches as a platter for distributing the Eucharist bread; when not in use, they were stored in the prothesis of the sanctuary together with the wine chalice. It is noteworthy that marble patens continue to be uncovered in excavations in southern Israel: in 2019, parts of at least three marble patens were discovered in the debris of a Byzantine church dismantled in the Early Islamic period in er-Rasm, south of Ashqelon (Erickson-Gini 2021:20\*).

#### *Three Beads and a Small Gastropod Shell*

Three beads were discovered in Area A, all in L1/02: Fig. 50:1 is made of carnelian and biconical in shape; Fig. 50:2 is made of black-banded agate and tubular in shape; and Fig. 50:3 is made from a white shell, and is round and worn.

A small shell of a gastropod was also uncovered (Fig. 50:4); it may have been used as an ornament.

#### *Mother-of-Pearl Shell*

A mother-of-pearl shell (Fig. 50:5) was found in Area D on the floor in the ruined cave, in front of the *Dipinti* Wall. The context suggests that it was deposited in the cave during the Roman period.

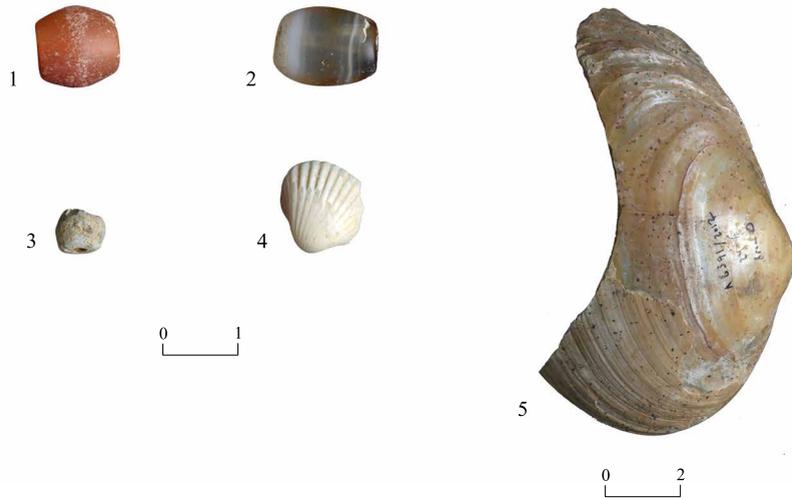


Fig. 50. Small finds.

No.	Object	Area	Locus	Basket No.
1	Carnelian bead	A	1/02	18
2	Agate bead	A	1/02	
3	White-shell bead	A	1/02	
4	Shell			
5	Shell	D	1/03	24

### *Glass Finds*

Yael Gorin-Rosen

A few glass vessels were uncovered, three of which are of value as dating indicators due to the contexts in which they were discovered. The other glass fragments are non-diagnostic or fragments in a poor state of preservation.

Figure 51:1 is the rim of an eroded, colorless bottle or flask uncovered above the cave floor in front of the *Dipinti* Wall in Area D (L1/02, B23). The everted rim has a wide fold (0.5 cm). The colorless fabric is very different from the local fabrics and is frequently identified as imported, possibly from Egypt. Several fragments of other colorless, Roman-period vessels were found at the site (Jackson-Tal 2016:82–83). This rim type is characteristic of the Roman and Late Roman periods, for example, colorless flasks from Karanis, Egypt (Harden 1936:203–204, Pls. VII:562, 568; XVII:562; XVIII:568) and a colorless vessel from Tomb 7 at Fardisya, dated to the third century CE (Gorin-Rosen 2009:77\*–78\*, Fig. 1:8). Such vessels were discovered at other sites situated along the Incense Route, excavated by Rodulph Cohen (unpublished).

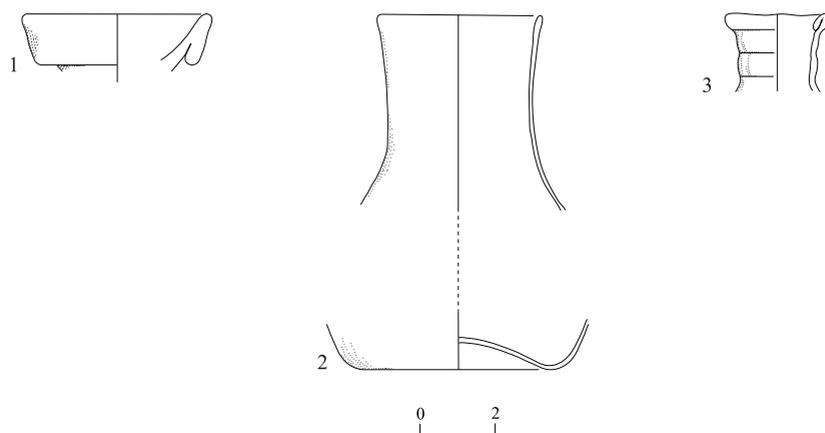


Fig. 51. Glass finds.

A glass bottle with an upright rim, piriform body and slightly concave base (Fig. 51:2) was discovered among the remains of the pantry in the courtyard (Room 2) in Area B (L2/01, B4). The vessel's sides were very thin, causing them to erode to the extent that the vessel could not be reconstructed. The bottle has a characteristic wide mouth that widens to the body without a proper neck or constriction between the mouth and body. This shape is less common. The glass quality is similar to that of glass vessels from the Negev in the Byzantine period.

The third vessel is a rim fragment of a bottle (Fig. 51:3) made of greenish-blue glass. It was found in Area D (L1/02, B23) in front of the *Dipinti* Cave. The rim is infolded, and below it are wide horizontal ridges. This type of vessel was widely distributed, beginning in the Umayyad period and continuing into the Abbasid period (Gorin-Rosen 2010:233–235, Pl. 10.6:7–10). It compares to bottles from a number of other sites in the northern Negev, such as Hura (Gorin-Rosen 2012: Fig. 9:4) and Tel 'Ira, where it was discovered in a courtyard of a Byzantine-period structure that continued in use in the Early Islamic period (Lehrer-Jacobson 1999:442–444, Fig. 13:3). Two similar bottles were recovered from the site of Naḥal 'Anim, dated to the Early Islamic period (eighth–ninth centuries CE; Winter 2017:1–3, Fig. 1:3, 4, with further references to Upper Naḥal Besor). This bottle type was also found at Nizzana (Nessana), dated by Harden to the tenth–eleventh centuries CE, although he also cites earlier parallels (Harden 1962:87, Pl. XX:67). The glass fabric suggests that it belongs to the Umayyad period and not later. During the Abbasid period, a change in the production resulted in different glass compositions and appearances (Gorin-Rosen 2010:213–214).

The three glass vessels are evidence of three periods in the timeline of the site: the Roman period, the late second or third century CE, in which the glass is of high quality, probably imported; the Byzantine period; and the Umayyad period. The two later periods are represented by local products.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The 2012 excavations at 'Avedat revealed important evidence regarding the effects of earthquakes on the Byzantine-period occupation in Areas A and B and the use of a cave on the southern slope of the site by a monastic community in Area D. The author previously uncovered evidence of a destructive seismic event at the site that occurred in the early fifth century CE in the Roman/Byzantine Quarter, directly outside the middle Byzantine town wall east of the acropolis (Erickson-Gini 2010:90–95). Substantiation of this particular event may be inferred by the construction of heavy revetment walls along the southern side of the temenos, i.e., the western part of the acropolis, as well as the construction of smaller revetments against private houses such as that of Area B. However, the excavations appear to provide the first definitive testimony of earthquake damage and subsequent rebuilding in a stratigraphical context. 'Avedat met its final devastation at the end of the late Byzantine period, postdating the latest epitaph found in the South Church (617 CE), dating to the first half of the seventh century CE.

The most dramatic testimony of earthquake damage was in Area B, in rooms that had been added to the northern exterior of an earlier building, presumably following damage by an earlier earthquake in the early fifth century CE. The rooms appear to have been attached to the earlier building next to a heavy revetment wall located to the east. This building is situated in close proximity to the South Church and the discovery of part of a marble paten in the pantry in Room 2 raises the possibility that the building was occupied by church personnel.

Western Room 1 in Area B appears to have been roofed with heavy stone slabs supported by arches. The heavy collapse remained *in situ* on the eastern side of the room but further excavation on the western side revealed stone arches bearing incised, red-painted decoration. Room 2 seems to have been kind of a sunken open courtyard, in front of the main entrance into the structure, accessed by means of stairs leading down from the northeastern corner, opposite a baking oven. A number of bag-shaped storage jars found sunken into the earthen floor of the room probably served to store grain for grinding and baking. A similar baking oven, also located in the corner of an open courtyard, was uncovered by the author in Room 38 in the Roman/Byzantine Quarter in 'Avedat (Erickson-Gini 2010:94). Noteworthy is the mentioning of a baking oven and courtyard in a sale contract between a civilian and a soldier, dated c. 566/7 CE, in the Nizzana archive (Colt 1962:259). Unusual is the presence of a pantry in the southeastern corner of the courtyard near the wide entrance into the main building. This small space was used to store cooking and other vessels, including a glass bottle (Fig. 51:2), that were probably placed on wooden shelves. An unusual find in the pantry was part of a marble paten with faded black ink patterns of crosses and circles (Fig. 49). The ceramic and glass vessels in the pantry and the rest of the courtyard, including the latest form of a Gaza wine jar (Fig. 46:9), point to a late Byzantine date in the first half of the seventh century CE. However, there were no organic finds or coins that could have provided a more precise date for the destruction of the rooms.

The *Dipinti* Cave, located on the southern slope below the acropolis in Area D, completes the picture of the late Byzantine occupation at the site. The extant wall in front of the cave apparently dates to the Roman period, based on the fragment of a molded Judean Southern Lamp (Fig. 44:17) and a glass fragment (Fig. 51:1), both produced during the Roman period. Red-painted Christian motifs, such as crosses, were added to the early wall. It seems that this wall too underwent structural damage, probably due to the early fifth-century CE earthquake. After this event, the interior of the wall was repaired, and a window was blocked. The motifs discovered on the *Dipinti* Wall and in the cave interior, particularly on the eastern wall, deep inside the cave, point to its use by a monastic community. Figueras (1995:434) discussed the existence of monastic communities in 'Avedat in the South Church and the structure in front of the Cave of the Saints. The winepresses situated in proximity to both the South Church and the Cave of the Saints deserve our attention. The use of the *Dipinti* Cave by such a community may have been encouraged by the presence of the large cistern of an earlier (Roman?) date located on the tier just above and behind the *Dipinti* Cave. Additionally, access to walled gardens, fields and a large winepress located below the cave on the plain to the south of 'Avedat would have also attracted the community. Layers of organic material (animal manure) outside the cave indicate that the rooms in front of the *Dipinti* Wall served for stabling animals. Stabling animals in close proximity to dwellings was customary in the region among the poorer segments of the population and continued up until modern times (Canaan 1933:35, 70).

Epigraphic evidence from earlier excavations in 'Avedat show that donkeys and camels were regularly used to bring produce from the fields (Erickson-Gini 2012:53, Fig. 5). The position of the cave and its external rooms well-suited the commanding of the plain below and, among other things, may have been an indication of ownership. According to Canaan, it was customary in this region for low-lying fields to belong to those occupying higher ground (Canaan 1933:53); the higher location within the protected walls of the Byzantine town allowed the inhabitants to easily observe and guard the fields during harvest.

The earthquake that destroyed the site at the end of the late Byzantine period, presumably in the first half of the seventh century CE, appears to have destroyed a room of the cave in front of the *Dipinti* Wall. Extant walls c. 10 m south of the *Dipinti* Wall apparently belong to the same structure that incorporated the *Dipinti* Cave. In the Early Islamic (Abbasid) period, visitors who frequented the cave, probably because of the cistern, left debris on the ruins of the collapsed bedrock shelf fronting the *Dipinti* Wall. Also found in the debris above the collapse were finds from the Late Ottoman and British Mandate periods, among them pieces of Arabic- and English-language newspapers. Unlike many red-painted *dipinti* in the 'Avedat caves, those on the *Dipinti* Wall are particularly well-preserved due to the cave's location on the south-slope facing, thereby ensuring minimum exposure to sunlight.

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