

A BRONZE AGE SITE AT NAḤAL RIMMONIM IN THE JEZREEL VALLEY

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INTRODUCTION

In November 1999, salvage excavations were carried out at the site of Naḥal Rimmonim (NIG 2210/7174; OIG 1710/2174),¹ in the southwestern part of the Jezreel Valley, northwest of the modern village and ancient site of Zububa (Ezbuba)² (Palestinian Authority) and 1.5 km southeast of Kibbutz Giv'at 'Oz (Fig. 1). Naḥal Rimmonim is a wadi that originates in the upper Menashe Hills and flows into the lower Jezreel Valley floor southwest

of the site, separating it from the hilltop upon which Zububa is located. The site is situated immediately above the brown alluvial soil layer on the lower slope of the Jezreel Valley bordering the Menashe foothills.

On the basis of the distribution of the finds, as well as from aerial photographs, the size of the Naḥal Rimmonim site is estimated at about one hectare. Although mostly located in Israel, the site extends into territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority; the 1999 excavation squares are located on the patrol road bordering this division.

Water sources in the immediate vicinity of the site include a cluster of springs to its northwest, near Tel Qedesh, and numerous wells located at modern Zububa noted by Conder and Kitchener (1881–1883:44).

The site was previously surveyed by Nehemia Zori (1977:51, Site No. 74) who dated the various occupation levels to EB I, the Intermediate Bronze Age, and MB IIA. Arieḥ Drori of Kibbutz Giv'at 'Oz repeatedly surveyed the site; his extensive archaeological collection reflects the periods of occupation noted by Zori. During a second season of excavations at the site in 2003,³ gravel from the ancient bed of Naḥal Rimmonim was exposed in association with the Intermediate Bronze Age stratum. Two MB IIA phases, one including a potter's workshop, and a rich tomb dating to MB IIC, were also uncovered.

Two squares were excavated (Fig. 2), revealing architectural remains from three superimposed strata dated to the Intermediate Bronze Age (Strata III, II) and MB IIA| (Stratum I). The archaeological remains were found directly below the modern surface.

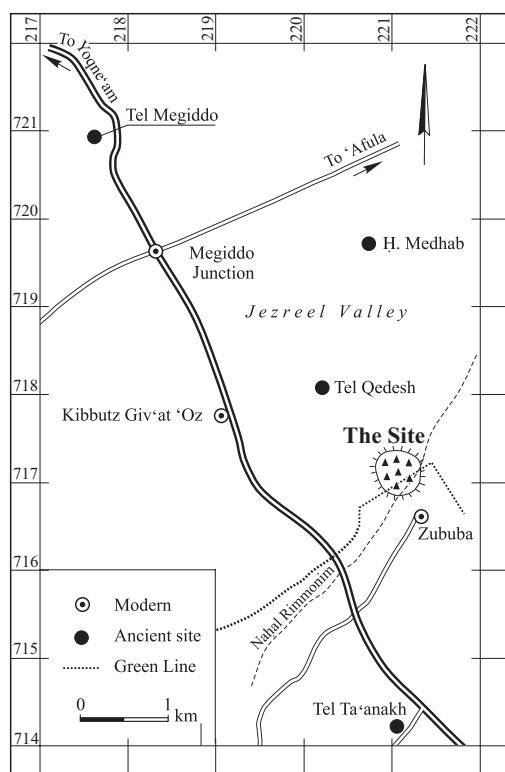


Fig. 1. Location map of the Naḥal Rimmonim site with nearby ancient sites.



Fig. 2. General view of the excavation, looking east.

THE INTERMEDIATE BRONZE AGE (Plan 1)

STRATIGRAPHY

A number of limited probes excavated below the Stratum I wall foundations revealed two strata (III and II) dating to the Intermediate Bronze Age. Due to the limited nature of the probes, the architectural features of these strata were not widely exposed. Although the architectural plan of the consecutive Intermediate Bronze Age occupation is not distinct, the stratigraphic sequence is conclusive, revealing Stratum III elements below the removal of Stratum II stone layers.

Stratum III

Even though the probes reaching Stratum III were minimal, the stratigraphic sequence was consistent in all excavated areas, with all elements of this stratum erected above sterile soil. The exposed series of hard-packed stone layers (L132, L134, L140; Fig. 3) may possibly merge into a single architectural feature. In addition, a gray ashy pit (L137) in square A1 contained a large quantity of bones and

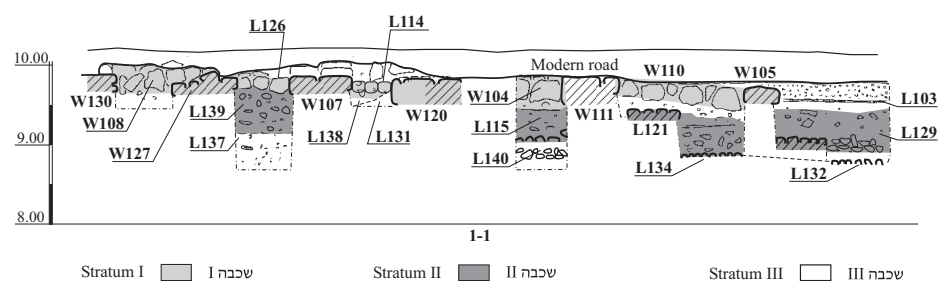
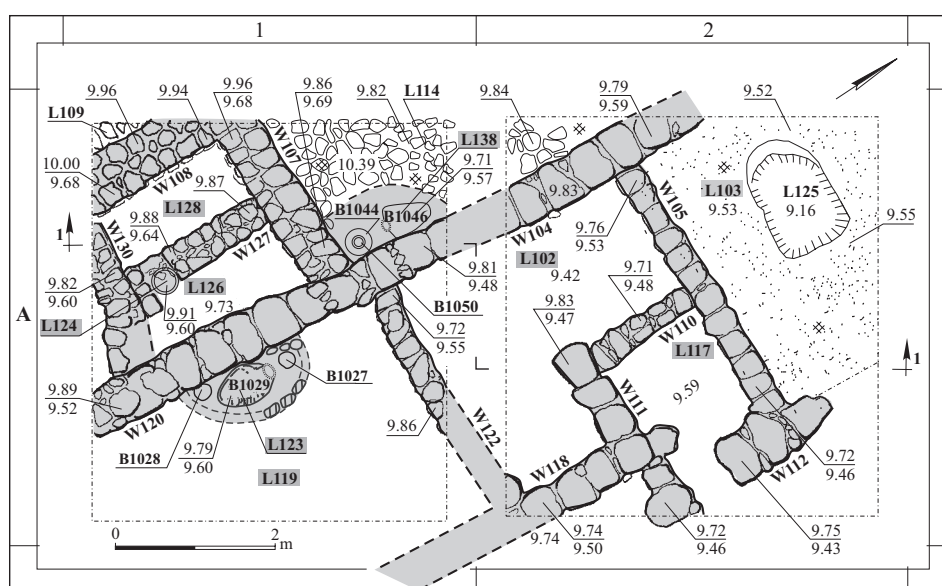
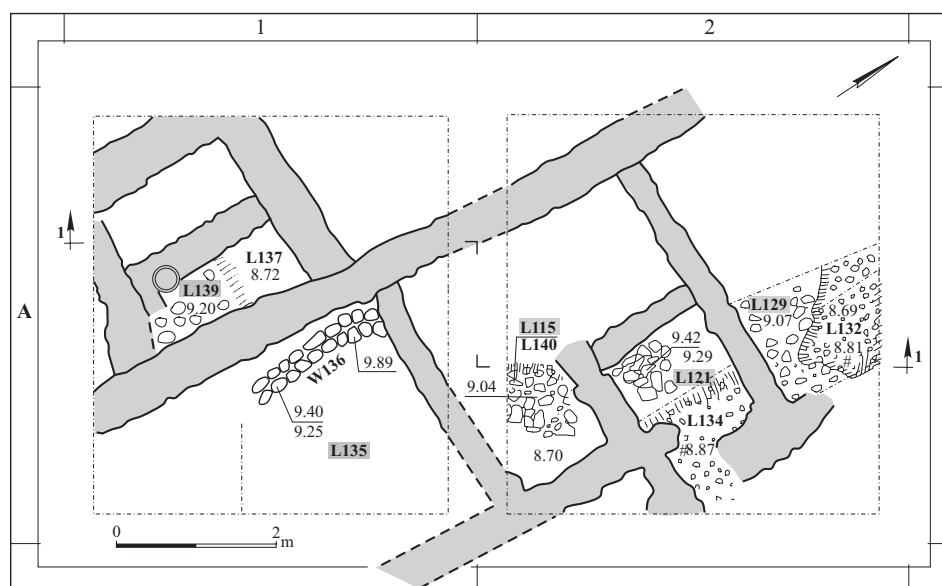


Fig. 3. Stratum II: Floor 129 overlying Floor 132 of Stratum III, looking west; above them are W105 and Floor 103 of Stratum I.

pottery sherds, as well as an intact bronze pin (Fig. 9:13).

Stratum II

Directly beneath the MB IIA Stratum I walls, in all of the probes, the soil changed into an accumulation of softer brown debris. Architectural elements associated with this stratum include a small stone wall (W136) and a hard-packed stone layer (L129; Fig. 3). Wall 136 (Fig. 4) was poorly preserved to only a



Plan 1. Plans and section of the site.

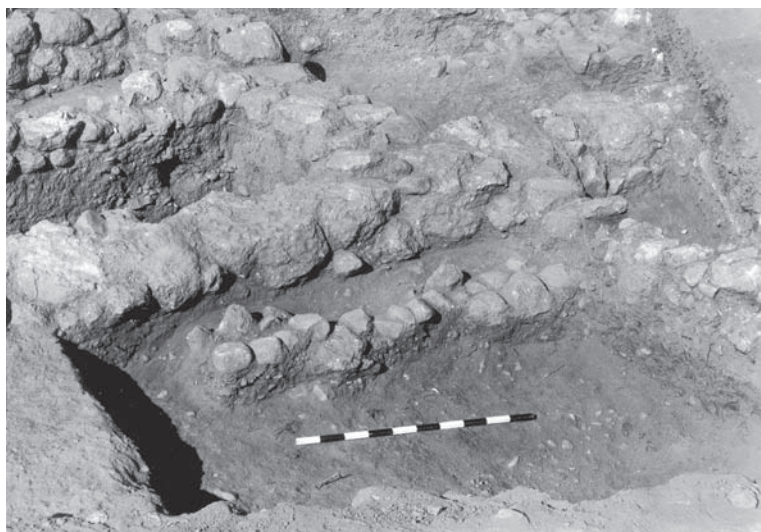


Fig. 4. Stratum II: W136, looking west.

single course; the accumulation (L135) abutting this wall was clearly dated to the Intermediate Bronze Age. Additional loci associated with this stratum include accumulations (L115, L121) and fills (L139). Finds relating to these loci include pottery sherds, flint, and animal bones.

The finds from Strata III and II are presented in the figures by stratum. Due to the similarity of the pottery assemblages and the limited scope of the excavation, the typological discussion deals with both strata together.

POTTERY

The pottery assemblage at Naḥal Rimmonim shares traits with known contemporaneous Intermediate Bronze Age pottery assemblages of the Jezreel Valley, such as Tel Megiddo, Tel 'Afula, and 'Ein el-Ḥilu: the vessels are handmade, some with wheel-finishing, and come in a variety of forms and decorations that reflect a regional character. The closest parallels are to the extensively excavated site of 'Ein el-Ḥilu⁴—an Intermediate Bronze Age hamlet located at the northern margins of the Jezreel Valley.

Small Bowls

The small bowls include both rounded and straight-sided deep bowls, in addition to straight-sided shallow bowls.

Small Hemispherical Bowl/Cup.— This bowl has a simple rounded rim and walls (Fig. 5:1), with signs of wet smoothing on the upper 2–3 cm of the interior and exterior walls. Another cup (Fig. 6:1) has straighter walls and incised lines encircling the vessel, resembling those found at Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pl. 15:6).

Small Shallow Bowl (Fig. 6:2).— This bowl has a thickened rim and apparently had two ledge handles. This bowl type is known at 'Ein el-Ḥilu, where the bowls often have red painted rims (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 37: 8–11).

Large Bowls

The large bowls are made from a coarse ware, and may be classified into two main groups according to their depth. The bowls exhibit a high diversity of types and a low level of standardization, as noted by the variation of rims and the placement of the ledge handles.

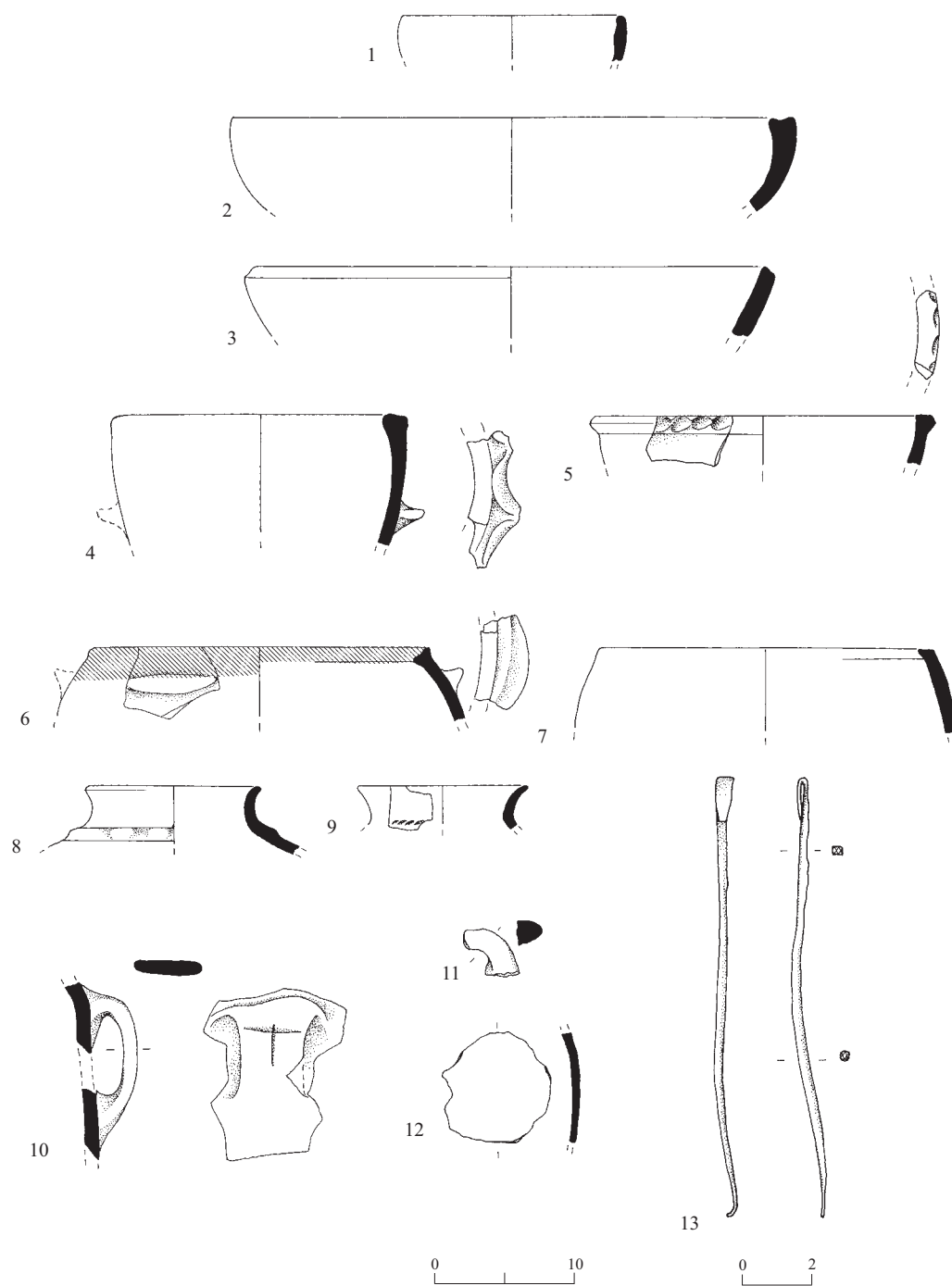


Fig. 5. Stratum III finds.

◀ Fig. 5

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Bowl	1068/2	137	Light orange brown clay, minute gray grits
2	Bowl	1020/7	140	Light orange brown clay, gray grits
3	Bowl	1054/2	132	Brown clay, gray grits
4	Bowl	1024/4	140	Buff clay, red and gray grits
5	Bowl	1020/6	140	Light brown clay, white and gray grits
6	Holemouth	1020/5	140	Light orange brown clay, red and gray grits, red painted decoration
7	Holemouth	1068/1	137	Light orange brown clay, white and gray grits
8	Storage jar	1020/3	140	Light brown clay, red and gray grits, applied decoration
9	Storage jar	1058/1	132	Orange clay, white and gray grits, incised decoration
10	Storage jar (handle)	1020/1	140	Light brown clay, white and gray grits, incised lines
11	Amphoriskos (handle)	1020/8	140	Light brown clay, white grits
12	Stopper	1020/2	140	Cooking pot sherd; brown clay, gray grits, sooted ext.
13	Toggle pin	1066	137	Bronze

Folded ledge handles are commonly found on both the shallow and the deeper bowls.

Large Shallow Bowls.— The large shallow bowls (LSB) have either a recessed rim with a slight gutter (LSB1) (Figs. 5:2; 6:5), a simple beveled rim (LSB2) (Fig. 5:3), or a thickened inverted rim (LSB3) (Fig. 6:3, 4). All of these bowls have parallels at 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 38:1–5).

Large Deep Bowls.— The rims of the large deep bowls (LDB) (Figs. 5:4, 5; 6:6–12) are similar to those of the large shallow bowls. The common placement of the handles on these bowls enables a further division into subtypes. *LDB1*: These bowls have a flat rim (Fig. 6:6, 7), often with a shallow gutter (Fig. 6:8–10).

LDB2: These bowls have either a flat rim, sometimes with a slight gutter (Figs. 5:4; 6:11), or a beveled rim (Fig. 6:12), and are characterized by folded envelope ledge handles below the rim, often positioned midway on the side of the bowl. This bowl type is very common at 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 39:1–3), Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-

Paran 1996: Fig. 10:5), and also at Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pl. 15:18).

LDB3: Although this bowl type is similar to LDB2, it has a thumb-indented 'piecrust' band along the exterior side of the flat rim (Fig. 5:5). Similar bowls are found at 'Ein el-Hilu where, in addition to a thumb-indented band, there are also ledge handles positioned at the rim (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 39:8–11).

Holemouth Vessels

The holemouths are defined as closed globular or straight-profiled vessels having inverted rims and no neck. Like the large bowls, the holemouths exhibit a low level of standardization also noted by the rim variation.

Holemouth vessels having a recessed rim with a slight gutter (HM1) (Figs. 5:6; 6:14, 15) and often have ledge handles (Fig. 5:6) or loop handles (Fig. 6:15) from the rim to the shoulder of the vessel. The holemouth in Fig. 5:7, which has an inverted flat rim (HM2), may also have had a ledge handle. Holemouth vessels often have red painted bands on the upper exterior surface and rim (Fig. 5:6) or 'trickle-painted' decoration (Fig. 6:13).⁵ The surprisingly small

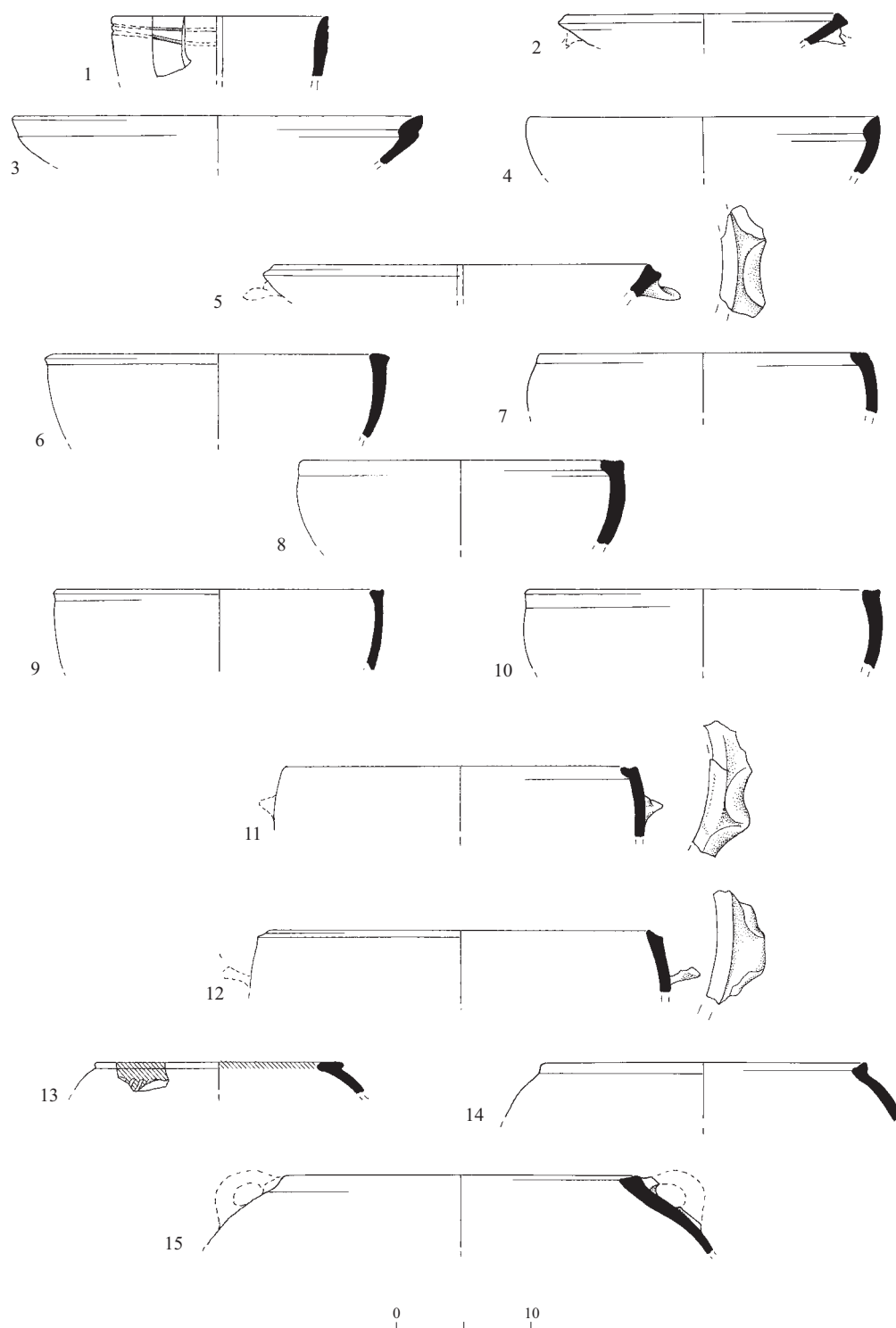


Fig. 6. Stratum II: bowls and holemouth vessels.

◀ Fig. 6

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Bowl/cup	1042/2	129	Pink clay, minute gray and red grits, incised decoration
2	Bowl	1019/2	115	Light brown clay, minute gray and white grits
3	Bowl	1067/1	135	Red brown clay, minute gray grits
4	Bowl	1065/2	135	Dark gray clay, white grits
5	Bowl	1065/1	135	Pink clay, minute gray and red grits
6	Bowl	1048/4	139	Light brown clay, minute gray grits
7	Bowl	1026/1	121	Light brown clay, minute gray and white grits
8	Bowl	1049/2	129	Light brown clay, minute gray and red grits
9	Bowl	1049/1	129	Light brown clay, gray grits
10	Bowl	1062/1	129	Light brown clay, gray grits
11	Bowl	1059/1	135	Pink clay, minute gray and red grits
12	Bowl	1055/1	129	Orange clay, white and gray grits
13	Holemouth	1055/7	129	Cream clay, fine gray and red grits, red painted decoration
14	Holemouth	1019/1	115	Light brown clay ext., orange clay int., white and gray grits
15	Holemouth	1025/1	119 or 135	Light brown clay, red and gray grits

quantity of trickle-painted ware in the present assemblage may be due to the limited exposure of the Intermediate Bronze Age strata.

The decorated exterior of many holemouths is indicative of their use for serving, in addition to storage. This is noted at both 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 40:1–4, 8) and Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-Paran 1996: Fig. 10:6–9).

Cooking Pots

The necked cooking pots (Fig. 7:1–3) with a short everted neck/rim and a globular body are handmade with signs of wheel finishing on the neck area. All of the rims at Nahal Rimmonim are of the tapered flaring rim type. Common among the cooking pots is the applied rope decoration at the joint of the neck and shoulder (Fig. 7:1, 2). A wide range of these cooking pots is noted at Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-Paran 1996: Fig. 10:10–17) and 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 42:2–10).

Storage Jars

The storage jars of Strata III and II exhibit a diversified rim typology. In the absence of

any complete vessels from this period in the excavated area, four types of storage vessels from Strata III and II can be distinguished based on the rim/neck morphology:

SJ1 (Fig. 7:4–6).— Storage jars with upright neck and a simple rounded or tapered rim. The rounded shoulders indicate a globular upper body shape. This jar type is noted at Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-Paran 1996: Fig. 11:5).

SJ2 (Fig. 7:7, 8).— Storage jars with tapered rim and short flaring neck; in the interior joint of the neck and the shoulder there is an overhang of excess clay.

SJ3 (Figs. 5:8, 9; 7:9, 10).— Jars characterized by a rounded or beveled rim and a high flaring neck. They have either applied plastic rope decoration (Fig. 5:8) or oblique incisions (Fig. 5:9) at the joint of the neck and the shoulder.

SJ4 (Fig. 7:11, 12).— Storage jars with a long/high flaring narrow neck, slightly pinched beveled rim, and 'funnel-like' opening. These

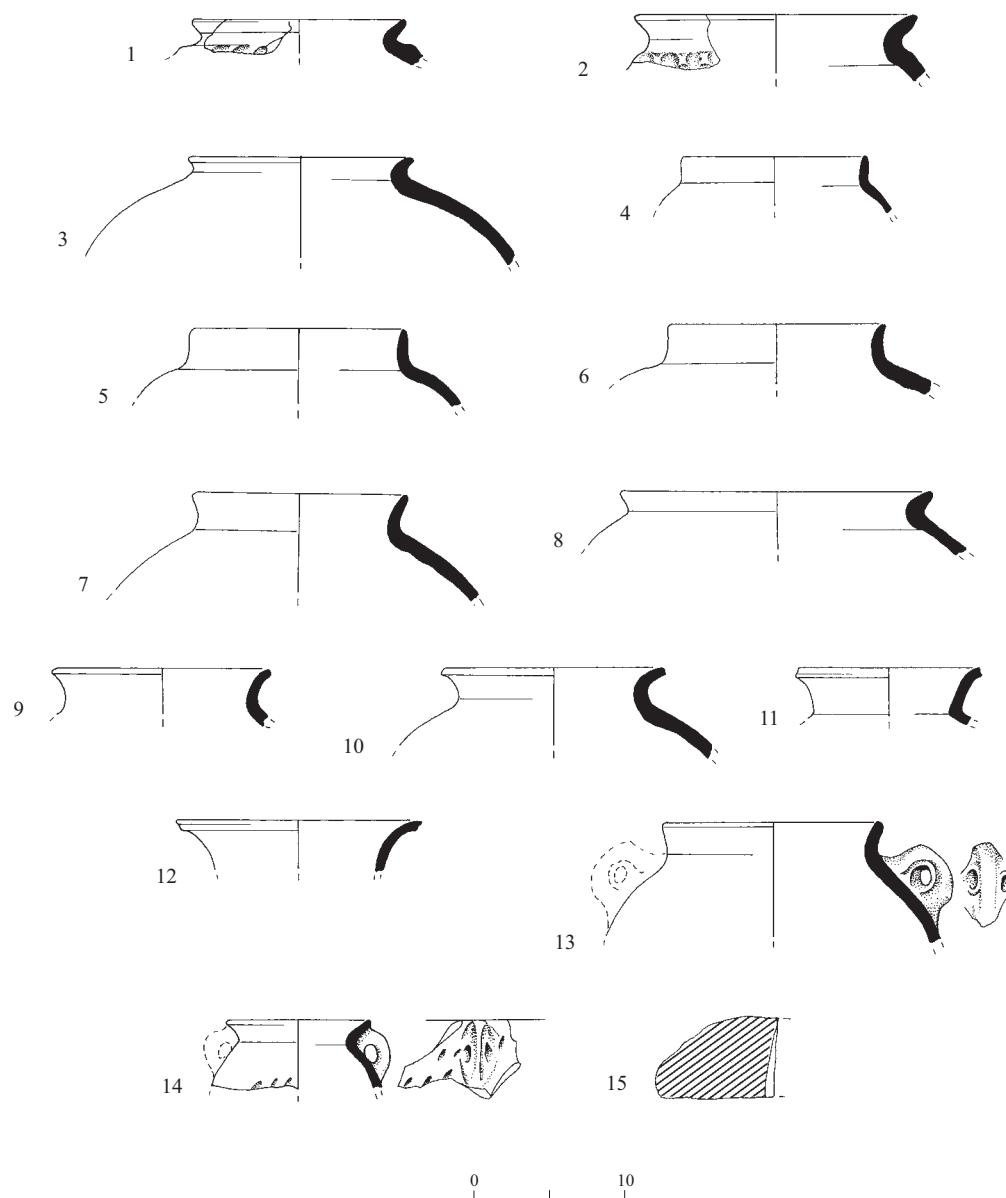


Fig. 7. Stratum II: cooking pots and storage vessels.

vessels, of a typical greenish fabric, have thin walls of well-levigated clay fired to a very high temperature giving a metallic ring to the vessel walls. The larger jar (Fig. 7:12) may be a pithos (cf. 'Ein el-Hilu; Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 44:9). High-fired 'metallic' vessels of this type, limited to storage vessels, were noted at both Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-Paran 1996:

Fig. 11:10, 11) and 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Fig. 43:1, 3).

A flat, loop storage-jar handle (Fig. 5:10) has an incised mark. Incised markings on the handles of large and small storage vessels are common in the third millennium and are generally interpreted as potter's marks in a small-scale production system. Flat loop handles are the

◀ Fig. 7

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Cooking pot	1026/2	121	Brown clay, white and gray grits, sooted rim, applied decoration
2	Cooking pot	1048/3	139	Brown clay, gray grits, sooted rim, applied decoration
3	Cooking pot	1042/1	129	Brown clay, white grits, sooted ext.
4	Storage jar	1065/3	135	Light brown clay, white, red and gray grits
5	Storage jar	1048	139	Orange clay, gray and white grits
6	Storage jar	1069/1	135	Buff clay, white and gray grits
7	Storage jar	1048/1	139	Orange clay, gray grits
8	Storage jar	1048/5	139	Orange brown clay, gray grits
9	Storage jar	1067/2	135	Buff clay, white grits
10	Storage jar	1063/1	135	Light brown clay ext., orange clay int., white and gray grits
11	Storage jar	1042/1	129	Green buff clay, fine white grits, metallic ware
12	Storage jar	1048/7	139	Green buff clay, fine white grits, metallic ware
13	Amphoriskos	106812	129	Buff clay, white and gray grits
14	Amphoriskos	1048/2	139	Light brown clay, white, red and gray grits, incised decoration
15	Upper grinding stone	1026	121	Basalt

second most common handle type at 'Ein el-Hilu (Covello-Paran 1999: Table 8).

Amphoriskoi

The amphoriskoi (Fig. 7:13, 14) of the Strata III and II assemblage are of the wide-necked type. The larger amphoriskos (Fig. 7:13) has a simple rounded rim, a slightly flaring short neck, and a pierced lug handle on the shoulder of the vessel. The smaller amphoriskos (Fig. 7:14) has a tapered rim, flaring neck, and a lug handle from the rim to the shoulder of the vessel; two rows of oblique incisions encompass the vessel at the line of the handle.

A fragmentary triangular-sectioned lug handle (Fig. 5:11) is evidence of a narrow necked amphoriskos (cf. Megiddo, Loud 1948: Pls. 13:7; 16:8).

Stopper

A rounded ceramic sherd (Fig. 5:12), originally part of a cooking pot, was reused as a stopper.

Summary

The pottery assemblages from Strata III and II are securely dated within the Intermediate Bronze Age. The utilitarian character of the

assemblages is attested by the dominance of vessel types such as bowls, holemouths, cooking pots, and storage jars that were used for food preparation and storage. Additional serving vessels are the amphoriskoi. Spouted vessels are notably absent. Surface treatment includes applied plastic bands, incisions, red slip, and also 'trickle-painted' ware. Handle types include folded envelope ledge handles (on bowls), lug handles (on amphoriskoi), and flat loop handles (on storage jars).

The Nahal Rimmonim pottery conforms well to the regional assemblage known from contemporary settlement sites of the Jezreel Valley.

OTHER FINDS

Flint.— The flint assemblage is discussed separately by Khalaily (this volume). Most of the flint tools from this stratum are wide sickle blades that were used as reaping knives.

Upper Grinding Stone.— A fragment of a basalt upper grinding stone (Fig. 7:15) has a flat working surface and a convex blank.

Toggle Pin.— The toggle pin (Fig. 5:13) is fabricated from a thin rod with a round cross-section at one end and a square section closer to the top. One end of the pin is sharp and the other end is flattened and folded over. This toggle-pin type is common in the Intermediate Bronze Age, primarily in burial contexts at northern sites, such as nearby Tel Megiddo T.884A (Guy and Engberg 1938: Pl. 101:9). For additional parallels, see Getzov 1995:6*.

Shells.— Two shells of Mediterranean mollusk species were recovered in the Stratum II accumulations: a *Cerastoderma glaucum* and a *Glycymeris sp.*⁶

THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE IIA (Plan1)

STRATIGRAPHY

Stratum I revealed the well-preserved foundations of a domestic structure, six rooms of which were partially exposed. The floors of this structure were only preserved in two rooms (L103, L114). Two intramural storage-jar burials were found; however, only one floor (L114) of the two rooms with burials was preserved.

Room 103 has a plaster floor (8–10 cm thick) that abutted W104 and W105. Except for a concentration of storage-jar sherds in the northwestern corner, this floor provided sparse

finds. A disturbance (L125) found in the center of Room 103 may be modern.

Room 102 is an irregular L-shaped room that did not have a distinctly preserved floor (Fig. 8). A surface comprised of small- and medium-sized stones abutting the lower stones of the walls (W110, W111, and W105) in this room may represent the foundation for the floor. A notable find from this room is a fragment of a model wheel (see Fig. 16:1). Adjoining this room in the northeastern corner is a small space (L117)—perhaps a corner installation accessed from Room 102. The poor preservation of this space precludes a definition of its function.

Room 114 has a smooth stone floor that was initially laid out in rows and subsequently repaired with small stones. This floor abutted W104 and W107 and continued west of the excavated area. A storage-jar burial (L138) was placed directly beneath this floor, cutting through a fill (L131; Plan 1: Section 1–1) below the stones of the floor. No finds were found above this floor.

Burial 138 (Fig. 9) consisted of a neckless storage jar alongside and aligned with W120. The fragmentary bones were in a very poor state of preservation and were not analyzed. Grave goods (see Fig. 14) associated with this burial include an overturned carinated bowl covered by an overturned open bowl, a loomweight, a bronze object, and a bead. The opening of the neckless jar faced south and was plugged by a



Fig. 8. Stratum I: Room 102, looking east; Floor 114 in foreground.



Fig. 9. Stratum I: Storage Jar Burial 138 alongside W120 and W107, looking east.

rounded flat limestone stopper. The storage jar and additional vessels were all placed above a whitish plaster-like surface. Above the burial, Floor 114 showed signs of repair in patches.

In two small narrow rooms, L126 and L128, the floors were not preserved. In Room 126, bordered by W127, W107 and W120 (Fig. 10), an upright sunken pithos (L124) incorporated into W127 probably served as a storage installation. The dividing wall (W127) between these rooms may represent a later phase and internal division of an originally larger, square room.

Room 119 is bordered on the west by W120 and in the north by W122; the floor of this room was not preserved. A cache of flint sickle blades was found in this room close to W120. In this room, a storage-jar burial (L123) was placed directly alongside and leaning on W120. Burial 123 (Fig. 11) consisted of a large neckless storage jar that contained skeletal remains and additional grave goods; small stones encircled the burial and offerings. The opening of the jar was toward the north in alignment with W120. The jar, which could not be fully restored, was plugged with a large pithos sherd. It originally contained an infant as attested by the concentration of poorly preserved bones in the base;⁷ above the bones was a dipper juglet. On

the outside of the jar a trefoil-mouth jug was placed near the mouth; an additional piriform juglet was found near the base. A hammerstone was also associated with this burial.

Discussion

The architectural finds from Stratum I revealed a series of rooms associated with a domestic structure. The inhabitants upheld the MB II funerary tradition of interring infants below the floors of the living area. The minimal exposure of the architectural remains does not allow for an elaborate discussion of the plan of this domestic structure. However, it is probable that this is a courtyard-type structure, i.e., a courtyard with a series of rooms flanking the sides.

The wall foundations were constructed of local limestone in either a single row of large boulder-like stones, or a double row of medium-sized stones. Most of the walls were preserved to a height of a single course, whose uniform height and flat level surface was suitable for a superstructure of bricks. The probability of a brick superstructure is supported by a total absence of stone collapses in the excavated rooms. Moreover, the location of the site in the low valley floor provided a readily available source for brick material.



Fig. 10. Stratum I: Rooms 114, 119, 126, 128, looking east.

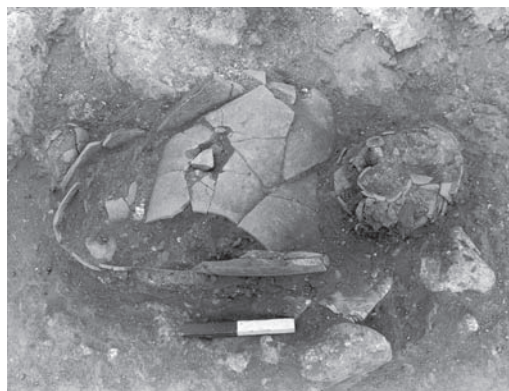


Fig. 11. Stratum I: Storage Jar Burial 123 alongside W120, looking west.

The preservation of only two floors, a thick plaster one and a stone pavement, may be due to the poor state of preservation in this area of the site. Most rooms were preserved only below the floor level.

POTTERY

The pottery assemblage from Stratum I presented in Figs. 12–16 is made up of vessels and sherds from two archaeological contexts—accumulations (Figs. 12, 13) and burials (Figs. 14, 15). The burial goods were placed beneath the floors of the domestic structure, and thus are of prime chronological significance for dating this stratum.

The comparisons for the pottery assemblage are primarily drawn from the well-documented stratified site of Tel Afeq (Beck 2000a; b) with additional references to Tel Megiddo. Although the Tel Afeq pottery assemblage exhibits regional variations from the Tel Megiddo-Jezreel Valley repertoire, the high degree of similarity between the two assemblages justifies reference to the distant, yet well-established and less problematic stratigraphy at Tel Afeq (Beck 2000b:243).

Bowls

Small Rounded Bowl (Fig. 12:1).— This small bowl has rounded incurving walls, a simple rim, and a highly burnished red slip on the exterior.

Carinated Bowls (Fig. 12:2–4).— These bowls at Naḥal Rimmonim have a mid-body carination and a plain gutterless rim. A complete bowl (Fig. 14:1) of this type, with a low disk base, was found overturned in Burial 138. A red-burnished slip surface treatment was noted on only one bowl (Fig. 12:4); however, this surface treatment may not have been well preserved on this and other vessel types recovered in the excavation. Similar bowls are found at Megiddo IV (Loud 1948: Pls. 14:37, 39; 15:1–3). Carinated bowls are known throughout the MB IIA sequence at Tel Afeq (Beck 2000a:230); however, the low disk base is more common in the Pre-Palace and Early Palace levels (Beck 2000a:193).

Large Open Bowls (Figs. 12:5, 6; 14:2).— Straight-sided bowls with an inverted and sharpened rim (Fig. 12:5), or with rounded walls and a thickened exterior rim (Figs. 12:6; 14:2). The latter bowls have signs of red-burnished slip on the interior walls and exterior rim. The only complete profile is from the bowl found overturned in Burial 138, which has a thickened exterior rim, rounded walls, and a slightly concave disk base.⁸ Similar bowls are found at Tel Afeq in the Pre-Palace and Palace phases (Beck 2000a: Figs. 10.8:4; 10.13:14; 10.18:3) and from tombs at Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pl. 14:6).

Krater (Fig. 12:7).— The closed holemouth krater has a thickened everted profile rim that is flattened on the top. Holemouth kraters are mostly confined to the Pre-Palace phases at Tel Afeq (Beck 2000a:230, Fig. 10.1:16, 17).

Cooking Vessels

Not displayed in the accompanying figure, but present in the assemblage, are sherds of straight-sided handmade cooking pots that have applied rope decoration and punctured holes near the rim.

Storage Jars

The storage jars (Fig. 13:1–3) exhibit variations of the typical storage jars with externally

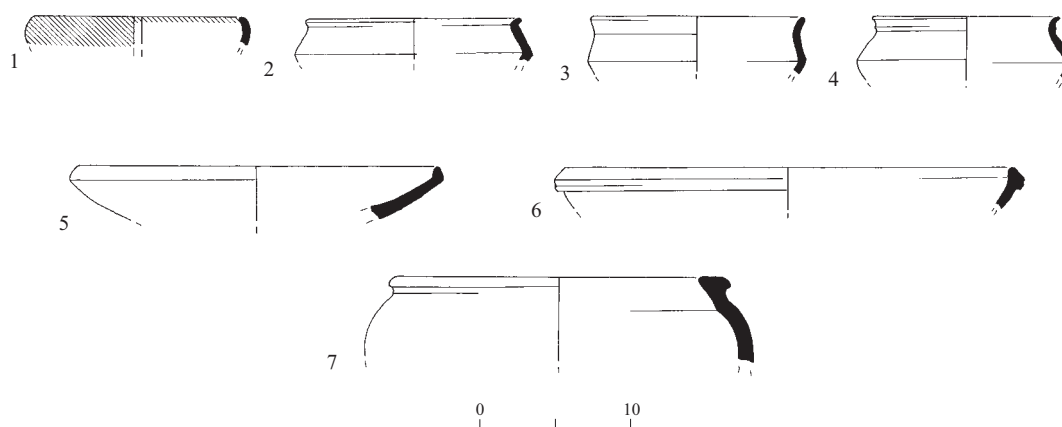


Fig. 12. Stratum I: bowls and a krater.

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Bowl	1039/5	131	Cream clay, red burnished slip on ext. and int. rim
2	Bowl	1009/13	103	Light brown clay
3	Bowl	1003	103	Light brown clay, small gray and red inclusions
4	Bowl	1031/4	131	Red brown clay, gray inclusions, red burnished slip on ext. and int. rim
5	Bowl	1013/1	109	Brown clay, gray grits
6	Bowl	1009/4	103	Brown clay, gray inclusions, red burnished slip
7	Krater	1005/1	102	Light red/cream clay, white grits

Fig. 13 ▶

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Storage jar	1025/2	119	Brown clay, minute red and gray grits
2	Storage jar	1008/2	128	Light brown clay, medium white grits
3	Storage jar	1022/2	119	Brown clay, minute red and gray grits
4	Pithos	1016/1	102	Red brown clay, minute red grits
5	Pithos	1039/3	131	Red brown clay, red and gray grits
6	Pithos (base)	1033	124	Red brown clay
7	Jug	1021/1	117	Cream clay, red burnished slip ext.
8	Jug	1009/2	103	Red clay
9	Jug	1039/2	131	Cream clay, white grits
10	Jug	1022/1	119	Reddish brown clay, gray grits, red burnished slip on ext. and int. rim
11	Body sherd	1031/2	131	Brown clay, gray inclusions, incised decoration
12	Body sherd	1031/5	131	Red brown clay, red and black painted band decoration
13	Body sherd	1021/2	117	Red brown clay, red and black painted band decoration
14	Storage jar (handle)	1022/1	119	Light brown clay, gray grits, red painted bands

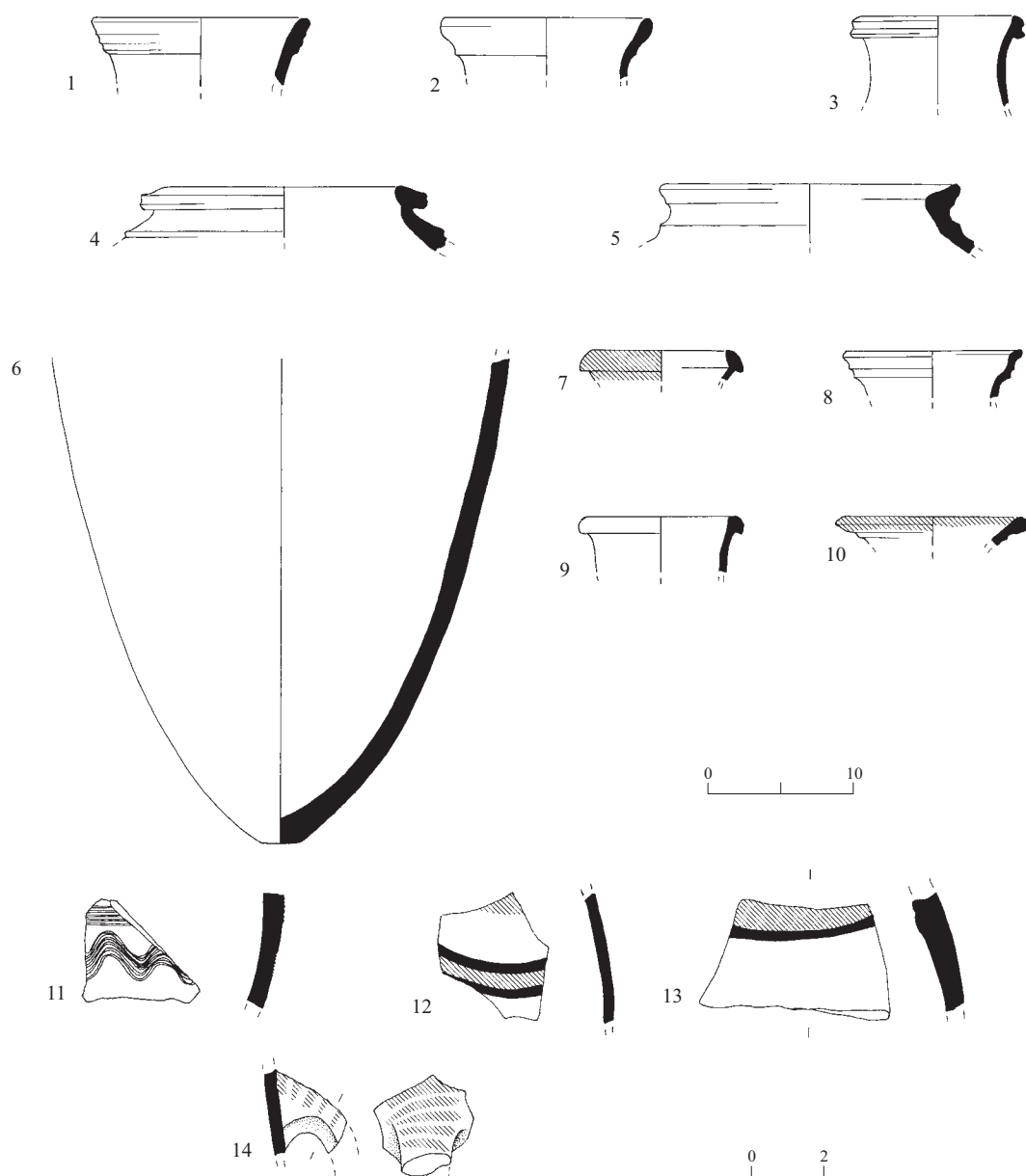


Fig. 13. Stratum I: storage vessels.

developed rims. Two jars (Fig. 13:1, 2) have elongated rims, one (Fig. 13:2) with a triple concave interior profile. One jar has a more out-turned thickened and grooved rim (Fig. 13:3).

Jars with the elongated rims are known from Tel Afeq, beginning in the Pre-Palace and continuing until the Palace phases, where there is a high rate of rim variation (Beck 2000a: 177–178, Figs. 10.11:6–8; 10.12:20, 21).

Pithoi.— The pithoi all have externally and internally molded rims (Figs. 13:4, 5; 14:3). These large storage vessels were often used as fixed installations and were placed upright, partially buried into the ground, probably for coolness and the preservation of the contents (e.g., Installation 124; Fig. 13:6). Similar pithoi at Tel Afeq begin in the Pre-Palace phase, but are more dominant during the

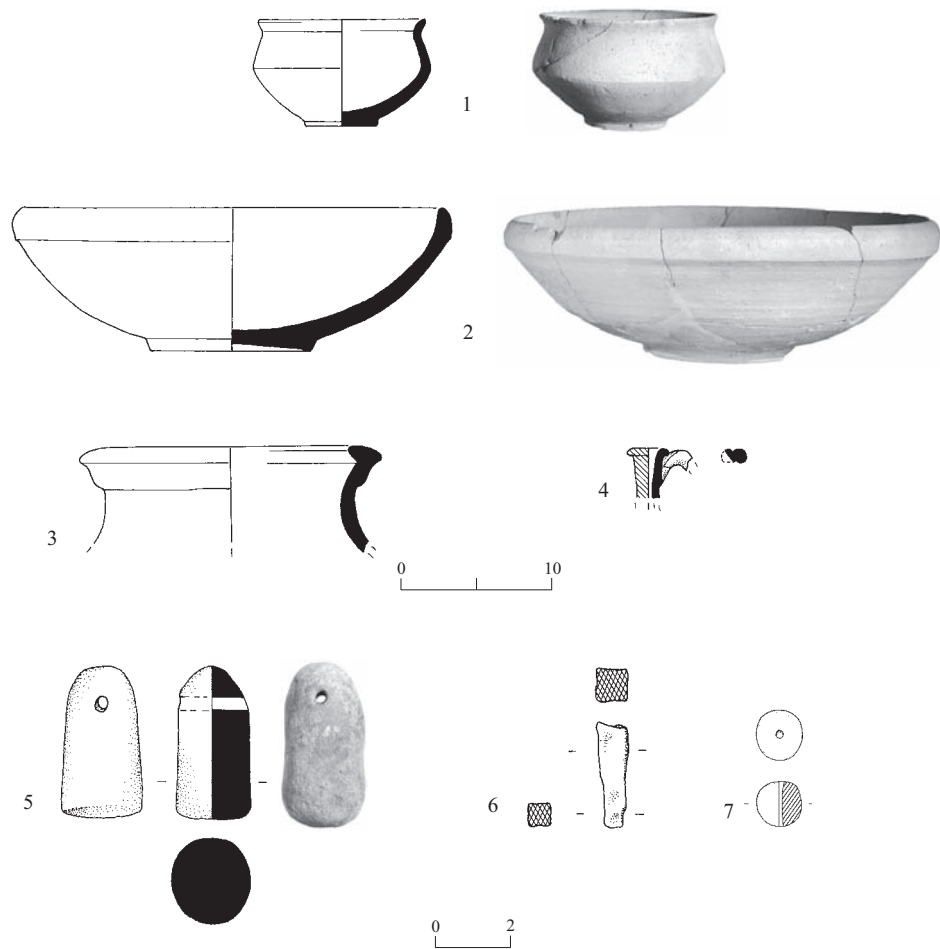


Fig. 14. Stratum I: finds from Burial 138.

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Description
1	Bowl	1050	Light brown clay, small gray and red inclusions (probably had red burnished slip)
2	Bowl	1044	Light brown clay, gray grits
3	Pithos	1054/1	Red brown clay, minute gray and white grits
4	Juglet	1039/1	Cream clay, red burnished slip ext.
5	Loomweight	1039	Red brown clay, minute white grits
6	Chisel?		Bronze
7	Bead		Amethyst

Palace phase (Beck 2000a:230, Figs. 10.11:12; 10.13:28).

Jugs.— With the exception of the entire jug in Burial 123, only rims of jugs were found, none of which have a profile beyond mid-neck.⁹ These jug rims include an externally folded rim with a

concave interior (Fig. 13:7), a ridged-neck jug (Fig. 13:8), an externally rilled rim (Fig. 13:8), and a plain out-turned rim (Fig. 13:9).

The trefoil-mouth jug (Fig. 15:1) was placed near the opening of the storage jar in Burial 123. This jug has a combed decoration on both the neck and shoulder of the vessel. Similar

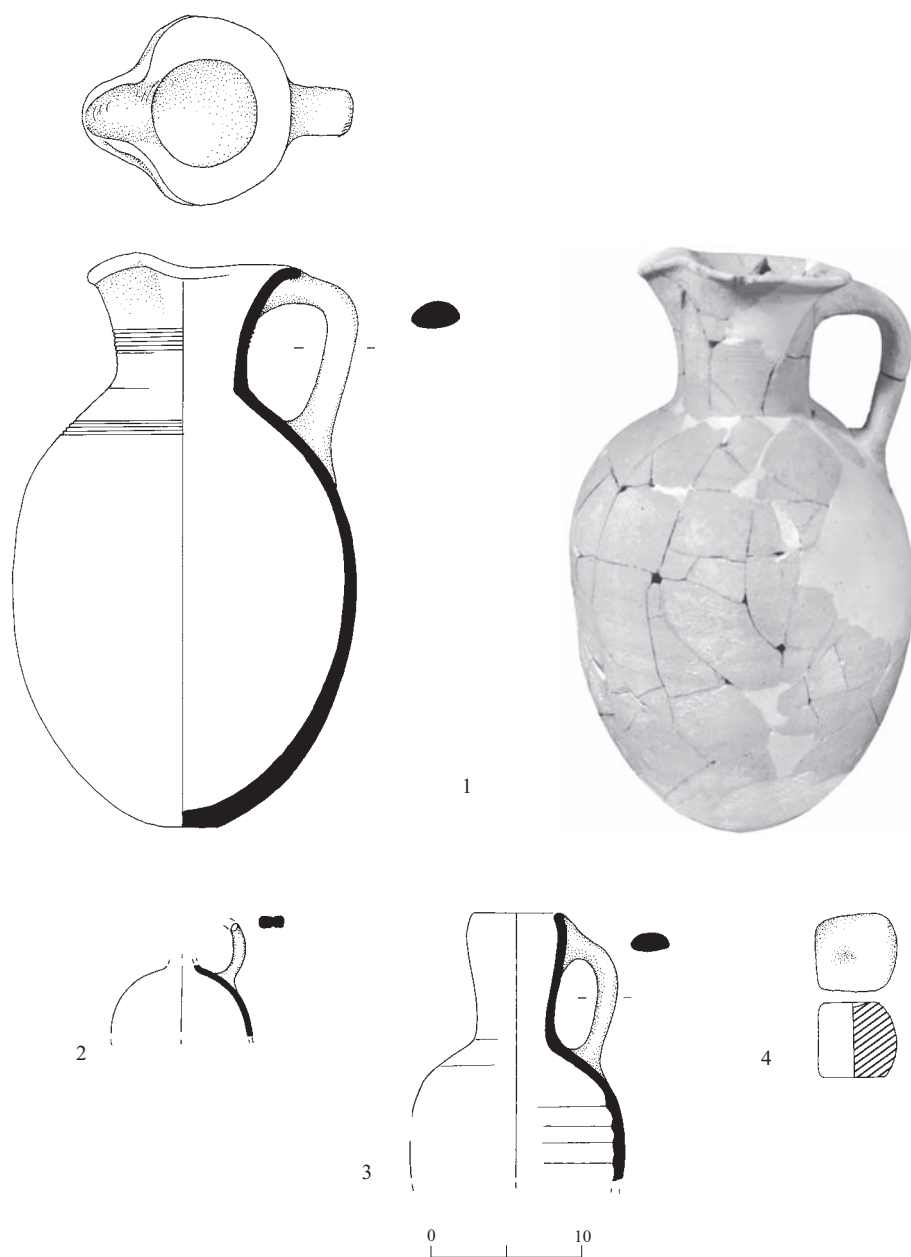


Fig. 15. Stratum I: finds from Burial 123.

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Description
1	Jug	1027	Red clay, white and gray grits
2	Juglet	1022	Light brown clay, small gray, red and white grits
3	Juglet	1028	Light brown clay, small gray, red and white grits, poorly preserved ext. surface, traces of red slip
4	Hammerstone	1018	Geode quartz

jugs with either red slip or painted decoration were found in intramural burials at Megiddo XIV (Loud 1948: Pl. 11:12, 13) and at Afeq Pre-Palace (Beck 2000a: Fig. 10.4:5).

Juglets

The juglets, all associated with the burials, are not well preserved and there are no complete profiles for this vessel type.

Dipper Juglet.— The large dipper juglet (Fig. 15:3) found inside the storage-jar Burial 123 has a wide neck and a pronounced shoulder. Similar forms of juglets are known from Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pl. 7:19–25) and from the Palace and Post-Palace phases at Afeq (Beck 2000a: Figs. 10.12:19; 10.23:10).

Two additional juglets are very fragmentary, one in Burial 123 and one in Burial 138. The former juglet, probably of piriform shape (Fig. 15:2), found alongside the base of the storage jar in Burial 123, has a double handle from the shoulder toward the rim. The juglet (Fig. 14:4) from Burial 138 is possibly a cylindrical juglet having a simple, rounded out-turned rim and a narrow neck from which the double handle extended downward. Although poorly preserved, the highly burnished red slip is detectable.

Decorated Sherds

Figure 13:11–14 shows a collection of body sherds and a handle with decorative surface treatment. A sherd with combed designs (Fig. 13:11), a wavy and a straight band, is diagnostic of MB IIA where at Afeq it appears in the Pre-Palace phase (Beck 2000a:193, 230). Two sherds (Fig. 13:12, 13) from smaller storage vessels, probably jars or jugs, have a bichrome decoration consisting of a painted red band with black bands on either side. Vessels with this decoration are also known from closed vessels dating to MB IIA at Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pls. 11:21, 18:4) and Afeq Pre-Palace (Beck 2000a:230; Fig. 10.4:5, 7).

Stoppers

A total of 50 stoppers found in the upper levels of the excavated area are associated with Stratum I. These objects are pottery sherds that were rounded into circular disks and were probably used to cover juglets. There appear to be four basic sizes of stoppers (Table 1; Fig. 16:1) that seem to fit juglets with wider mouths such as the dipper juglets. Two stoppers of a wider diameter might have been used for jugs.

Summary

The pottery assemblage from Stratum I is dated to MB IIA and includes vessels known

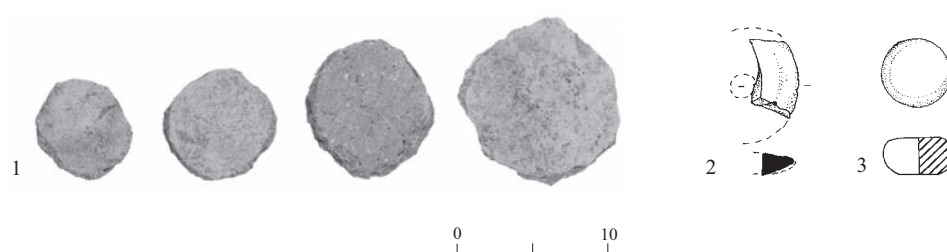


Fig. 16. Stratum I: varia.

No.	Type	Reg. No.	Locus	Description
1	Stoppers	1009/10, 1014/20, 1014/21, 1021/5	103, 117	Pottery
2	Wheel model	1005	102	Red brown clay, minute gray grits, burnished surface
3	Rubbing stone or stopper	1043	126	basalt

Table 1. Diameter Range of Stoppers

Diameter Range (mm)	N
25–28	9
30–32	9
38–40	16
45–50	14
>50	2
<i>Total</i>	50

from MB IIA contexts at nearby Megiddo. A further chronological refinement shows the many affinities with both the Pre-Palace and Palace phases at Afeq. Characteristics of the Pre-Palace phase include open bowls with a low disk base, holemouth kraters, and decorated vessels with either wavy incised or bichrome decoration. However, many of these types do continue in the initial Palace phase along with the handleless molded-rim pithoi that begin to appear during the Palace phase at Tel Afeq (Beck 2000a:229–230). Despite the regional character of pottery production, and the probable continuation of certain features into later MB IIA phases, it appears that the Stratum I occupation was contemporaneous with either the late Pre-Palace or Early Palace phases at Afeq. Also noted in the Stratum I assemblage are body sherds of non-restorable storage jars exhibiting combing at the shoulder, a common feature during MB IIA.

OTHER FINDS

Loomweight.— An intact loomweight (Fig. 14:5) of baked clay is dome-shaped (93 mm high, 43 mm upper diam., 48 mm lower diam.) with a horizontal perforation (9 mm). Similar loomweights are common in MB II contexts, e.g., at Megiddo XIII (Loud 1948: Pl. 169: 7–9).

Wheel Model.— A small fragment of a ceramic wheel model (Fig. 16:2) was found in Room 102. That these wheels are not a rare occurrence

at the site is attested by the seven wheels found in the second excavation season (see n. 3) and by numerous wheels collected from the site's surface and displayed in the Giv'at 'Oz Museum. Similar wheel-model fragments are known from MB II contexts at Megiddo (Loud 1948: Pl. 257:1–8; Sass 2000: Fig. 2.39:4, 5).¹⁰

Flint.— The flint assemblage is discussed separately by Khalaily (this volume). Notable are the geometric-shaped sickle blades from this stratum.

Hammerstone.— A cuboid hammerstone (Fig. 15:4), associated with Burial 123, is a quartz geode with multiple working surfaces.

Rubbing Stone/Stopper.— A small basalt hemispherical stone (Fig. 16:3) with well-worn edges was perhaps used as a rubbing stone (plano working surfaces), or as a stopper.

Bronze Fragment.— A near pyramidal-shaped bronze object (Fig. 14:6), possibly a chisel fragment, was found associated with Burial 138.

Bead.— A single entire spherical bead (Fig. 14:7) (diam. 12 mm; perforation diam. 2.5 mm) of amethyst.¹¹ The presence of amethyst beads is also noted in MB II burials at nearby Megiddo (T.5090; Loud 1948: Pl. 204:14).

Shell.— In addition to the above finds, a complete shell of a *Hexaplex trunculus* was found near the surface of the excavated area. Numerous shells of this type originating from the Mediterranean were found in Drori's site survey.¹²

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The small-scale excavations at the southern margin of the Naḥal Rimmonim site provided a reliable stratigraphic sequence spanning the Intermediate Bronze Age (Strata III and II) and the Middle Bronze Age IIA (Stratum I). The

absence of an earlier EB I stratum indicates that the occupation during this period did not reach this part of the site.¹³

The Intermediate Bronze Age

The Intermediate Bronze Age occupation at Nahal Rimmonim extends over two stratigraphic phases during which the site may have reached its maximum limits and was a large village. The fragmentary nature of the Intermediate Bronze Age architecture and small finds precludes far-reaching conclusions regarding the successive occupation at the end of the third millennium. Nevertheless, the site location and fragmentary finds can probably shed light on the economy of this occupation.

The site's location, at the valley floor bordering the lower slopes of the foothills and alongside the streambed, conforms to a common pattern of the rural settlement system during this period. This location is advantageous for pasturage in the hills and for cultivation of the fields in the flat valley, suggesting that the local economy combined agriculture with animal husbandry. The Canaanite flint reaping knives found in Strata III and II (see Khalaily, this volume) were used for the harvesting of cereals and grains, while the basalt upper grinding stone fragment (Fig. 7:15) is further evidence of the processing of agricultural produce. The acquisition of specialist goods, produced off-site, as suggested by these Canaanite flint knives and the bronze toggle pin (Fig. 5:13), attests to the site's location along the trade routes.

The Intermediate Bronze Age settlement network in the Jezreel Valley, mostly known from the northern valley and its southern margins, primarily comprises numerous small sites established along the valley margins, similar to Nahal Rimmonim (Covello-Paran 1999; see also contemporary sites in Raban 1999). An analogous settlement pattern is noted in neighboring Ramot Menashe, west of Nahal Rimmonim, where a number of sites smaller than one hectare were founded in the Intermediate Bronze Age at the edge of the foothills near the wadi bed (Meir 1975).

Among the contemporary sites in the immediate vicinity of Nahal Rimmonim are Tel Medhab (Zori 1977:50, Site No. 71), Tel Megiddo (Loud 1948), and Tel 'Afula (Gal and Covello-Paran 1996).

The Middle Bronze Age IIA

The excavations exposed a single-stratum occupation dated to this period and uncovered a domestic structure. The pottery finds, mostly from the burials, date this structure to MB IIA. In the 2003 excavations, an additional MB IIA occupation layer was exposed overlying the initial MB IIA settlement at the site. This layer was most likely removed when the patrol road was paved and aligned with the Green Line. The MB IIA occupation of the site may have had additional phases toward the center of the site.

In addition to the excavated finds, surface finds¹⁴ from the site attest to the rich material culture of the MB II occupation, including cylinder seals, large quantities of domed loomweights, grinding implements, and potters' wheels (tournettes). The loomweights and potters' wheels attest to intensive craft specialization such as textile and pottery production. The acquiring of prestige objects is evident from both cylinder seals and the *in situ* amethyst bead from the present excavations.

The agriculture-based economy of the MB II rural settlement system is evidenced at Nahal Rimmonim by the numerous basalt and flint implements for the processing of cereals and grains that were found both in the excavation area and on the surface (see Khalaily, this volume). Further evidence for intensive horticultural activities are the numerous winepresses and cupmarks on all of the adjacent low foothills noted in a previous survey (Ahlstrom 1978).¹⁵

The MB IIA occupation at Nahal Rimmonim is apparently part of the regional network of rural sites, such as the neighboring Tel 'Afula and Edh-Dhahar (Raban 1999:86*), that were interconnected with the major urban center at Tel Megiddo (5 km to the northwest), which dominated the southeastern Jezreel Valley.¹⁶

In conclusion, the 1999 excavations conducted at Naḥal Rimmonim exposed the material culture of one of the rural sites situated at the margins of the Jezreel Valley, occupied from

the Intermediate Bronze Age into the MB IIA. The site is informative for the study of rural settlement patterns during these periods in the Jezreel Valley.

NOTES

¹ The excavation (Permit No. A-3157), on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and financed by the Jewish National Fund, was directed by Karen Covello-Paran, assisted by Yossi Yaacoby (administration), Avraham Hagian (surveyor), Leea Porat (pottery restoration), Ella Altmark (metal cleaning), and Hagit Tahan-Rosen (drawing of finds).

² The village of Zububa (Ezbuba), recorded by the Survey of Western Palestine (Conder and Kitchen 1881–1883:44; Sheet VIII Mj) and Zori (1977:51), is the location of an ancient site dating to the Hellenistic, Byzantine, and Islamic periods.

³ The second season of excavations (Permit No. A-3847) was directed by the author and Yotam Tepper on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

⁴ The author directed extensive excavations at 'Ein el-Hilu, located within modern Migdal Ha-'Emeq. The site covers 0.5 hectares of which 50 percent have been excavated, revealing occupation levels of the Intermediate Bronze Age, MB II, the Late Bronze Age, and Iron I (Covello-Paran 1997).

⁵ The 'trickle painted' holmouth was found on the surface of the excavated area and cannot be attributed to Stratum II with certainty.

⁶ The author identified these shell types based on comparison with the Megiddo mollusc shells studied by Bar-Yosef Mayer (2000).

⁷ The bones of storage-jar Burials 138 and 123 were not studied due to their very poor state of preservation.

⁸ During the excavation, red slip was noted on the base of this bowl; this slip was inadvertently removed during the restoration process.

⁹ Distinguishing jugs and jars based on small rim fragments is problematic.

¹⁰ A similar group of wheels were found in the MB IIA strata at the rural site of 'Ein el-Hilu at the northern edge of the Jezreel Valley, excavated by the author.

¹¹ The author thanks Anastasia Shapiro (IAA) for identifying this stone type.

¹² See n. 14, below.

¹³ Only a few isolated EB I sherds were found in the excavated area, where, however, there is no evidence of an EB I stratum.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Arie Drori of Kibbutz Giv'at 'Oz for allowing me to study his extensive collection of surface finds from the site, which includes important finds that shed light on the nature of the MB IIA settlement there. Notable are 50–100 intact loomweights, cylinder seals, model wheels, flint implements, basalt grinding and crushing implements, and pottery, including red burnished vessels and imported Cypriot ware.

¹⁵ Ahlstrom (1978:19) noted a particularly large number of winepresses in the vicinity of Zububa (Ezbuba). Among these winepresses, many of which are of the Roman and Byzantine periods, are installations most likely dating to the Middle Bronze Age (see discussion in Ahlstrom 1978:46).

¹⁶ Excavations at Tel Ta'anakh, 3 km to the south, revealed a settlement gap between EB III and MB IIB (Glock 1993). The connection between the MB IIB–C city at Tel Ta'anakh will be discussed in the final report of the 2003 excavation season.

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