

IMPORTED POTTERY FROM THE LATE MAMLUK AND OTTOMAN PERIODS AT THE AL-WAṬA QUARTER, SAFED (ZEFAT)

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Sixteen small sherds of imported pottery vessels were recovered in excavations in the residential quarter of Ḥâret al-Waṭa in Mamluk Safed (modern-day Zefat), dating to the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods (see Cohen, this volume). As these sherds belong to ceramic types that are rarely found in Israel, they are described here separately from the rest of the ceramic assemblage. It is important to note that these sherds make up a small percentage of the total ceramic finds, and do not represent common ceramic types at this site.¹ They comprise types originating mainly in Italy, as well as Spain and Turkey, and fall roughly within a time range from which relatively few imports are known in the archaeological record (c. fifteenth–eighteenth centuries).²

The source material for the current research consists of studies of ceramics from the eastern Mediterranean, in particular the Ottoman pottery from Saraçhane, Istanbul (Hayes 1992:233–390), Ottoman pottery from Kouklia, Cyprus (von Wartburg 2001), and pottery from Greece (Vroom 2003:170–180; 2005:134–187). In addition, two studies of imported Italian and Spanish pottery were utilized, from Barcelona (Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007) and central southern England (Gutiérrez 2000), due to the similar wares found there. These imported pottery types, and their distribution in the Mediterranean basin, have been extensively described and discussed in these studies. On the other hand, pottery of the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods recovered in modern-day Israel has not been widely investigated, and when published, it is usually marginal rather than the main focus of

research.³ Two articles by Milwright review the pottery of these periods. One is a gazetteer of sites in the Levant reporting pottery of the Middle Islamic period (Milwright 2001), the second describes the present state of knowledge concerning the pottery of Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) during the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods (Milwright 2000). In the latter, Milwright gathers all published ceramic material according to sites and pottery types (Milwright 2000: Table 1), and discusses the implications that can be drawn. A more recent collection of articles on Ottoman pottery from various sites in the southern Levant (Walker 2009a) is an important addition.

THE POTTERY

Italian Wares

Seven types of Italian wares were identified. These can be divided into two main groups: red-bodied, lead-glazed bowls decorated in various techniques (thin incision, *Champlevé* and marbled decoration), and a white, hard, compact fabric glazed with opaque tin glaze, known as Maiolica Ware.

Polychrome Sgraffito Ware (*Graffita polychrome* or *Graffita arcaica*; Figs. 1:1; 2:1).— This type is made of red fabric with incised decorations (usually floral, but also geometric), a transparent glaze over a white slip and enhancement of the design with green and yellow glaze (Avissar and Stern 2005:72–73). It was produced in numerous workshops in northern Italy, beginning in the late thirteenth century and becoming more common in the

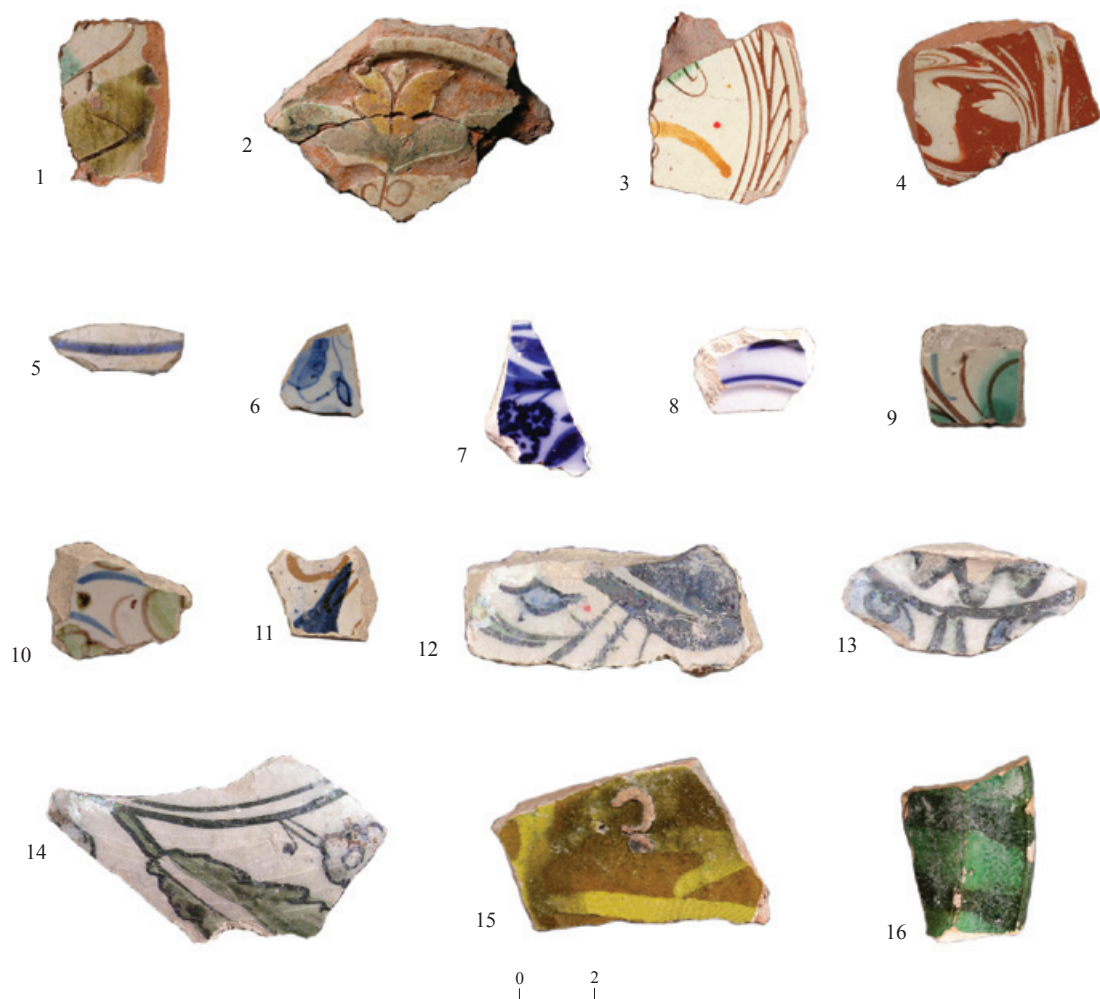


Fig. 1. Imported pottery sherds from the late Mamluk–Ottoman periods (for selected drawings, see Fig. 2).

fourteenth century. It was widely produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when it was apparently imported to the eastern Mediterranean (Whitehouse 1980:75–77; Blake 1986:321–341, 347; Gutiérrez 2000:82; Vroom 2003:171; for examples from Venice, see Saccardo 1993:221, Fig. 16:72, 74, 75). Italian Polychrome Sgraffito bowls were the most common type of glazed bowl imported into Israel, and fragments have been found at another excavation at the al-Waṭa Quarter of Safed (see Barbe, this volume: Fig. 15:5), as well as in large urban centers such as Jerusalem and Ramla, and at rural sites such as Giv'at Yasaf, Kafr Kanna, Ḥ. Burin, Laṭrun, Bethany

and Zuba (for references, see Avissar and Stern 2005:72–73; see also Pringle 1984:39, Figs. 1, 2; Tushingham 1985:341, Fig. 45:21; Knowles 2000:112, 113, Fig. 7.7:103; Kletter and Stern 2006:196–197; Cytryn-Silverman 2010:128–129, Pl. 9.25:4–6). Italian Polychrome Sgraffito also penetrated inland as far as Karak in Transjordan (Milwright 2000:196, Fig. 2:6), and was widely distributed in the eastern Mediterranean. For example, similar bowls were found at al-Mina, in northern Syria (Lane 1937:60–61, Pl. 22:J, J), at Istanbul, dating to c. 1600 (Hayes 1992:265, Fig. 98:1, 2, bottom), at Kouklia (von Wartburg 1998:159–163, Figs. 82:65–70; 83:71–73) and Famagusta in Cyprus

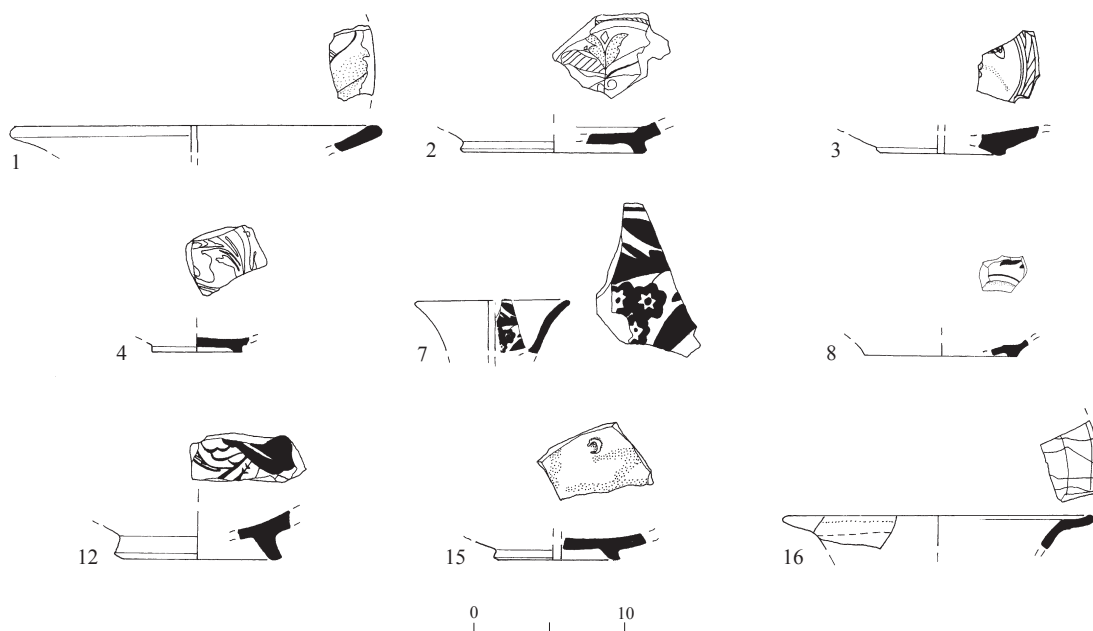


Fig. 2. Drawings and profiles of selected sherds from Fig. 1.

(François and Vallauri 2010:303, Fig. 8:15) and at Alexandria, Egypt (François 1999:74–75, Fig. 17). This ware was also found at Split and Albania, as well as in Crete and Rhodes (Vroom 2003:170–171).

Champlevé and Sgraffito (*Graffita a punta su fondo ribassato*; Figs. 1:2; 2:2).— This decoration is a combination of thin incisions and removal of the background of a central design, following the application of slip to the interior of the bowl. Thus, the decorative subjects appear in low relief. In addition, designs of thin incision enhanced by green and yellow glaze were added. The *Champlevé* decorative technique was common in the late Byzantine period (late twelfth–early thirteenth centuries) and produced in the Aegean region (Avisar and Stern 2005:43–44). *Champlevé* appeared again in the Veneto region during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. One bowl of this later type, bearing the profile of a man, was found at a salvage excavation outside and east of the walled city of ‘Akko (Stern and

Shalvi-Abbas 1999:12*, Fig. 17:6 and back cover). Bowls of this type were also found at Kouklia in Cyprus (von Wartburg 1998:163–164, Fig. 85:77, 79).

Pisan Sgraffito Ware (*Graffita policroma tarda*; Figs. 1:3; 2:3).— This developed style of decoration, dating from the seventeenth century, has a standardized central design comprising a border of incised concentric circles and a ladder-type filling, around a flower with a stem in the central medallion. The design is enhanced by green and yellow glaze. The Pisan Sgraffito Ware is made of fine, hard, brownish red fabric with a very shiny, high-quality glaze, identical to the Marbled Ware (below), and both types had a very wide circulation during the late sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (Blake 1981:103–108, Fig. 8.7; Gutiérrez 2000:82, Fig. 2.57; von Wartburg 2001:376–378; Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007:17, Pl. 8:1–4). In Israel, Pisan Sgraffito Ware has been found in Nazareth (Bagatti 2002:187–192, Fig. 69:5, 6, Pls. 79:6, 7; 80:1), and at other, unpublished

sites such as 'Akko. It has also come to light in Kouklia, Cyprus (von Wartburg 1998:164–165, Fig. 86; 2001:378), and Damascus, Syria (François 2009: Fig. 3:16).

Marbled Ware (*Ceramica marmorizzata*; Figs. 1:4; 2:4).— In this ware, the glazed design imitates marble. The effect was achieved by running together various colored glazes or slips in such a manner that they do not merge, but appear as different-colored streaks. Marbled Ware was manufactured at several centers in northern Italy, including Pisa, and Provence, where wasters of this ware were found. As Pisa is regarded as the main distributor of glazed wares in the Mediterranean during this period, it is presumed that most of the Marbled Ware in the eastern Mediterranean originated there. Marbled Ware was widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin and was also found in northwestern Europe, including England; it even found its way to Colonial America. It was imitated later by Ottoman workshops in a lower quality. The Italian variant is made of fine, hard, brownish red fabric with a very shiny, high-quality glaze on both the interior and exterior of the bowl, including the base. As noted above, the fabric and glaze are identical to those of the Pisan Sgraffito Ware, and they are of similar date and distribution (Blake 1981:103–105, Pls. 8.I, 8.II; Hayes 1992:265; Gutiérrez 2000:91, Fig. 2.62; Vroom 2003:176–177; Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007:15–16, Pls. 4–7). Italian Marbled Ware was reported from Nazareth (Bagatti 2002:187–192, Fig. 69:7–10, Pl. 81:1–11), Qula (Avissar 2009:12, 13), Damascus (François 2009: Fig. 3:13–15), and Istanbul in contexts dating to the seventeenth century (Hayes 1992:265, Fig. 98:11; note that the base profile from Istanbul is similar to Fig. 1:4 here). Similar bowls were also found at Kouklia in Cyprus (von Wartburg 2001:378, Fig. 10:25). Ottoman imitations of this ware were produced at Ganos, on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Marmara, in the seventeenth century (Armstrong and Günsenin 1995:185, Fig. 4:19–

21), and most likely at other centers within the Ottoman Empire (Hayes 1992:276–277), and have been found in Israel, for example at Yoqne'am (Avissar 2005:75–76, Fig. 2.25:10, Pl. 2:15) and 'Akko (Edelstein and Avissar 1997:132, Fig. 1:8 and unpublished material).

Maiolica Ware (Fig. 1:5, 6).— This ware differs from the wares described above in its light-colored fabric, white, opaque tin glaze and decoration. The vessel shapes consist of plates, bowls and jugs. The decoration is a painted design executed in a somewhat pale blue (not as shiny as the following type), and consists of stripes (No. 5) or delicate floral designs (No. 6). It is possible that the small fragments unearthed in this excavation belong to one of the various groups of Ligurian Maiolica wares of blue on white, identified in Barcelona (Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007:27–43, Pls. 33–35). Maiolica Ware dates from the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries (Vroom 2003:172–173; 2005:146–147) and was produced in various centers in northern Italy, from where it was distributed to northwestern Europe, Italy, the Adriatic coast, the Aegean region and Cyprus. It is, however, very rare in Israel, and to my knowledge, no other sherds of this type have yet been published. Similar fragments were found in Famagusta, Cyprus (François and Vallauri 2010:303, Fig. 8:14).

Maiolica alla Porcelana (Figs. 1:7, 8; 2:7, 8).— This is a variant of the Maiolica Ware, apparently imitating Chinese blue and white porcelain of the Ming period. The fabric is white and compact, and the decoration is almost always floral, painted in cobalt blue on a white background of shiny tin glaze. It was produced in northern Italy, at Faenza, Montelupo and Venice, and dates from the late fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The distribution of this type in the eastern Mediterranean is more limited than the other Italian types and has been found at several sites in Greece, Istanbul and Cyprus (Hayes 1992:265, Pl. 39, bottom; von Wartburg 2001:380, Fig. 10:28, 29; Vroom

2003:173; Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007:25, Pl. 20:2–4).

Montelupo Maiolica (Fig. 1:9, 10).— Two very small body sherds, characterized by light-colored fabric, white tin glaze and polychrome painting, appear to be Montelupo Polychrome Maiolica (or some other Tuscan Polychrome Maiolica). These sherds were apparently part of a single open vessel, as the exterior bears painted stripes, while there is a floral design on the interior. This Polychrome Maiolica Ware was produced in Montelupo, situated in the Arno Valley in Tuscany, between Florence and Pisa, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Blake 1981:101–103, Figs. 8.2, 8.3; Gutiérrez 2000:86–90, Fig. 2.59; Beltrán de Heredia Bercero and Miró I Alaix 2007:19–23). This bowl seems to correspond with Blake's third phase, dated to the mid-sixteenth century, which was decorated with green leaves outlined in brown and sometimes accompanied by blue dashes (Blake 1981:103). Montelupo Maiolica is not common in the eastern Mediterranean, but it has been found at 'Akko (unpublished material; perhaps Edelstein and Avissar 1997:132, Fig. 1:12), Nazareth (Bagatti 2002:187–192, Pl. 81:16), Jerusalem (Johns 1950:189, Pl. 63:4), Damascus (François 2009: Figs. 2:8; 3:17) and Kouklia, Cyprus (von Wartburg 2001:378–379, Figs. 7:60–62; 10:26, 27).

Spanish Wares

Spanish Luster Ware (Fig. 1:11).— One sherd of Spanish Luster Ware was identified, a ware with an opaque, white tin glaze over a design in brownish yellow luster paint and cobalt blue. Spanish Luster Ware was produced at various sites in southern Spain that were under Islamic rule, and was influenced by North African pottery decorations and manufacturing techniques. It seems that this fragment was manufactured at Valencia, and should be ascribed to the 'Classic Valencian' style, dated to the fifteenth century. The main decorations of this type consist of epigraphic motifs, dotted flowers, and various

other vegetal motifs (Gutiérrez 2000:28–39, Figs. 2.18–2.20). Spanish Luster Ware is quite rare in Israel and the Levant. Two large fragments of a bowl were found in Jerusalem, dated there to the late fifteenth century (Johns 1950:189, Pl. 63:2), and some fragments were also unearthed at Ramla (Cytryn-Silverman 2010:127–128, Pl. 9.32:6, 7, Photographs 9.36, 9.37). To the north, Spanish Luster Ware was reported from Ba'albek in Lebanon and Hama in Syria (Poulsen 1957:132–133, Figs. 405, 406). It was distributed throughout the Mediterranean basin, but was more common in the western and central regions (France, Italy, Albania; see Vroom 2005:134–135). Vessels of this type were also found in Egypt, at both Fustat (Rosser-Owen 2012:178–180, Figs. 15–17) and Alexandria (François 1999:84).

Ottoman Wares

Iznik IIB Ware ('Damascus') (Figs. 1:12–14; 2:12).— Three sherds of vessels made of Soft Paste Ware were unearthed at Safed, continuing the tradition of Soft Paste Wares dated to the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (Avissar and Stern 2005:25–33). The artificial soft-paste fabric consists of a mixture of crushed quartz, white clay and glass frit. The decoration consists of under-glaze painting, and the glaze is a mixture of lead, alkaline and tin. These three sherds apparently belong to a group that Hayes termed Iznik IIB (also known as the 'Damascus' phase, following Lane's division). Iznik IIB Ware has painted outlines of floral designs on a white background, filled with a variety of colors—in these three examples, green and light blue. Although previously considered to have been produced in Syria, mainly due to the numerous finds of this type there, today its Turkish provenance is well-established, with solid evidence that it was manufactured at Iznik and dates to 1525–1560. It was also found in Greece (Hayes 1992:244–256; Milwright 2000:198; von Wartburg 2001:366; Vroom 2003:175–176), and small sherds of vessels attributed to Iznik IIB Ware or Iznik Derivatives were recovered

at Hisban in Jordan (Walker 2009b:51–52, 60, Fig. 5.16).

Ottoman Slip-Painted Ware (Figs. 1:15, 16; 2:15, 16).— Two sherds of Ottoman Slip-Painted Ware were retrieved: a low ring base (Fig. 1:15) and a ledge rim (Fig. 1:16). The slip-painted decoration consists of a design (mainly straight or circular lines) painted with white slip. After the vessel was biscuit fired, glaze was applied and the vessel was refired, thus the design appears in the color of the glaze and the background is a few shades darker. The glaze is frequently yellow (Fig. 1:15) or green (Fig. 1:16). This decorative technique was popular during the medieval periods, with a zenith in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Avissar and Stern 2005:19–21, 40–58). During the late Ottoman period it regained popularity. Ottoman Slip-Painted Ware has been found, for example, at 'Akko (unpublished material), Yoqne'am (Avissar 2005:75–76, Fig. 2.25:5, 6), Ha-Bonim–Kefar Lam (Avissar 2009:11, Fig. 2.7:3), Hisban, Jordan (Walker 2009b:51–52, 60, Fig. 5.19:2) and in Cyprus (von Wartburg 2001:375–376, Fig. 7:52, 53). It has been suggested that this group of Ottoman Slip-Painted Ware was, in fact, an imitation of a more widespread type of Slip-Painted Ware known as Didymoteichon Ware (Hayes 1992:276; Vroom 2003:184). Didymoteichon Ware has a standardized form and decoration, with a down-turned, folded rim, a low ring base, and vertically slanted, slip-painted stripes from the rim to the base. It was produced at Didymoteichon in Thrace, northern Greece, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and distributed throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin (Bakirtzis 1980; Hayes 1992:276–277, Ware P; François 1995; 1999:134–137, Fig. 31:336–339, Pl. 14; 2009: Fig. 5:33; von Wartburg 2001:375–376, Fig. 7:48–51; Walker 2009b:50–51).

A workshop producing Slip-Painted Ware during the nineteenth century, which could be considered an imitation of the Didymoteichon Ware, was identified in Ganos, on the

northwestern shore of the Sea of Marmara (Armstrong and Günsenin 1995). Without further typological study and petrographic or chemical analyses, it is impossible to distinguish between the different production centers, and the origin of the Slip-Painted Wares found at Safed remains uncertain.

DISCUSSION

It seems that the presence of imported wares at Safed is related to the fact that it was the capital and main administrative center of Galilee during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods (Schick 1997–1998:566; Petersen 2005:72–74). This would explain how such imported ceramics were found at this inland site, rather than on the coast where imported ceramics are more common, and supports the economical importance of Safed as attested in the historical sources.

As stated above, most of the ceramic types presented here, dating to the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods, are relatively rare in Israel, the exception being Polychrome Sgraffito ware. During the preceding Crusader period, there had been a massive appearance of imported ceramic wares originating from regions throughout the Mediterranean. In thirteenth-century Acre, for example, imported glazed bowls outnumbered local ones, apparently reflecting the lively maritime commercial activities that took place in the Mediterranean basin in the Crusader period (Stern and Waksman 2003:170, Fig. 4; Avissar and Stern 2005:34, 40–71, 76–78; Stern 2012). After the fall of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291, the imported types immediately ceased to appear. During the mid- to late Mamluk period and early Ottoman period, imported glazed ceramics appeared once again in this region, beginning in the late fourteenth century and becoming more abundant between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries. However, the imported pottery is present in much smaller quantities than in the Crusader period and consists mainly of northern Italian wares and, more

rarely, Spanish and Chinese wares. It appears that these imported ceramics were distributed in different patterns than those of the Crusader period. It is possible that they reflect the trade carried on by the Venetian merchants, as indicated by the presence of Venetian pottery in the Levant,⁴ or (as Pringle has proposed) by Ligurian or Tuscan merchants, as suggested by the presence of Florentine, Pisan and Spanish pottery (Pringle 1984:39–40; Milwright 2000:196; Avissar and Stern 2005:34, 72–75, 78–80). These merchants occasionally arrived in Palestine through the harbor of Acre to buy local agricultural goods, mainly cotton (Arbel 1988:245–251, 255–261; 2004:37–39, 55–56, 68–72) and the ceramic wares were probably a by-product of this trade. For example, a document mentions the sale of Italian cloth to Mamluk officials in Safed in 1479 (Arbel 1988:248), and pottery could have been purchased on the same occasion, although being a minor good, it was not recorded. As noted above, following the Ottoman conquest, trade with Italian merchants in the region continued, and imported ceramic wares continued to appear. Toward the end of the Ottoman period (eighteenth–twentieth centuries), relatively large quantities of ceramics once again circulated the eastern Mediterranean and were imported into Palestine. These comprised various ceramic types produced in Turkey, as well as European porcelain (Milwright 2000:197–198), including types that were not

found in this excavation at Safed, such as the Çanakkale and Kütahya wares (von Wartburg 2001:366–369). At this time, the imported glazed wares once again dominated the ceramic assemblage, as in the Crusader period. However, at Safed, only the slip-painted, Ottoman glazed wares were found.

Comparing the types of imports that were found at Safed with those from other sites in modern-day Israel, is not a simple task, as examples are rare and poorly published. In recent years, imported late Mamluk and Ottoman wares are becoming more visible in the archaeological record (see nn. 2, 4), and it can perhaps be broadly stated that the same types of glazed wares were distributed throughout the Ottoman Empire, and found at various sites in the modern-day countries of Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Jordan and Israel (François 2009:61, Table 4; Walker 2009b:48–57).

This short survey of imported pottery, recovered from one relatively small excavation within the important urban administrative center of Safed, illustrates the potential value in the study of such wares and comparison with other sites within the larger geographical region. Hopefully, in the future, when additional archaeological evidence of these and other imported wares has accumulated, it will be possible to distinguish and attempt to understand their patterns of distribution and consumption during the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods.

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank Michael Cohen for allowing me to study these pottery sherds. Although statistical analyses were not carried out on the pottery assemblage of this excavation, these small sherds stood out during the pottery sorting. Thus far, most of the types have not been identified in other ceramic assemblages recently excavated by the IAA in Zefat, neither in the citadel (Barbé and Damati 2005; Barbé,

unpublished) nor in excavations in close proximity to this one (Cohen 2008; Dalali-Amos and Getzov, forthcoming). It should be noted that this article was originally written in 2006 and was slightly updated in 2012.

² Since this article was originally written in 2006, imported pottery of the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods has been unearthed in other IAA

excavations, and is now being studied and prepared for publication. This includes pottery from two dozen small salvage excavations in the Galilee (identified by the author), Jerusalem (Miriam Avissar and Benjamin J. Dolinka, pers. comm.), Jaffa (Yoav Arbel and Anna de Vincent, pers. comm.) and Ramla (Ron Toueg, pers. comm.).

³ An exception is the article on Ottoman pottery from Ti'innik (Ziadeh 1995), which describes pottery from a rural site, but does not include imports, and thus is not relevant for this study.

⁴ Recent analysis by the author of pottery from IAA salvage excavations in Galilee has shown that at least half of the sites where Mamluk pottery was

found, also contained Italian imports, occasionally only a very small sherd. As merchants and pilgrims (and religious orders) would have arrived on the same ships that brought the pottery, it is obvious that there would be a clear link between the distribution of Italian and Spanish pottery and the merchants and pilgrims. Bagatti, while studying the imported pottery from Nazareth, suggested a possible link between this pottery and the Franciscans and pilgrims (Bagatti 2002:189). The ongoing analysis of the pottery has demonstrated that the Mamluk sites that did not yield Italian pottery were probably villages that were not visited by Europeans for commercial purposes or were not on the pilgrimage routes.

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