

A BYZANTINE MONASTERY IN NAḤAL QIDRON, JERUSALEM

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INTRODUCTION

During September–October 2003, a salvage excavation was conducted on the lower western slope of a high hill east of Naḥal Qidron, following construction of the security fence along the separation line, next to the es-Sawahra neighborhood in Jerusalem (map ref. 22470/62860; Fig. 1). The remains, which were severely damaged by this construction, were identified as a Byzantine monastery occupying an area of c. 800 sq m.¹ The site was surveyed and described by Warren and Conder of the P.E.F. (1884:116), and it appears on their map as Khûrbet Jubb er Rûm (the 'Roman hole'). A team from the Jerusalem Survey documented the site in 1978–1984, reporting the presence of a sturdy wall (2 × 100 m) constructed of large, mostly flint stones, preserved one to two courses high (Kloner 2000:88*). The surveyors found pottery dating from Iron Age II and the Byzantine period; they did not realize that they were standing on a significant archaeological site. The present authors documented the wall, but unfortunately, we cannot add further details concerning its date, construction or purpose, and there is no stratigraphic connection between the site and the Byzantine monastery described below.

Three excavation areas were opened (Areas 10, 20, 30; Plan 1). Most of the site was highly disturbed by construction activities and was excavated as one large unit (Area 10). It includes two courtyards, northern and southern, the rooms surrounding them on the north and south, and a burial complex in the east. Part of the southwestern sector, which was less damaged, was excavated separately as Area 20.

The underground burial complex beneath the northern courtyard was excavated as Area 30 (Plan 2).

THE ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS

The Main Part of the Monastery (Area 10)

The monastery was constructed as a closed rectangular unit (25 × 36 m), oriented northwest–southeast and enclosed within massive walls on four sides (Plan 1). The masonry style of all the walls was homogenous. They were faced on both sides with ashlar, while the core comprised a fill of earth, small stones and mortar. The northern wall (W110; 1 × 27 m) is preserved to a maximum height of 0.6 m. The northern face of the eastern portion (W109) was robbed in antiquity, as was the northeastern corner. The eastern wall (W108; 1 × 32 m), preserved to a height of 0.4–0.6 m, was only partially exposed (Fig. 2); southeastern corner W113 was part of the same wall. Wall 108 most likely also connected to the robbed northeastern corner. The remains of the southern wall (W100; 0.8–1.0 × 25 m) were preserved to a height of 0.6 m. The southwestern corner of the structure and the surrounding area were demolished during the massive construction works prior to the archaeological excavation. The western wall (W205; 1.0 × 16.5 m), preserved to a maximum height of 1.2 m, was only partially excavated. It is assumed that the main entrance to the monastery was located along its northern section.

Based upon the architectural remains and stratigraphy, it seems likely that the monastery was established as a single complex built around

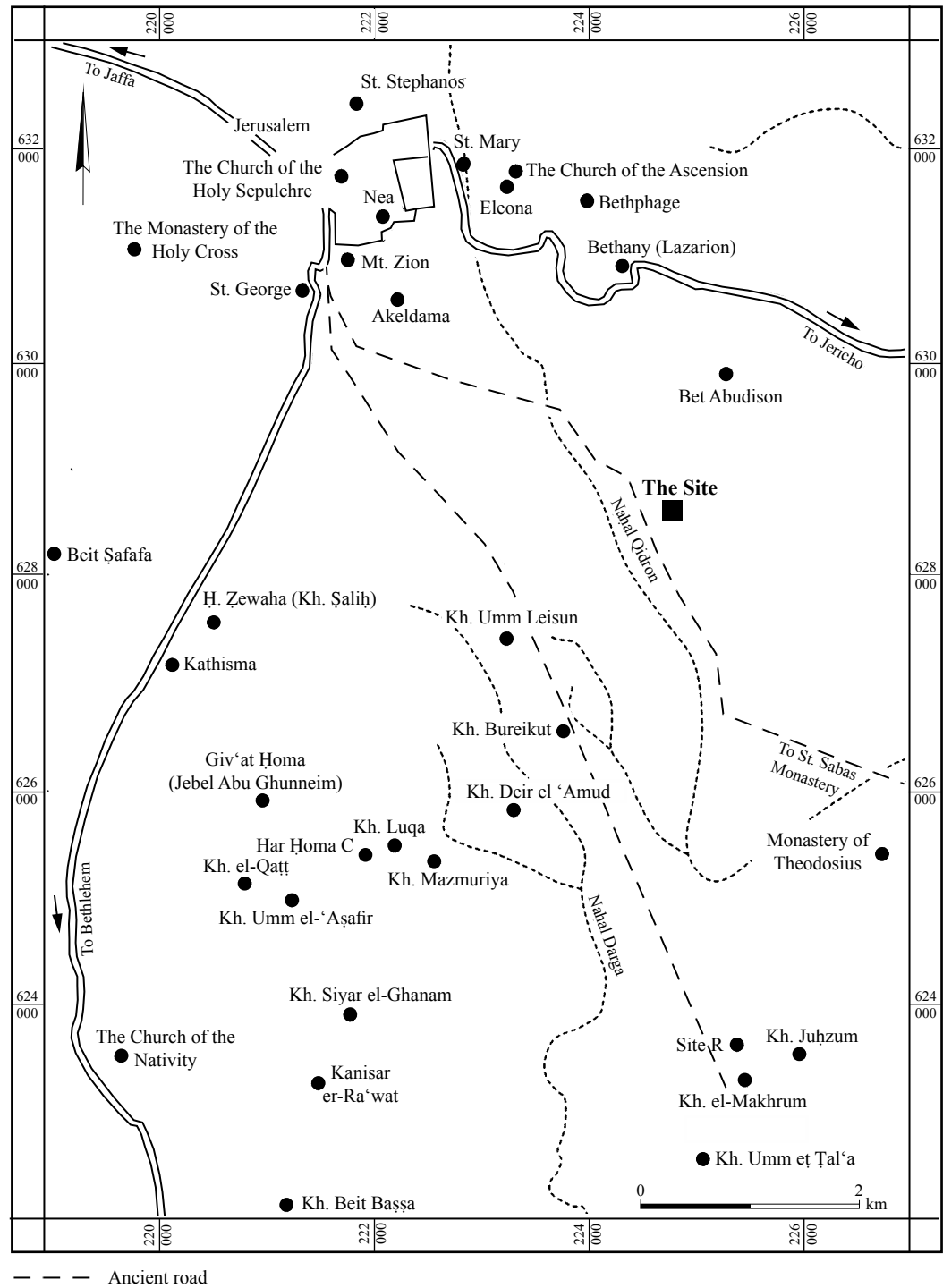
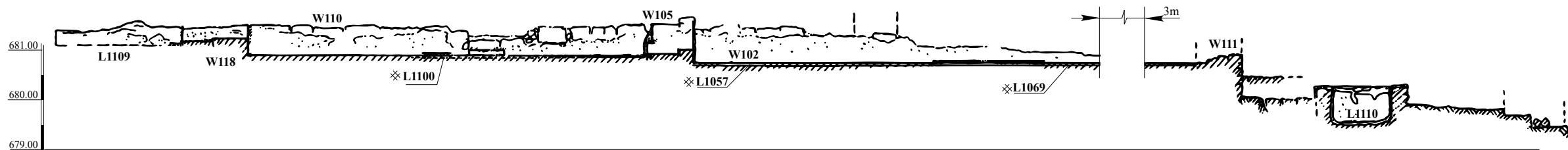


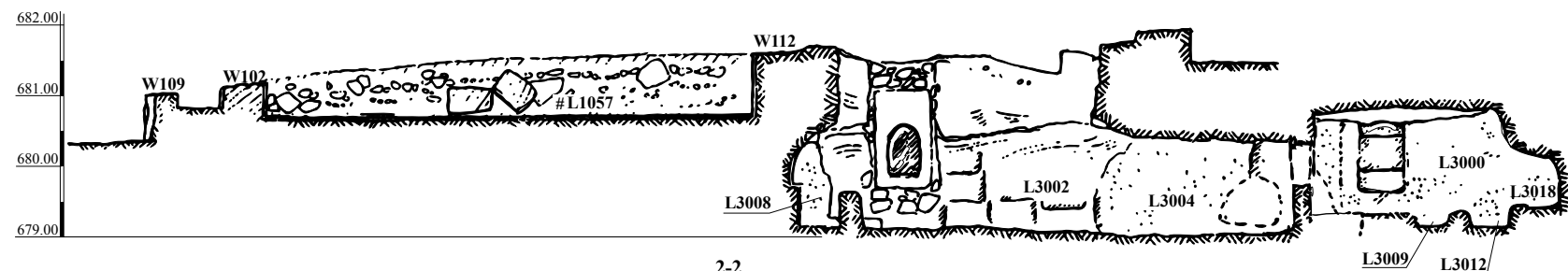
Fig. 1. Location map of the monastery in Naḥal Qidron and other monastery sites in the vicinity.



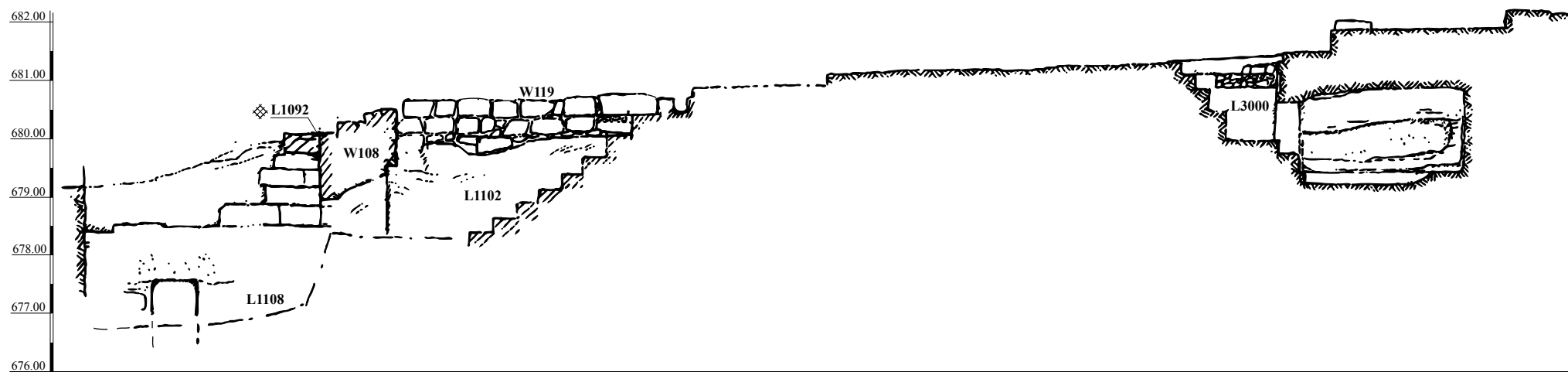
Plan 1. The monastery, plan and sections.



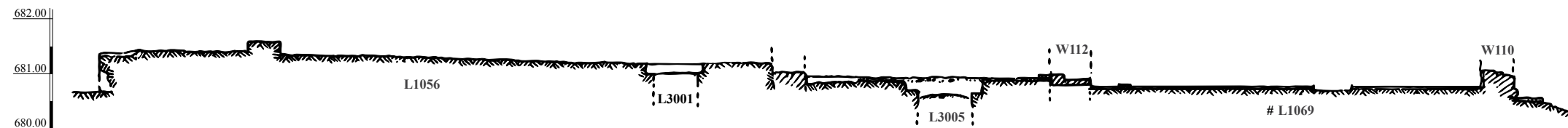
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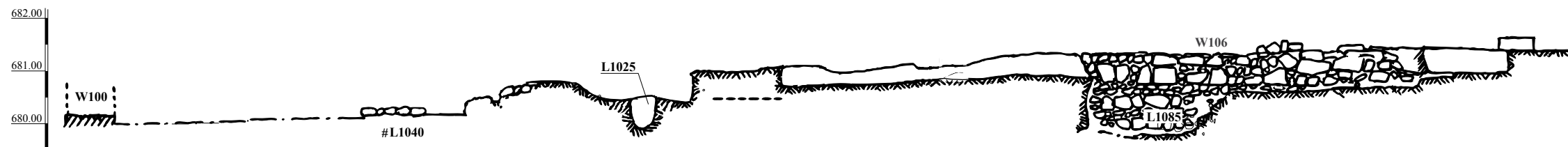
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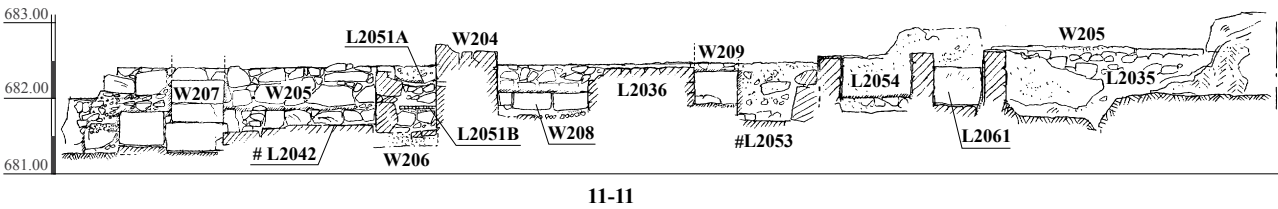
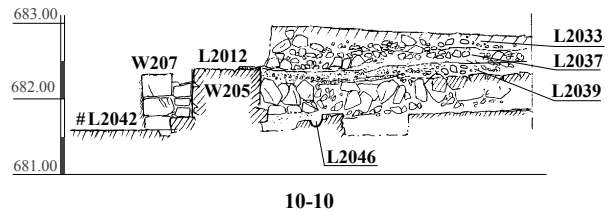
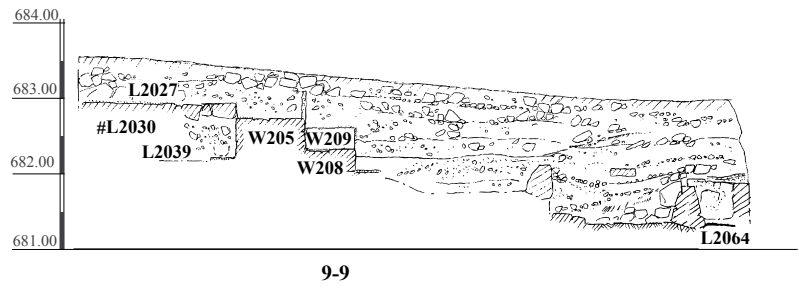
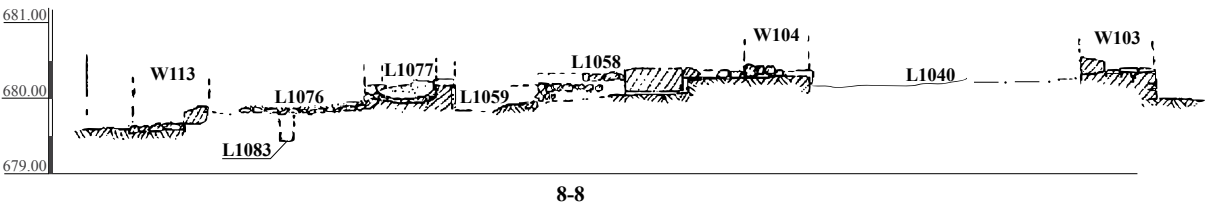
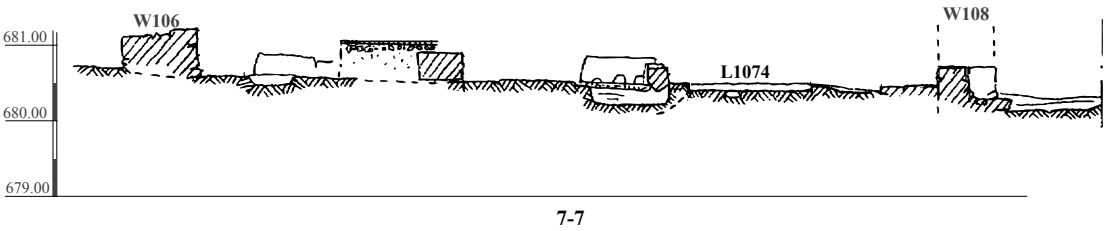
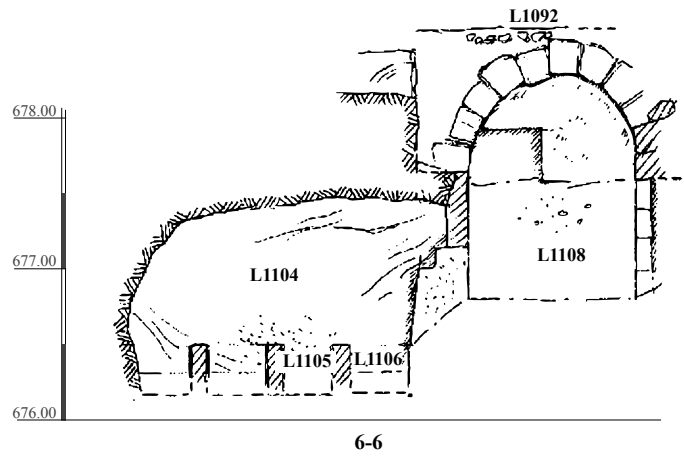




Fig. 2. The eastern wall of the monastery (W108), looking north.



Fig. 3. The church (L1069, L1100), looking east.

two distinct courtyards with separate functions. The northern courtyard (L1056) contained a church, a burial complex (see below, Area 30), and a water cistern (L1111). The southern courtyard was enclosed by units, in which the domestic activities of everyday life took place, and above them, the monks' residence cells. Over the course of the site's occupation, several architectural modifications and additions were carried out.

The Northern Courtyard and the Church

A church was exposed along the northern side of the monastery (Fig. 3; Plan 1: Section 1–1), measuring 9×32 m, which is equivalent to 30×100 Byzantine feet,² indicating that the church was designed from the beginning as part of the original plan of the monastery. Its location to the north of the courtyard resembles the arrangement in some of the smaller monasteries

in the vicinity (Hirschfeld 2002:234). Churches in monasteries of the Judean Desert, as opposed to large city churches, were usually humble chapels for the monks' devotions comprising a long, narrow room with one apse; these were termed 'monastic-type' chapels by Hirschfeld (2002:231). This church is the largest among the Judean Desert monastery churches, even larger than that of St. Martyrius at Ma'ale Adummim, which was the largest monastery excavated until now (Magen and Hizmi 1985:68–71).

The church is divided into four spaces (from west to east): the entrance hall (L1109), the atrium (L1100), the nave (L1069) and the apse (L1093). The entrance hall (L1109) was only partially excavated. According to its location and size, it probably functioned as a small entrance hall leading to the ceremonial rooms, or perhaps, it was part of the monastery's main entrance hall. It was probably not a narthex, as

this feature would not have been required in a monastic community, where all the inhabitants were already baptized. This corresponds with the absence of narthexes in other Judean Desert monastery churches (Hirschfeld 2002:231–232).

In the northern part of the eastern wall of the entrance hall (W118; 1.4 m wide) there was a one-meter-wide entrance to the atrium (L1100; 7 × 8 m). It was paved with a mosaic floor in colorful geometric patterns, which was partially preserved (see Habas, this volume). Two square stones were discovered in symmetrically adjacent positions against the northern and southern walls, suggesting they carried architectural elements to support the roof. A well-cut bracket stone (console), decorated with a cross (Fig. 4; see Habas, this volume: Fig. 17), was found on the floor, and it is likely that it functioned as a support for a ceiling beam.

A doorway in the southern part of the eastern wall of the atrium (W105; 0.9 m wide) provided access to the nave (L1069; 7.5 × 12.5 m). The threshold had a hole in its center for a bolt, and it seems that the door opened into the atrium. The nave was paved with a partially preserved mosaic depicting animals (see Habas, this volume: Fig. 3). Mamluk pottery found on the floor (Fig. 20:6, 7) suggests that the destruction of the mosaic took place much later than the abandonment of the monastery, probably during the thirteenth century (see below). In the southern wall of the nave (W112; 0.8 m wide), an entrance led into the large northern courtyard (L1056). Only the western half of the entrance was excavated, but the two parallel bolt holes in the middle of the threshold suggest that it was approximately 2 m wide, and two ‘half’ doors opened inward from the courtyard.

All that remained of the apse (L1093) were hewn bedrock foundations with shallow depressions, which were carved in the upper surface for the stone-built superstructure (Fig. 5). Low W111 (1 m wide), which separated the apse from the nave, can be interpreted as a dividing step between the floors of the nave and



Fig. 4. Stone bracket (console) decorated with a cross.

the apse, or it may have stood to a greater height with at least one passage through it. Beneath the apse floor, which was not preserved, was a square, plastered installation (L1110; 1.3 × 1.7 m, 0.8 m deep). Its nature is unclear; however, it might have served as a reliquary, or one was set into it.

The northern courtyard (L1056; 13 × 16 m) was surrounded by a row of columns. The floor of the courtyard, as well as some of the column bases, were hewn from bedrock (Fig. 6; Plan 1: Section 4–4). The square plan of the columned space indicates that this was probably a courtyard surrounded by a cloister. A cistern mouth (L1111; 1.2 × 1.2 m) in the middle of the courtyard led to the monastery's water reservoir, which is still in use today by Bedouin shepherds.

In the northwestern part of the courtyard were three entrances leading to the subterranean burial complex; another tomb entrance (L1102) was discerned on its eastern side (see below).³ A square, plastered water installation (L1099; 1.2 × 1.5 m), located near the staircase of the eastern tomb, was used to collect the water from the roof of the cloister. From this installation, a well-built, plastered channel bypassed the entrance to the eastern tomb's staircase and drained the water through a rock-cut passage below the monastery's eastern wall. This



Fig. 5. The apse area (L1093, L1110), looking west.



Fig. 6. The northern courtyard, looking east.

channel likely fed another cistern, discerned to the east of our excavation. Several meters to the south, another channel (L1088) led toward the same cistern.

The Southern Courtyard and Surrounding Rooms

The southern courtyard was badly damaged, and therefore, it was difficult to reconstruct



Fig. 7. Room 1074, the 'bakery', looking north.

the architectural elements and determine their functions. The most comprehensible structure is a room located in the northeastern corner of the courtyard (L1074; 7×9 m), bounded on the west by W106 and on the east by W107. In the middle of the room was an irregular, rounded, hewn depression in the rock (max. diam. 2 m; 0.1 m deep) with a small square hole in its center (Fig. 7; Plan 1: Section 7–7). To the west of it was another hewn depression, square in shape (1×1 m; 0.3 m deep), which was covered by a huge stone (0.4×1.2 m, 0.3 m high) with three square protrusions. Both the rounded and square depressions were surrounded by a floor of stone pavers, which probably originally reached the western wall of the room (W106). These installations and the encircling pavement can be interpreted in several ways. It is possible that the hewn circle contained a millstone base for grinding grain with a paved path for the animals powering the wheel; however, a better candidate for a millstone base was discovered in Room 2053 in the southwestern part of the complex (see below), and it is improbable that a monastery would require two such installations. An alternative explanation is that this circle

may have held the crushing stone of an ancient olive press, although in the limited area of the excavation, no traces of a pressing element were recovered. The most likely possibility, in our opinion, is that this hewn circle once contained the monastery's oven, and the stone floor slabs were installed for insulation purposes. According to literary sources (Hirschfeld 2002:198–199), the bakery, and especially the oven, was one of the most basic elements of the Judean Desert monasteries. For example, a well-preserved, circular oven, 3.5 m in diameter with a 0.7 m high stone-built foundation, was excavated at the Khirbat ed-Deir monastery (Hirschfeld 1999:74–76).

In the southeastern corner of the monastery, three rooms were investigated (Fig. 8). In the eastern room (L1068; 6.5 m wide), a few installations were preserved *in situ* near the southern corner. A square, plastered installation (L1077; 1×1 m, 0.18 m high) was preserved adjacent to W100, with walls 0.2 m wide and an inner, plastered surface measuring 0.6×0.7 m. To the east, between Installation 1077 and the southern corner of the room, a partially preserved, industrial mosaic floor was



Fig. 8. The southeastern corner of the monastery, looking north.

uncovered (L1076; 1×2 m). A narrow, built and hewn channel (L1083; 2 m long, 0.15 m wide) extended from this floor underneath W100 and outside the structure. These three elements lay at different levels, descending from the square installation to the mosaic floor and then to the channel (Plan 1: Section 8–8). They were clearly part of a system of unknown function through which liquid flowed, perhaps associated with laundry, sewage, or kitchen activities. In the southwestern corner of this room was a floor paved with fieldstones (L1059), into which two chiseled stones (0.8×1.0 m, 0.3 m high) were inserted, probably forming the base of a column. Above this floor was a second floor (L1058) that extended from the column base to the western wall of the room (W104). These floor levels are clear evidence of modifications throughout the monastery's habitation.

To the west of W104 (0.9 m wide, 0.4 m high), two rooms were poorly preserved, with only parts of the walls and the floors remaining. Room 1040 (3.5 m wide) was delimited in the west by W103 (0.9 m wide, 0.5 m high). On the northern edge of this room, the floor had been

leveled by filling its crevices with small stones and dirt. The westernmost room (L1007; 3.7 m wide) was delimited on the west by W101 (0.8 m wide, 0.5 m high). No floor was evident in this room; however, the bedrock had been leveled. To the north, the hewn foundations of the northern wall of the room protruded from the bedrock.

In the middle of the southern courtyard, a hewn, plastered drainage channel (L1025; 0.3×12.0 m, 0.3–0.6 m deep) ran from northwest to southeast, terminating at the southern row of rooms. It then became a slab-covered channel (L1038; 0.2×7.0 m, 0.15 m deep) running eastward, although no outlet for this drain was discerned within the excavated area.

The Southwestern Part of the Monastery (Area 20)

Another row of rooms bordered the southern courtyard on the west. The western side of these rooms comprised the best-preserved remains of the monastery, while the eastern side was destroyed down to bedrock, rendering it impossible to reconstruct the original plan.



Fig. 9. The stable (L2042) and flour mill (L2053), looking west.



Fig. 10. The stable (L2042), looking west.

The only partition wall perpendicular to the western external wall (W205) was W204 (0.8 m wide, 1.1 m high), which divided the area into two rooms, L2042 and L2053 (Fig. 9).

The southern room (L2042; 3 × 4 m) was largely destroyed (Fig. 10). Against the southern face of the partition wall (W204) was

an installation (L2051; 0.5 m wide) delimited by a narrow wall (W206; 0.25 m wide, 0.8 m high). Two phases were discerned in this installation (Plan 1: Section 11–11): the first (L2051A) was paved with a mosaic floor on a plaster foundation, and the second (L2051B), preserved 0.3 m higher, was coated with a

concave plaster layer. South of this installation, the floor was paved with stone slabs until it reached a square, stone-built pillar (W207; 0.95 m high) that abutted the external wall (W205). Installation 2051, which resembles a trough, together with the stone-paved floor, leads us to conclude that this room was a stable.

In Room 2053 (5 × 4 m), to the north of the partition wall (W204), an ashlar-stone bench (W208; 0.7 × 4.0 m, 0.6 m high) was attached to the external wall (W205) and extended from W204 to a stone-built pillar (W209). The length between W204 and the pillar was almost the same as that between W204 and the pillar (W207) in Room 2042. North of the pillar, also against the external wall, were three plastered installations, side-by-side, the plaster incised with a herringbone pattern (see Plan 1: Section 11–11). Installation 2054 was a square, whitish-gray plastered installation (inner measurements 0.9 m wide, 0.5 m deep) with no eastern wall; Installation 2061 (inner measurements 0.6 m wide, 0.7 m deep) also lacks an eastern wall, and on its western side, the plaster attached to W205 was preserved up to 1 m in height. Installation 2035 is the largest (0.8 m wide, 3.5 m min. length, 0.8 m deep) and best-preserved; it may have been even larger; however, we were unable to excavate its northern edge. On its eastern side, only a portion of the small stones remained.

Southeast of these three installations, the base of a rounded element (L2036; diam. 1.4 m, 0.5 m high), built of fieldstones cemented together, was preserved up to three courses in height. It was encircled by stone slabs (L2053; Fig. 9) laid upon a white plaster surface. This floor sealed a fill of organic ash mixed with gray earth (L2060, L2062, L2063) that contained a number of apparently discarded items, such as pieces of marble ossuaries and liturgical items (see below). To the east of this fill was a U-shaped structure (L2064; 0.9 × 1.0 m, 0.6 m high; Fig. 9) of unknown function that rested directly upon bedrock (see Plan 1: Section 9–9).

Room 2053 was most likely a flour mill; the rounded base probably supported a Pompeian-

type millstone operated by a donkey (Moritz 1958:64–66, Pls. 4, 5; White 1984:65, Figs. 54, 55; Adam 1994:323, Figs. 736, 737), while the three plastered installations were likely used for storing grains or flour. In both Rooms 2042 and 2053, tesserae from a mosaic floor were found in the fill above the stone floor slabs, indicating that there was probably a second story that collapsed either during or after the monastery's occupation. The lack of a fill between the lower level and the collapsed upper story suggests that only a short time passed between the abandonment of the room and the collapse.

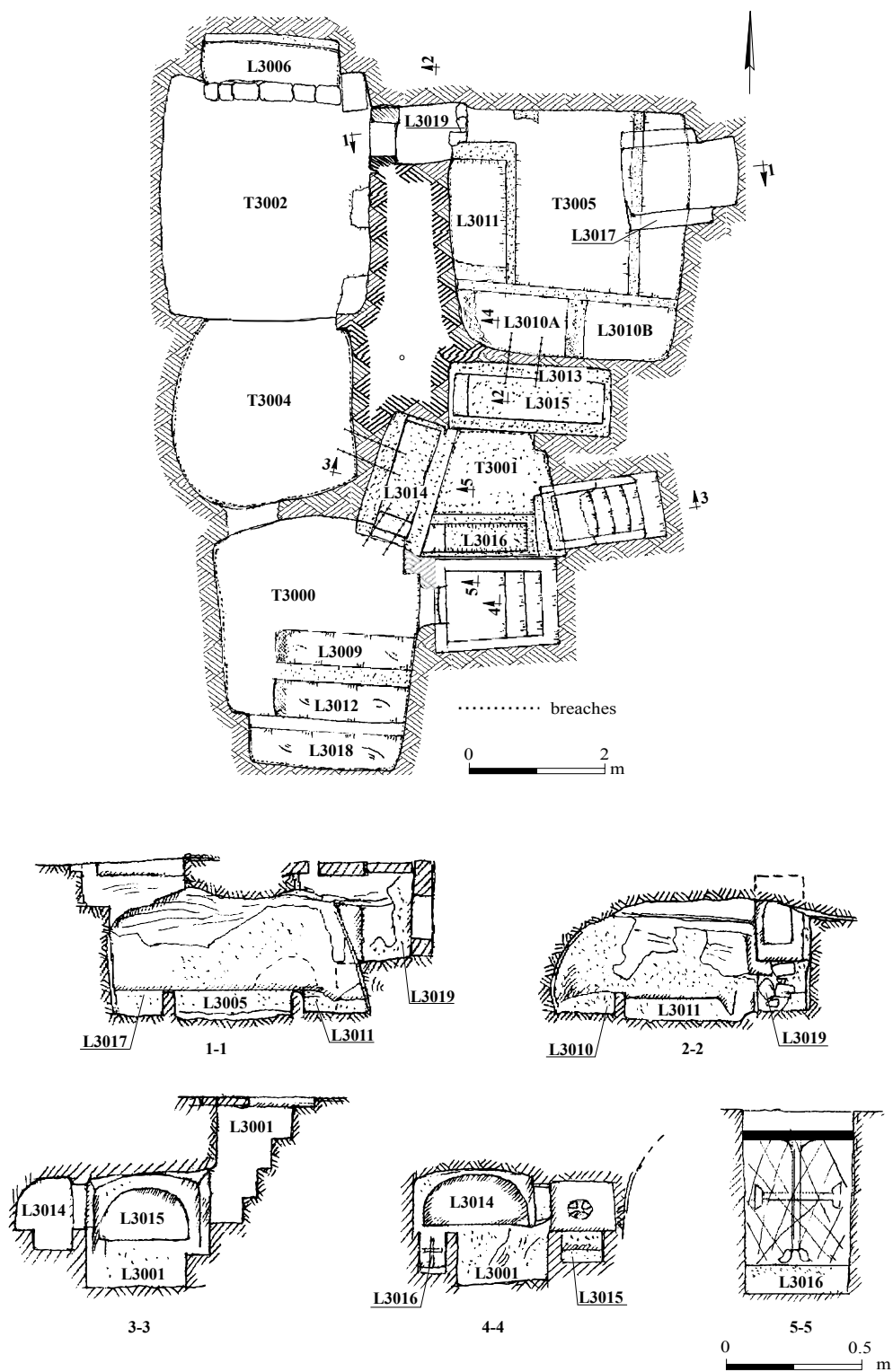
Along the western side of the foundation of the external monastery wall (W205), a water drain (L2046; 0.12 × 5.50 m, 0.1 m deep) ran from north to south and collected water from the roof. The drain most likely led to a cistern outside the monastery, as it clearly continued south, beyond the limits of the excavation area. The lower part of the channel was made of semi-cylindrical roof tiles (*imbrices*) and sealed by a layer of collapsed stones (L2039), most likely from the upper courses of W205 (Plan 1: Section 10–10). Above these stones was a surface (floor?) belonging to the post-destruction phase of the site (L2037), and above this was a fill (L2033) comprising fieldstones and earth that had been cut through by a robber trench (L2012) down to the monastery wall.

The Northern Burial Complex (Area 30)

Beneath the northern courtyard, a burial complex containing five tombs was revealed (T3000–3005; Plan 2).

Tomb 3000 (Plan 2)

Access to the southernmost tomb of this burial complex was gained through a staircase from the east, comprising seven irregular steps cut into bedrock. The upper opening was quadrangular in shape, with projecting edges upon which rested the paving stones that covered the staircase. When first discovered, the opening was completely covered with sediment and only the westernmost paving



Plan 2. The burial complex below the northern courtyard (Area 30).

stone, though fragmentary, was still *in situ*. On the lintel of the door was a circle cut into the rock (Fig. 11). As this burial complex was part of a Byzantine monastery, it can be assumed that the circle above the door held a cross. However, as no cross or sign of iconoclastic destruction was discerned, the carved circle on the door was either not completed, or had contained a portable wooden or metal cross that has since disappeared.

The main tomb chamber (T3000; 2.8×3.6 m, 1.5 m high) was quadrangular in shape with rounded corners. It was almost entirely filled with sediment that sloped from the eastern access point. The walls and ceiling of the room were faced with rough lime plaster mixed with aggregates (e.g., charcoal, gravel, crushed pottery). In the northeastern corner was a remnant of a section of the smooth lime plaster that had originally covered the underlayer of rough plaster throughout the room.



Fig. 11. The entrance to T3000 with hewn circle on the lintel, looking west.

On the southern side of the tomb are three graves with an east–west orientation. A stone funerary pillow was carved at the western end of each. The southernmost grave (L3018; 0.45×2.20 m, 0.1 m deep) was in a niche (*loculus*) in the wall, with a funerary pillow that measured 0.45×0.50 m. No skeletal remains were found in this grave. The central grave (L3012; 0.45×1.95 m, 0.25 m deep), hewn into the bedrock floor, had a funerary pillow measuring 0.35 m wide and yielded the remains of two adult skeletons of unidentified gender. The northern grave (L3009; 0.4×2.2 m, 0.25 m deep), also hewn into the floor, has a funerary pillow 0.4 m wide, and also contained two adult skeletal remains, one a male aged 50–60 years, the other, younger than 20 years old of indeterminate gender. Additional skeletal remains of at least three individuals were found in the fill of the main chamber (T3000), enabling the identification of a child aged 2–3 years, an individual of 15–20 years, and another, of 30–40 years. At least one of the adults was a male. Two breaches were evidenced in the main chamber of the tomb, one in the northern wall that connected it with the northwestern tombs (T3004, T3002), and the other in the northeastern corner that connected it to the central tomb (T3001).

Tomb 3001 (Plan 2)

The staircase and entrance to the central tomb in the complex, located on the eastern side, demonstrated the same characteristics as that of T3000, including the deposition process and a covering of paving stones on its western side. The staircase consisted of six irregular steps (Plan 2: Section 3–3), and above the doorway was a carved lintel. The small, trapezoidal chamber (T3001; 1.85×2.10 m, 1.7 m high) contained three graves (Fig. 12). The grave located near the entrance was oriented east–west (L3016; 0.42×1.51 m, 0.58 m high) and abutted the southern wall of the tomb chamber. It comprised a sarcophagus built of lime mortar with aggregates (crushed pottery, flint chips) that had been carefully smoothed. Above the

funerary pillow (0.3 m wide), a 'cross potent' was painted in red and covered with a mesh incised into the plaster (Fig. 13; Plan 2: Section 5–5), evidence of iconoclasm by later, non-Christian visitors. No skeletal remains were found inside the sarcophagus.

Two other sarcophagi (L3014, L3015), located on the western and the northern sides of the chamber respectively, were located

below low, hewn arches (arcosolia). These were probably partly hewn into the rock, but as both of them were covered with smoothed lime plaster, it was virtually impossible to distinguish between hewn and constructed elements. The western grave (L3014; 0.50 × 1.62 m, 0.32 m deep) was oriented northeast–southwest with a funerary pillow (0.22 m wide) on its southern side. A few human bones and



Fig. 12. Tomb 3001, looking west.



Fig. 13. Intentional elimination of Byzantine cross (L3016), looking west.



Fig. 14. A carved cross (L3015) in T3001, looking west.

teeth provided evidence for the burial of three adults aged between 20–50 years. The northern grave (L3015; 0.60×2.22 m, 0.35 m deep) was oriented east–west with a funerary pillow on the western end (0.2 m wide). The remains of two human individuals were discovered in this grave. One was an adult of unidentified gender aged less than 30 years, while the second was a child aged 1.5–2 years. Above the western end of the sarcophagus, a ‘cross pattée’ was carved within a circle measuring 0.35 m in diameter (Fig. 14; Plan 2: Section 4–4).

The entire central chamber (T3001) was plastered, the plaster much better preserved in the lower part of the room. Near the southern tomb, fragments of a polished pink limestone sarcophagus lid were discovered, and lime mortar around its edges indicated that it had sealed one of the sarcophagi. There were three breaches in this tomb, one at the head of the western grave leading southward into T3000, another on the western side opening into T3004 (see Fig. 12), and the third, in the northern wall giving access to T3005. The remains of a child aged 1–2 years were found in the earthen fill of this chamber, probably dating from a later period.

Tomb 3002 (Plan 1)

The hewn roof of this chamber (L3002; 3.0×3.5 m) had collapsed, and no traces of a staircase were visible; therefore, we cannot be certain if

there was an entrance from the outside. The floor of this room was covered by a thick layer of a red-brown earthen fill mixed with a powdery whitish sediment. This white sediment is no doubt the result of the disintegration process of the roof, while it was still in place and the room was largely empty. The upper part of the red-brown earthen fill was mixed with numerous stones and rock fragments that covered the hole after the tomb roof collapsed. A single *kokh* (loculus), oriented east–west, was located along the northern side of the room (L3006; 2.05×0.60 m, 0.45 m deep). The sarcophagus inside the *kokh* was delimited in the south by a low, built wall that was covered with the same white plaster as the inside of the niche. Unlike the plaster in the other tombs, here it contained fewer aggregates, and its whitish color was the result of a high lime content. Fragments of the covering stones were found in the eastern half of the sarcophagus. Upon their removal, the skeleton of a child aged 1–1.5 years, the head to the west, was revealed in a brown earth fill. The skeleton was well-preserved, laid *dorsal decubitus* with hands joined over the pubic area. In the surrounding fill were eggshell fragments and a piece of a handmade, geometric painted vessel, a ware that developed in the Levant during the twelfth century CE, became common during the Mamluk period, and continued in use throughout the Ottoman period (Avisar and Stern 2005:113), suggesting a later re-use of this tomb.

In the northeastern corner of the tomb, a large, monolithic rectangular stone doorway with an arched entrance opened onto a rock-cut corridor that led eastward to T3005.

Tomb 3004 (Plan 1)

This tomb (2.5×2.7 m, 1.4 m high) extended southward from T3002, and appears to have been a later addition to that tomb. The tomb was almost completely filled up to its roof with an earthen fill mixed with the same powdery white sediment mentioned above. A layer of well-preserved lime plaster containing diverse aggregates (e.g., charcoal, crushed pottery, flint

chips) completely covered the interior of the tomb. No sarcophagi were discovered in this room, but skeletal remains of two individuals were found on the floor. One skeleton was of an adult male aged less than 35 years, the upper part of his body still in articulation. He was buried on his back with his head to the west and his arms at his side. The skeletal orientation suggests that this was a late Islamic burial. The second burial was of a child aged 1–2 years, probably also from the late Islamic period.

The walls of this tomb had been breached in two places: the larger breach in the southern side leads to nearby T3000, and the second, on the southeast, leads to central T3001.

Tomb 3005 (Plan 2)

Situated in the northeastern part of the burial complex, this tomb (3.4×3.6 m, 1.4 m high) had two entrances. In the northwestern corner was an opening onto a small arched corridor (L3019), paved with stones, that led into T3002. A quadrangular opening in the northeastern corner of the ceiling provided entry from the courtyard above and was originally covered with paving stones. A cone-shaped earthen fill from this opening had almost entirely filled the tomb.

The walls of the room were covered with a pinkish brown lime plaster with diverse aggregates (e.g., gravel, crushed ceramics). Five graves surrounded the central chamber, four of them comprising well-preserved, constructed sarcophagi (L3010A, L3010B, L3011, L3017). The front walls of the sarcophagi measured 0.15–0.25 m in height, and their interiors were carefully smoothed with the same pinkish brown lime plaster. The southern sarcophagus was divided into two separate compartments, L3010A on the west (0.90×1.62 m), and L3010B on the east (0.80×1.58 m), both with a funerary pillow (0.28 m wide) at the eastern end. The sarcophagus along the western wall (L3011; 0.8×1.9 m) had a funerary pillow (0.3 m wide) at its southern end, while the sarcophagus on the eastern side (L3017; 0.63×2.74 m), which was exceptional

in length, had a funerary pillow at its southern end (0.34 m wide). In the small corridor that opened in the northwestern corner (L3019), the extremely degraded and unexcavated remains of what seems to have been a fifth grave were discerned, although no human bones were recovered. On the southern side of L3010A, a breach provided access to T3001.

Discussion: The Northern Burial Complex

This burial complex was apparently intended for the most esteemed heads of the monastery, as opposed to the eastern burial complex (see below), where the common monks were buried. As there were 11 graves, some of them containing at least two individuals, this would suggest that the monastery was occupied for a long period. It can be assumed that T3001 was the original construction and focal point of the complex, due to its relatively central position, the high-quality construction characterized by its partly hewn and partly built sarcophagi, with finely smoothed plaster and carved and painted crosses. Within this tomb, the two graves beneath arcosolia (L3015, L3014) clearly preceded the burial in L3016, which was positioned at the foot of the staircase, interfering with access to the room. The presence of two infant burials in this tomb (one in L3015, the second in the fill of T3001), alongside the original, *in situ* adult male burials, indicates that this tomb was reused after the abandonment of the monastery, probably during the Early Islamic period.

The next tomb to be added was T3005, based upon its position and the quality of the sarcophagi. As the only apparent access to the western part of the complex (T3002, T3004) was through T3005, it is reasonable to assume that the western part was added later. It cannot be determined if T3000 was added before or after T3002 and T3004.

The human remains found in the tombs suggest that they were used primarily by the monastery inhabitants, and then by others after the monastery's abandonment. Sometime before the roof collapsed in T3002, the tombs were looted. The disturbed remains of the

adult male in T3004 indicate that the looters moved some of the bones when they breached the wall between T3001 and T3004. While it may be assumed that the intruders intended to utilize the complex for themselves, as can be deduced from the erasure of the painted cross in L3016, there are no signs of reuse in the tombs. Sometime later, a fill of earth and stones trickled through the openings into the tombs. The collapse of the roof in T3002, which did not happen earlier than the twelfth century, reopened the underground complex and allowed for the baby burial in the sarcophagus in L3006.

The Eastern Burial Complex (Area 10; Plan 1)

During the last few days of our excavation, a bedrock-hewn staircase (L1102) leading eastward was revealed between the water cistern (L111) in the northern courtyard and the eastern external wall of the monastery (W108; Plan 1: Sections 3–3, 6–6; Fig. 15). Due to time constraints, we were unable to excavate this important underground complex in its entirety. Only the eight upper steps of the staircase were exposed (0.8×4.5 m, 2.2 m deep), but

we can estimate that another six steps remain unexcavated (Plan 1: Section 3–3). The staircase foundation walls were carved into the bedrock surface and above them, the northern wall (W116; 1.0×4.2 m, 0.5 m high) and the southern wall (W119; 0.4×4.2 , 0.7 m high) were built of three courses of two-faced ashlar stones. The staircase descended to a rectangular room (L1108; 2.2×4.4 m), which was only partially excavated, revealing the existence of entrances to at least three tombs: one in the north, one in the south, and another in the northeastern corner. The entrances were sealed with large blocking stones.

Room 1108 was roofed with a well-constructed barrel vault, only a segment of which was preserved on the western side of the room (Fig. 16; Plan 1: Section 6–6). Although the room was not excavated down to the floor, based on the excavated remains we suggest that the vault reached a maximum height of approximately 3.2 m. The southern burial chamber (L1104; 4.5×5.5 m, 1.3 m high) was the only one examined by the authors. A passage leading from the entrance separated two rows of four bedrock-hewn burial cells each, which were documented but not excavated (Fig. 17).



Fig. 15. Staircase (L1102) leading to the eastern tomb, looking west.

Inside each cell were numerous intact human skeletons, one above the other. Remains of a pair of leather footwear were recovered from two of these cells (L1105, L1106; see Sukenik, this volume), and a small piece of wood (L1107, B10268; 1.7×2.4 cm) with an iron nail was identified as Mediterranean cypress.⁴ The large quantity of skeletal remains suggests that this complex was established in an early stage of the monastery for interments of monks,

unlike the tombs below the northern courtyard, which were used exclusively for the burials of honored monastery leaders.

Above the barrel vault and adjacent to the eastern wall of the monastery, a segment of a white mosaic floor made of relatively large tesserae was preserved *in situ* (L1092; 0.6×1.4 m). In the earthen fill above it were found a colonnette leg of an altar table (see Habas, this volume: Fig. 16), a few burnt



Fig. 16. Barrel-vaulted roof above Room 1108, looking west.



Fig. 17. The burial cells in the eastern tomb (L1104), looking west.

fragments of a marble chancel screen, and a silver-plated copper coin from the Mamluk period (fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE), representing a fraction of a *dirham*.⁴ As this was the only paved external room associated with the monastery, and considering the presence of fragments of a chancel screen and an altar table, it is possible that this area functioned as a place to worship the holy remains below.

THE FINDS

Pottery

The pottery illustrated in Figs. 18–23 represents diagnostic sherds from selected loci that could assist in dating the foundation, occupation and post-abandonment phases of the monastery.

Most of the sherds belong to typical Byzantine vessels with a long lifespan; parallels and estimated dates are noted whenever possible. The brief typological discussion concentrates on vessels of chronological relevance or of special interest. The pottery figures are arranged according to the three excavation areas, although the entire assemblage is discussed typologically as a single unit.

Area 10 (Figs. 18–20).— This is the main excavated area at the site, including the northern and southern courtyards of the monastery and their associated rooms. The earliest locus is L1085 (Fig. 18:1, 2), which represents the foundation trench of W106, a major wall in the southern courtyard (see Plan 1). The main occupation period of the monastery is represented by pottery

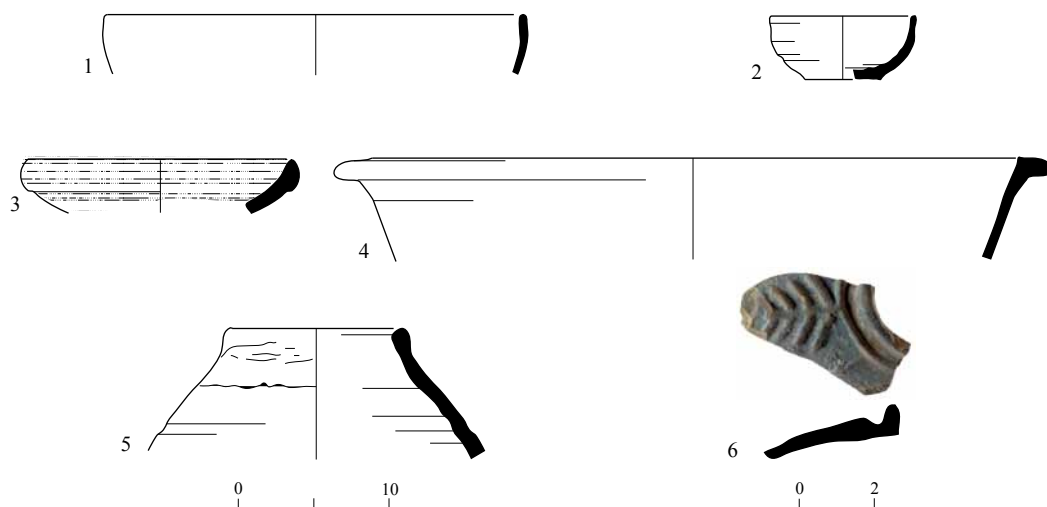


Fig. 18. Pottery from Area 10: (1, 2) foundation trench of W106 (L1085); (3–6) the northern courtyard (L1073, L1079, L1094).

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Bowl	1085	10209-1	Rolled upright rim, light brown fabric	Magness 1993:185, Form 4:7	Before mid-6th c.
2	Bowl	1085	10209-2	FBW; no decoration	Magness 1993:193, Form 1B	Mid-6th–late 7th c.
3	Bowl	1073	10179-1	ARS; rolled rim, interior glaze	Hayes 1972:154, ARS Form 99	550 CE–end of 7th c.
4	Basin	1094	10238	Arched rim, upright rounded walls	Magness 1993:204, Form 1	Late 3rd/early 4th–6th c.
5	Jar	1094	10238-2	Gaza storage jar	Majcherek 1995:169, Form 4	6th–7th c.
6	Oil lamp	1079	10248	Nozzle of a large candlestick lamp	Magness 1993:252, Form 3A:1	Mid-6th–late 7th/early 8th c.

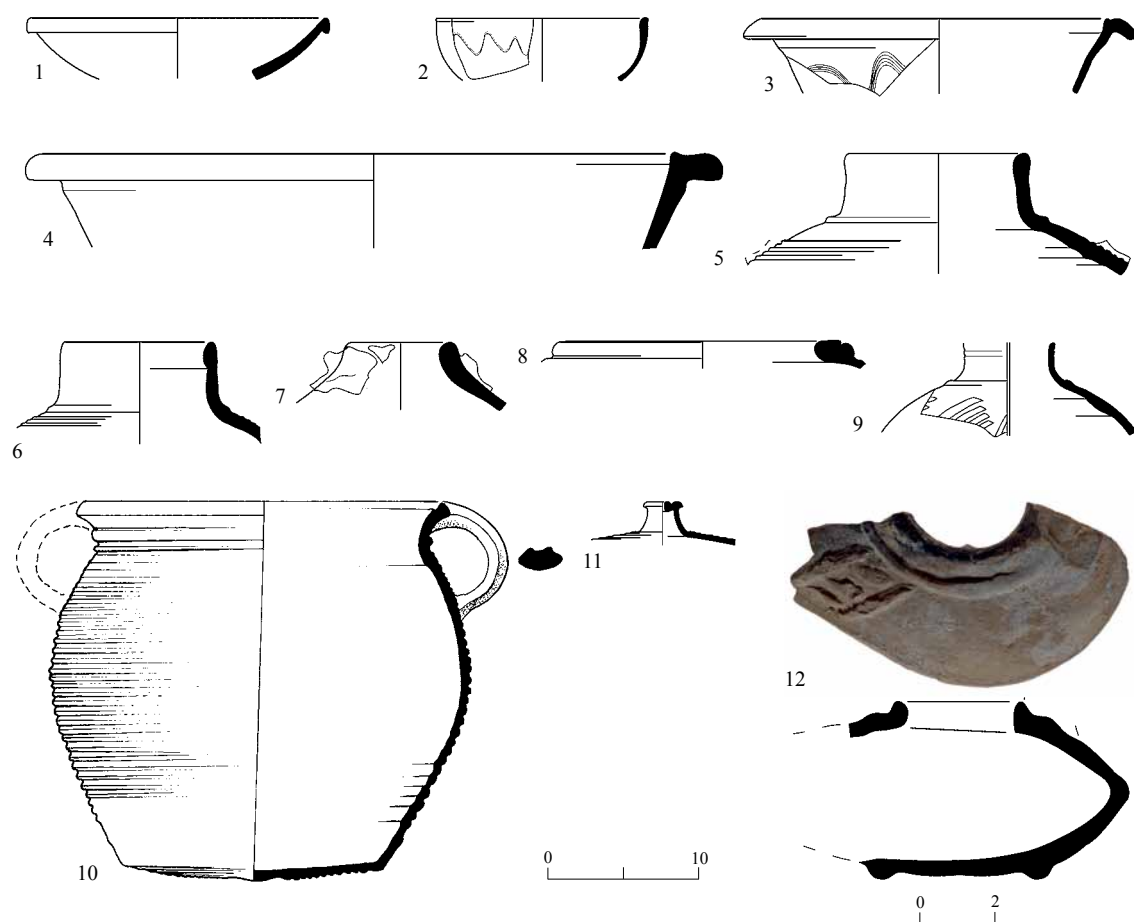


Fig. 19. Pottery from Area 10: the 'bakery' floor (L1043, L1074).

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Bowl	1043	10186-2	Rolled rim, interior glaze		
2	Bowl	1074	10233	FBW; whole; single incised wavy line	Magness 1993:194, Form 1A:1	Mid-6th–late 7th/early 8th c.
3	Basin	1043	10159-1	Arched-rim	Magness 1993:207, Form 2A	6th/late 7th–8th c.
4	Basin	1043	10186-1	Arched-rim	Magness 1993:204, Form 1	Late 3rd/early 4th–6th c.
5	Storage jar	1043	10139-1	Bag shaped, low neck with ridge	Vincenz 2007:344, Pl. 23:21	5th–6th c.
6	Storage jar	1043	10139-2	Bag-shaped, simple rounded rim	Magness 1993:224, Form 4B	5th–6th c.
7	Storage jar	1043	10139-3	Gaza storage jar	Majcherek 1995:169, Form 4	6th–7th c.
8	Holemouth jar	1074	10239	Sharply hooked rim, very short neck	Magness 1993:233, Form 1B2	5th–6th c.
9	Jug	1074	10180	FBW; neck without rim, decorated with incised nicks	Vincenz 2007:348, Pl. 25:1	Mid-6th–8th c.
10	Cooking pot	1043	10111	Globular, triangular rim		
11	Cooking-pot lid	1043	10251	Upper part of a lid, knob with steam hole	Vincenz 2007:338, Pl. 19:1	Late 3rd–8th c.
12	Oil lamp	1043	10116	Rear portion of lamp with radial decoration	Magness 1993: 252, Form 3A:1	Mid-6th–late 7th/early 8th c.

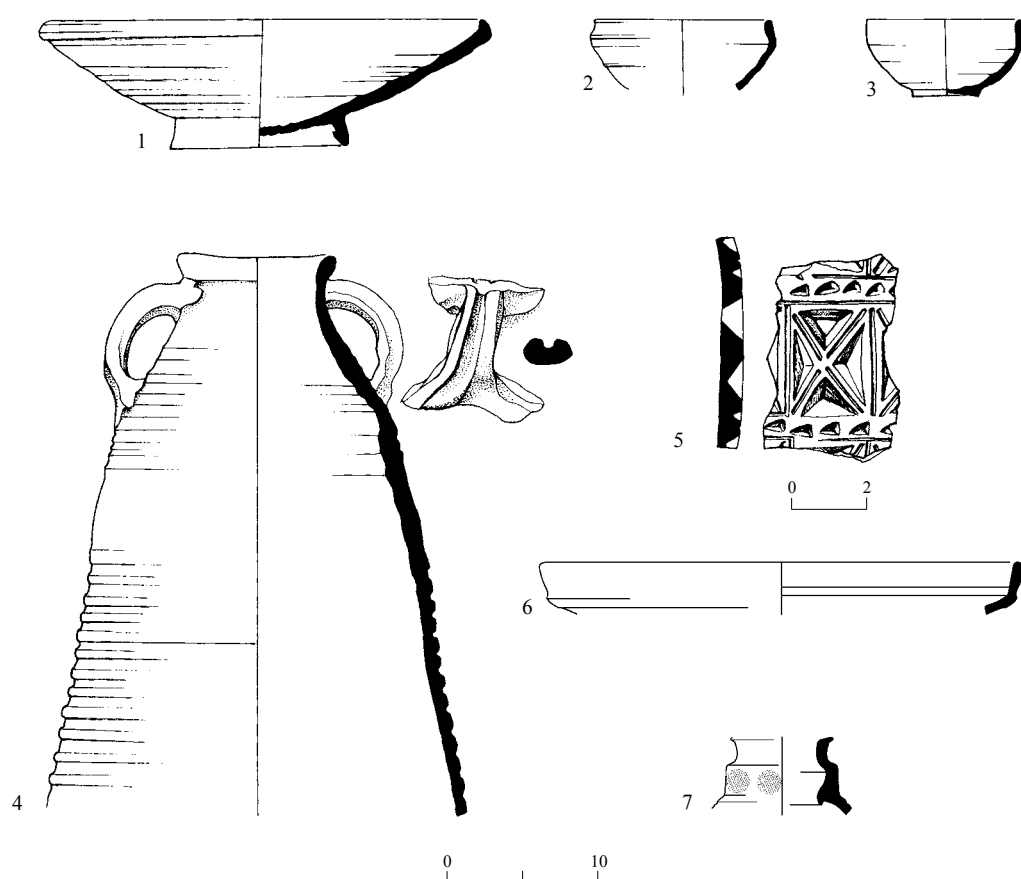


Fig. 20. Pottery from Area 10: (1–5) surface loci; (6, 7) Mamluk pottery (L1069).

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Shallow bowl	1010	10021	FBW; internally folded, upright rim	Rapuano 1999: Fig. 4:64	Late Byzantine
2	Bowl	1017	10067	FBW; no decoration	Magness 1993:193, Form 1C	Late 7th–mid 8th c.
3	Bowl	1037	10097	FBW; no decoration	Magness 1993:193, Form 1B	Mid 6th–late 7th c.
4	Storage jar	1008	10048	Folded rim, handles from rim to shoulder		
5	Body sherd	1070	10223	<i>Kerbschnitt</i> decoration		
6	Bowl	1069	10176-1	Yellow-glazed, slip-painted ware	Barbé 2015:61*, Fig. 13:2	13th c.
7	Jug	1069	10176-2	Swollen neck with stamped decoration	Avissar and Stern 2005:109, Fig. 45:6	13th c.

from the fill in the northern courtyard (Fig. 18:3–6) and from the floor of the ‘bakery’ (Fig. 19). A number of miscellaneous vessels from surface loci in Area 10 are illustrated in Fig. 20:1–5. The

latest ceramics in this area date to the Mamluk period and can be attributed to the destruction of the church mosaic floor (L1069) in the thirteenth century CE (Fig. 20:6, 7).

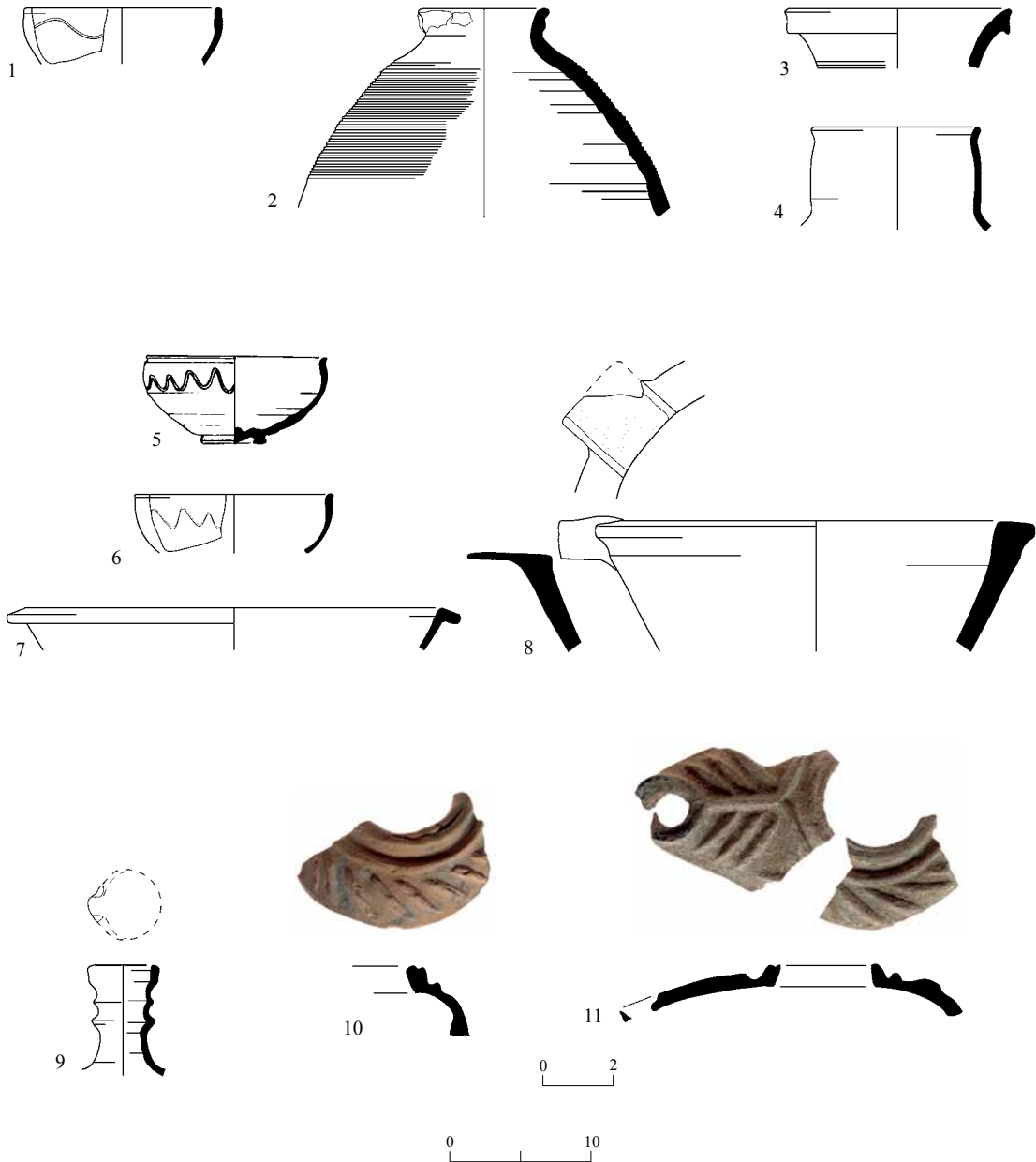


Fig. 21. Pottery from Area 20: (1–4) floor of the flour mill (L2053); (5–11) below the floor (L2060).

Area 20 (Figs. 21, 22).— This area is situated on the western side of the monastery. The main room in this area (L2053) probably functioned as a flour mill. Sherds found on the floor (Fig. 21:1–4) and below it (L2060; Fig. 21:5–11) are

of similar date and can be attributed to the time that the building was in use.

The pottery in Fig. 22 represents two different levels discerned outside of the western external wall (W205): the collapse of the monastery

wall (L2038, L2039, L2050; Fig. 22:1–5) and a later, post-abandonment phase (L2022, L2037; Fig. 22:6–10).

Area 30 (Fig. 23).— The pottery from this area represents the burial complex below the northern courtyard of the monastery.

Typology

Bowls.— Among the bowls selected for illustration, two main types are significant for dating. The Fine Byzantine Ware (FBW) bowls have thin, hard-fired walls and are distinguished by their fabric and surface treatment. Some of the small FBW bowls (Figs. 19:2; 21:1, 5, 6; 23:3) are decorated with one or two incised wavy lines on the exterior, a motif well-known at most Byzantine sites in and around Jerusalem, especially in monasteries, where such incised bowls were used as personal ‘soup bowls’ by the monks. Magness (1993:165–171), who studied the Fine Byzantine Ware from the Jerusalem vicinity, proposed Jerusalem as the production

center for this type of pottery. According to Magness (1993:193), this ware appeared in the Jerusalem area around the middle of the sixth century and continued well into the tenth century CE (Early Islamic period).

Two imported sherds of African Red Slip (ARS) bowls are present in the finds (Figs. 18:3; 23:2). Both are of Hayes ARS Form 99, dated from the second half of the sixth to the end of the seventh centuries CE (Hayes 1972:152–155). The latest bowl (Fig. 20:6), dated to the Mamluk period, is of slip-painted ware.

Basins (Figs. 18:4; 19:4; 21:8; 22:1, 6–8).— The arched-rim basins (Magness 1993:204–209), a well-known vessel form from the late Byzantine period, are the only basins uncovered in the excavation. The absence of earlier basin types, such as the shelf-rim basin (Magness 1993:202), may serve as further evidence for our dating of the site.

Cooking Pots (Figs. 19:10; 22:3).— Relatively few cooking-pot sherds were found at the site,

◀ Fig. 21

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Bowl	2053	20108-1	FBW; single wavy incised line	Magness 1993:194, Form 1A:1	Mid-6th–late 7th/early 8th c.
2	Jar	2053	20108-2	Triangular rim, tall neck	Magness 1993:236, Wide Necked Jars Form 2	3rd–5th c.
3	Storage jar	2053	20108-3	Bag shaped	Rapuano 1999: Fig. 7:106	Late Byzantine
4	Storage jar	2053	20112	Swollen, high neck	Magness 1993:230, Storage Jar Form 7	Late 7th to 9th–10th c.
5	Bowl	2060	20122-1	FBW; whole; single wavy incised line	Same as No.1	Same as No.1
6	Bowl	2060	20122-2	FBW; single wavy incised line	Same as No.1	Same as No.1
7	Bowl	2060	20122-3	FBW	Magness 1993:200, Form 2C	Mid-7th–9th/10th c.
8	Basin	2060	20122-4	Arched rim with a funnel	Magness 1993:206, Form 2A, without decoration	6th–late 7th/early 8th c.
9	Jug	2060	20120-2	FBW; pinched mouth		
10	Oil lamp	2060	20120-1	Large candlestick lamp	Kogan-Zehavi 2006:82*, Fig. 16:89	5th–8th c.
11	Oil lamp	2060	20122-5	Large candlestick lamp	Kogan-Zehavi 2006:82*, Fig. 16:88	5th–8th c.

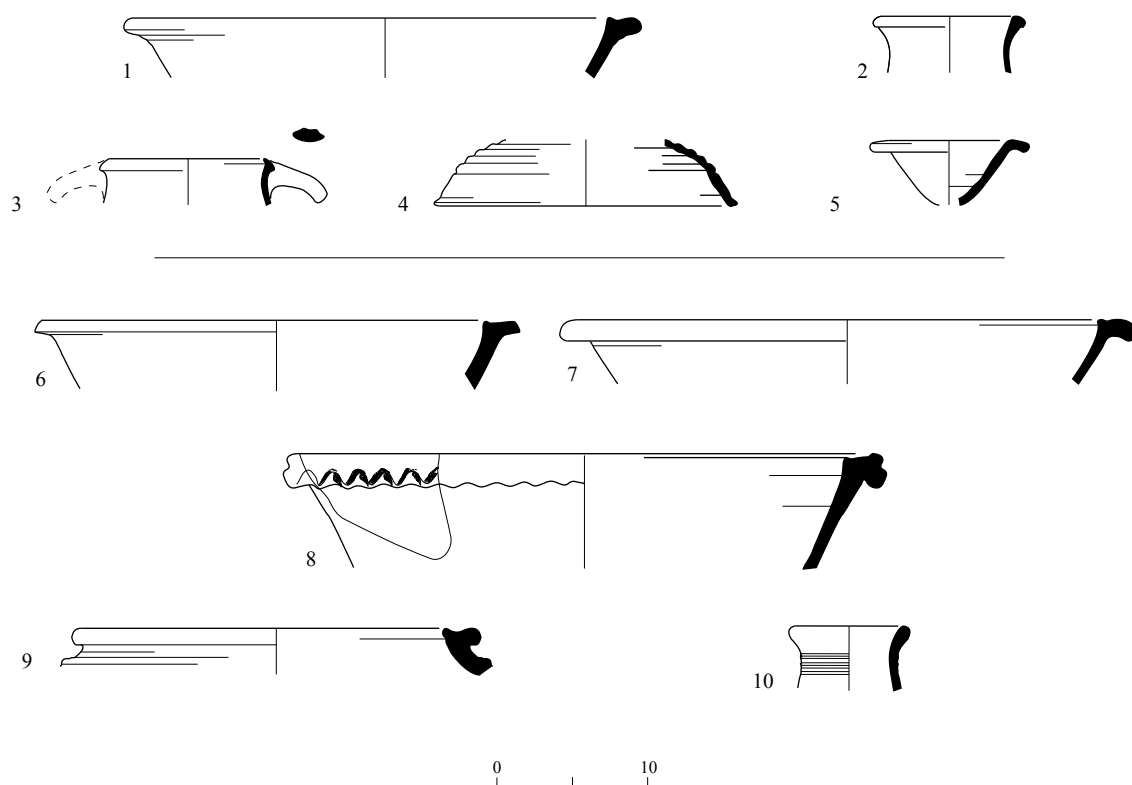


Fig. 22. Pottery from Area 20: (1–5) layer of collapse following monastery's abandonment (L2038, L2039, L2050); (6–10) the floor above it (L2022, L2037).

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Basin	2050	20103-1	Arched rim	Magness 1993:205, Form 1	Late 3rd/early 4th–6th c.
2	Jug	2039	20084	FBW; everted rim, short neck	Magness 1993:237, Form 1C:1	Mid-6th–early 8th c.
3	Cooking pot	2038	20083-2	Hooked rim, short neck	Magness 1993:219, Form 4B:2	5th/6th–late 7th c.
4	Cooking-pot lid	2050	20103-3	Ribbed body, no knob	Vincenz 2007:338, Pl. 19:2	Late 3rd–8th c.
5	Lid/stopper	2050	20103-2	Everted rim, conical shape	Magness 1993:247, Form 1:2	6th–8th c.
6	Basin	2037	20075-1	Arched rim with a funnel	Magness 1993:208, Form 2A	6th/late 7th–early 8th c.
7	Basin	2022	20054	Arched rim	Magness 1993:205, Form 1	Late 3rd/early 4th–6th c.
8	Basin	2037	20075-2	Arched rim with finger impressions	Magness 1993:208, Form 2B	6th/late 7th–early 8th c.
9	Jar	2037	20075-3	Holemouth jar	Rapuano 1999: Fig. 7:109	5th–6th c.
10	Jar	2037	20075-4	Everted rim, short neck, slipped		

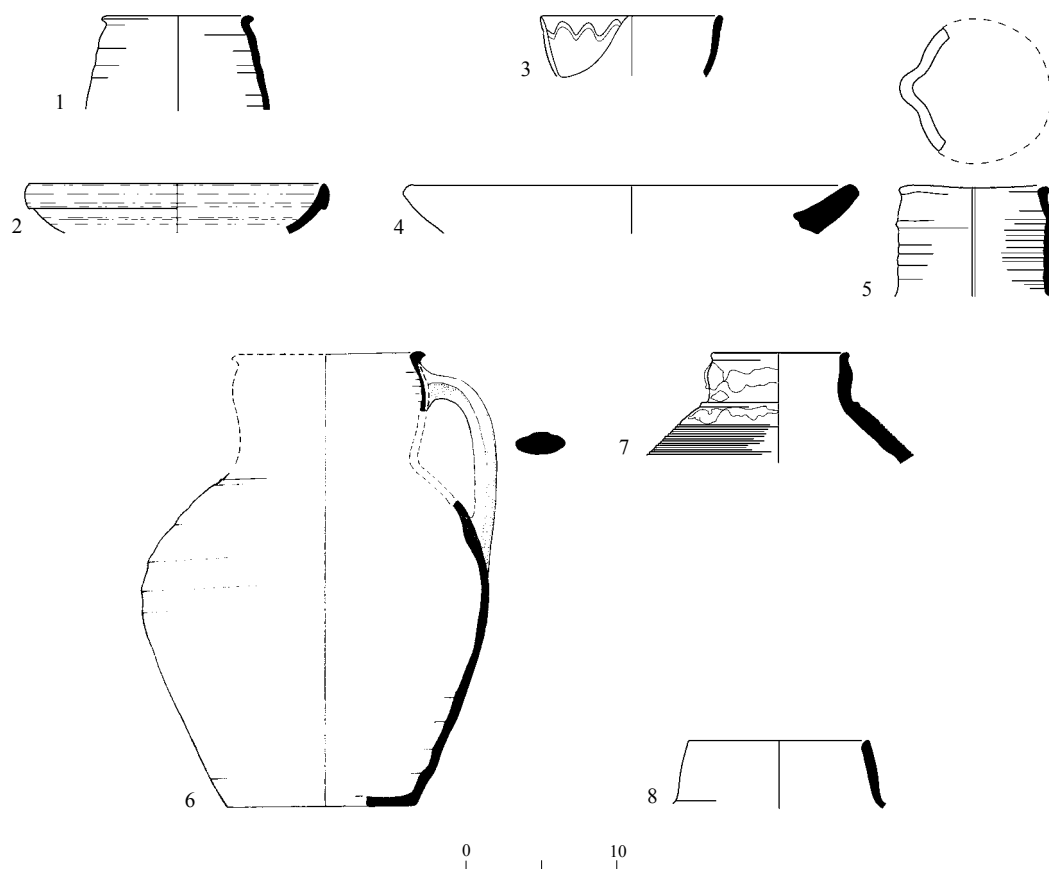


Fig. 23. Pottery from Area 30: the northern courtyard burial complex

No.	Vessel	Locus	Reg. No.	Description	Comparisons	Date
1	Cup	3005	30015	Straight neck, folded rim		
2	Bowl	3001	30006-1	ARS; rolled rim, interior glaze	Hayes 1972:154, ARS Form 99	550 CE–end of 7th c.
3	Bowl	3001	30006-2	FBW; whole; single incised wavy line	Magness 1993:194, Form 1A	Mid-6th–late 7th c.
4	Bowl	3008	30013	V-shaped, reddish grits, poorly fired	Golani 2004:21, Fig. 22:8	Early Bronze Age
5	Jug	3005	30012-1	Straight rim, pinched mouth	Bar-Nathan 2011: Fig. 11.24:12	End of 7th c. (Umayyad)
6	Jug	3005	30012-2	Whole; everted rim, swollen neck		
7	Storage jar	3000	30010	Straight rim, short neck		
8	Storage jar	3002	30002	Bag-shaped	Rapuano 1999: Fig. 7:106	Late Byzantine

and only one vessel, found on the floor of the ‘bakery’, was restored (Fig. 19:10). Its large loop handles, which extend from the rim to the shoulders, differentiate it from earlier Roman

cooking-pot forms, which have much smaller loop handles. Two examples of cooking-pot (or casserole) lids (Figs. 19:11; 22:4) are made of cooking ware, and the example in Fig. 19:11

has a raised knob handle that is pierced to form a steam hole.

Storage Jars.— Most of the storage jars are typical Byzantine forms. Noteworthy are two forms of the Palestinian bag-shaped storage jar: the typical Byzantine jar found in the southern part of the country and at sites around Jerusalem in the fifth–sixth centuries (Fig. 19:5, 6), and a form common at sites along the coast in the sixth–eighth centuries and rare in the Jerusalem area (Figs. 21:3; 23:8).

Also found in the ceramic assemblage are the neck-less Gaza jars (Figs. 18:5; 19:7), upon which leftover clay is often evident on the neck and shoulders of the vessel. These are called Gaza jars because they most probably contained the famous Gaza wine, which was exported throughout the Mediterranean region during the sixth–seventh centuries (Adan-Bayewitz 1986:97–99, Fig. 1:8–14).

Lamps (Figs. 18:6; 19:12; 21:10, 11).— All the lamps found at the site belong to the late Byzantine type known as ‘large candlestick lamps’ (Magness 1993:251–255, Form 3), which are characterized by a larger body and filling hole than the earlier Roman form (Magness 1993:250–251, Form 2). The rim is decorated with radial lines in raised relief and the nozzle is connected to the filling hole by a surrounding line and decorated with a palm branch, the so-called ‘tree-of-life’ motif. According to Rosenthal and Sivan (1978:116), this type was in use between the fifth and eighth centuries, although Magness suggests that it appeared no earlier than the sixth century (Magness 1993:251–252).

Miscellaneous.— Various vessels of common Byzantine types are also illustrated, including a cup, bowls, jars, jugs and a lid/stopper. Worth of mention is a body sherd decorated with *Kerbschnitt* decoration (Fig. 20:5), found on the surface (L1070). This type of decoration usually appears on handmade bowls from the Abassid period, which are dated at Kursi to the beginning of the ninth century (Tzaferis 1989:

Fig. 5:1) and at Pella, to the mid-ninth century (McNicoll, Smith and Hennessy 1982:152). At Tiberias, a few examples were dated to the late eighth–early ninth centuries (Stacey 2004:93, Fig. 5.6). Therefore, this sherd can be dated later than the occupation of the monastery. It appears to belong to either a lantern or an incense censer (Magness 2012:284). This unique vessel held either glowing embers or an oil lamp, and the smoke or the light emanated from the carved holes.

The chronological range for the bulk of the ceramic assemblage extends from the fourth to the eighth centuries CE, with the majority falling within the late Byzantine and the early Umayyad periods (sixth–seventh centuries CE)—the main occupation phase at the site—and is characteristic of the Jerusalem area (for further discussion, see Magness 1993). The latest sherds from the monastery, found on the floor of the church and in the intrusive child burial in T300, represent robber activities, most likely during the Mamluk period. This is probably also the date of the other child burials in the subterranean burial complex beneath the northern courtyard (Area 30).

Roof Tiles

A large number of broken, fired-clay roof tiles were retrieved from all the excavated areas, comprising the two most common types utilized for roofing in large structures, such as churches, during the Byzantine era. The *tegula* is a plain, flat tile (Fig. 24), while the *imbrex* is a semi-cylindrical tile, resembling half a pipe (Fig. 25), which was placed over the joints between the *tegulae*. Two rows of complete *tegula* tiles were found at the Monastery of St. Martyrius in Ma‘ale Adummim, probably a reserve supply for repairing the monastery roof (Magen and Hizmi 1985:70; Magen and Berman 2015:377–382).

Some of the roof tiles from the site were stamped, and two kinds of stamps are discernible: a triangular pattern of three small circles, which appears on both *tegulae* and



Fig. 24. *Tegula* roof tiles.



Fig. 25. *Imbrex* roof tiles.

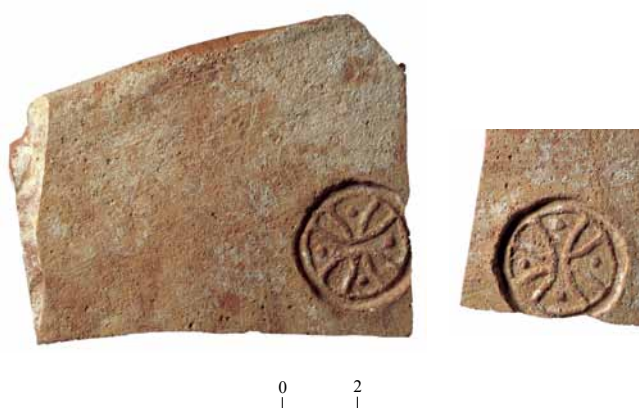


Fig. 26. Roof tiles stamped with a decorative cross.

imbrices, and a decorative cross stamped only on *tegulae* (Fig. 26). While roof-tile fragments are a very common find at most monastic sites in the Jerusalem area and the Judean Desert, to date, no comprehensive study has been carried out on the stamped tiles. Stamped tiles have been found at several monastic sites in and around Jerusalem, such as next to the northern wall of the old city (Hamilton 1940: Fig. 1:4), Ramat Rahel (Aharoni 1962: Fig. 2:8), Bethany (Saller 1957:324) and the Georgian monastery at Umm Leisun (Seligman 2015:168–171).

The finds from the Byzantine Monastery of Deir Ghazali, located to the north of Jerusalem, led to the identification of six different stamp designs (Avner 2000:45*–46*), one of which corresponds to our example of three impressed circles. Tsafir (1984:306) suggested that these stamps were used for inventory and revenue purposes; however, as they were stamped *before* they were fired, it seems more likely that they represent ‘trademarks’ of different local production centers. It is commonly assumed that tile-production workshops were located near urban centers, and from there the tiles were purchased and delivered to the monasteries. The triangular shape and the reddish color of the tiled roofs distinguished the churches from the other, flat-roofed buildings in monastery complexes. The triangular roofs had two functions: to cover a large building space, and to visually

emphasize the ritual nature of the churches. This phenomenon is typical of both urban and rural settlements, and is also depicted on the contemporaneous Madaba Map (Alliata 1999:74), in which the red-roofed buildings represent monasteries or churches, while other buildings had gray or yellow, horizontal roofs.

Stone Objects

Liturgical Furnishings

A number of stone liturgical items, including two vessels and a marble chancel screen, were recovered below the floor of the flour mill in Area 20 (L2060; see Habas, this volume), and pieces of an additional chancel screen, along with a colonnette leg of an altar table, were found on the white mosaic floor just outside the eastern wall of the monastery (L1092; see Habas, this volume).

Ossuary Fragments (Figs. 27, 28)

Two fragments from two different ossuaries were recovered from the site, neither of them *in situ*. The corner of a panel from an uncommon, hard-limestone ossuary (0.23 × 0.25 m, 3 cm thick) was found below the floor of the flour mill in Area 20 (L2060, B20128; Fig. 27). A strip of vegetal decoration is framed on the outer edge of the panel by three straight lines (7 cm wide), and on its inner side are the remains of another frame. The naturalistic decoration depicts a



Fig. 27. An ossuary fragment.

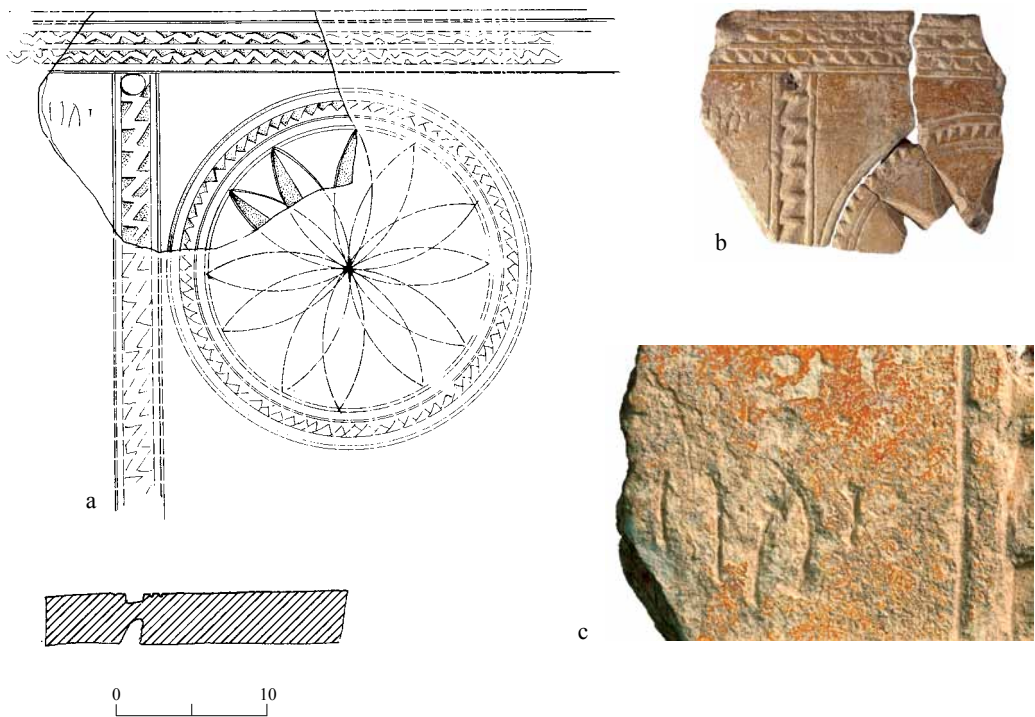


Fig. 28. An ossuary fragment with inscription.

grapevine with three finely detailed leaves and a grape cluster. Such a motif is rarely depicted on ossuaries, and only three examples are noted in Rahmani's comprehensive catalogue (Rahmani 1994: Figs. 600, 816, 893). In the corner of the panel, tendrils evolve into a stylized lily with three petals. The lily is a much more common motif on ossuaries. The realistic details of the lily indicate that the artisans had first-hand knowledge of its botanical components (Rahmani 1994:50–51).

A fragment (0.16 × 0.20 m, 3 cm thick) from the front panel of a soft-limestone ossuary was found on the surface in the southern part of the northern courtyard (L1023, B10053). The upper edge of the fragment is decorated with a horizontal frame (4 cm wide) containing a double zigzag, from which descends a vertical frame (2.5 cm wide) with a single zigzag motif (Fig. 28:a, b). The single zigzag is the most common motif on ossuary frames (Rahmani 1994:36–37). Three of twelve original rosette petals are partially preserved inside a circle originally 8 cm in diameter. Traces of red paint are still visible in a few places on the ossuary.

Three-and-a-half Hebrew letters of an inscription are preserved on the upper left panel (Fig. 28:a, b, c), יהו, which comprise a very common theomorphic prefix in Hebrew names during the Second Temple period, e.g., יהונתן, יהושע, יהוסף.

The origin of these two ossuaries is unknown, as no remains from the Roman period were discovered at the site. While a large group of burial caves from that era were surveyed at the southern edge of nearby Kh. Beit Sahure (Kloner 2000:78*–79*, 88*), this site is located on the opposite side of the deep Naḥal Qidron, and therefore probably not the source of the ossuaries. An alternative and closer location is the village of Abu Dis, situated c. 1 km northeast of the monastery, where many pieces of Early Roman pottery were found in the village and in a few *kokhim* tombs surveyed nearby (Dinur and Feig 1993:362, Site 457). At another site, between Abu Dis and the monastery, seven burial caves with Roman pottery were also

surveyed, one of which contained five *kokhim* (Dinur and Feig 1993:349, Site 432).

Basalt Millstones (Figs. 29, 30)

A complete, well-preserved pair of basalt stones comprising a rotary hand mill was found in the fill above the southern courtyard (L1046, B10135). The upper grinding stone (*catillus*) is 9 cm high and 45 cm in diameter, sloping down from the rim to a hole in the center, 0.1 m in diameter. An iron band (3 × 17 cm) was attached horizontally to the sides of the hole and fastened with melted lead. In the center of the band was a hole, 2 cm in diameter, into which the pivot was inserted.

The lower basalt stone (*meta*) is 0.1 m high and 0.45 m in diameter. An iron pivot (0.16 m high) was inserted into an 8 cm deep depression in the center of the stone, which was filled with lead. The upper stone (*catillus*) rotated around the central pivot of the lower stone by means of a wooden handle that was inserted into an iron ring at the outer edge of the stone, 2.5 cm in diameter.

Runnels (1990) suggested that the rotary hand mill was introduced into Greece by the Roman legions, and this appears to be true of Israel as well. Excavations carried out at sites captured by the Roman armies during the Jewish War, which culminated in the destruction of the Second Temple, provide striking evidence for this connection. For example, no rotary hand mills were found at the Jewish cities of Yodefat and Gamla, but at Masada, an example is dated to the period when the site was occupied by Roman soldiers (Netzer 1991:290–291). It seems, however, that the rotary hand mill replaced the Olynthus mill in Israel very gradually, only becoming the main hand mill in the Byzantine period (Frankel 2008:20).

No exact parallels were found for the unique features of this hand mill—the flat upper surface, the receptacle around the edge of the pivot hole and the iron ring to hold a pole—in the Levant. The Roman millstones in Greece are similar, although their handles are different (Runnels 1990:148), and a few

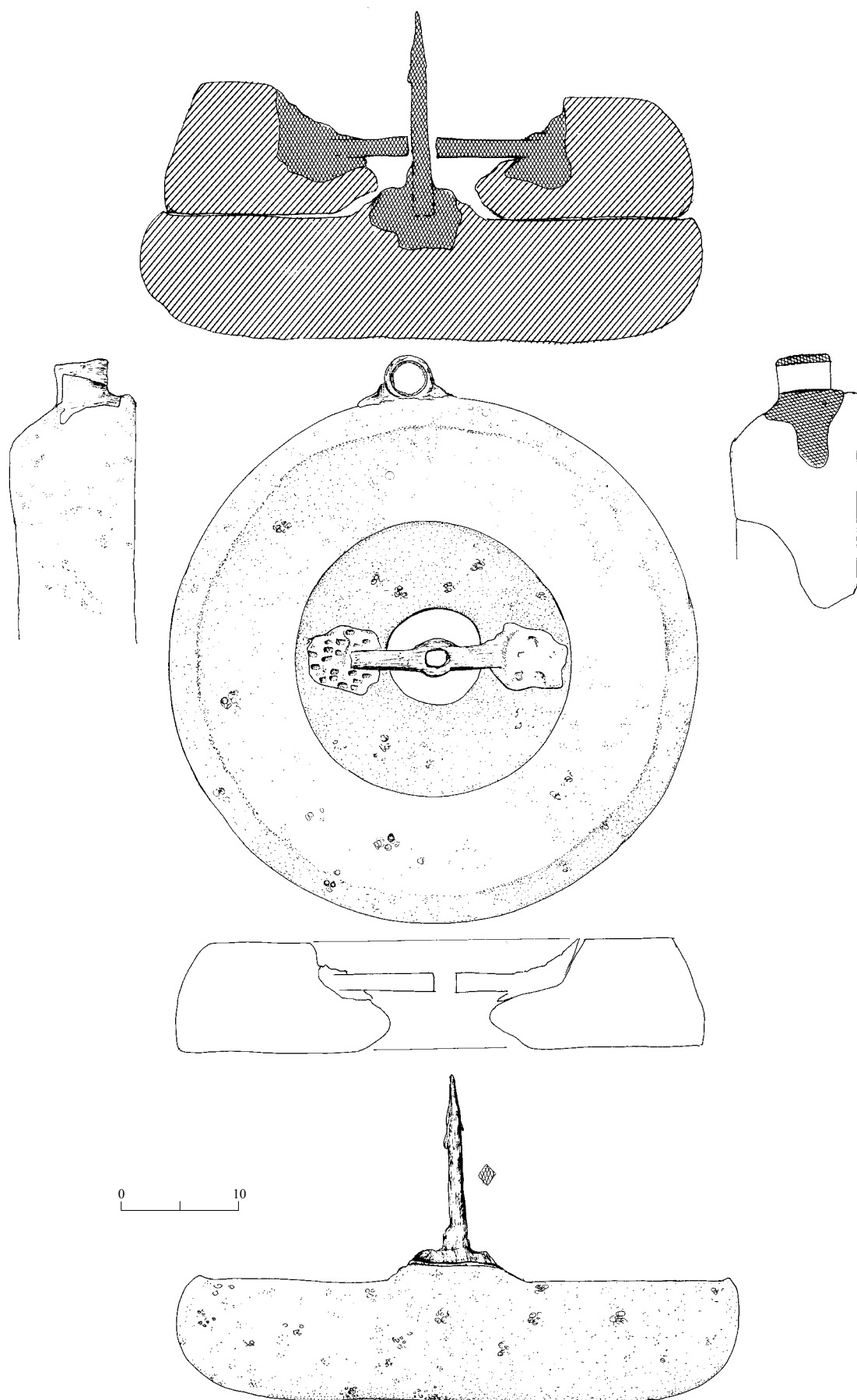


Fig. 29. Basalt millstones.



Fig. 30. Basalt millstones.

somewhat similar examples were documented in Roman England (Watts 2002:34–35). Among the Roman hand mills of France, there are no identical examples, but several from Late Antiquity offer interesting comparanda (Longepierre 2011:812).⁵ In southeastern France, *catilli* with a flat upper surface are dated from the beginning of the third century CE onward (prior to the third century CE they were all concave in shape). In addition, *catilli* with a well-defined receptacle around the pivot hole appear in southeastern France at the beginning of the sixth century CE.

In France during the Early Roman Empire, the rotary hand mills were smaller in diameter (less than 0.41 m in diameter), while from the Late Roman Empire until the Middle Ages, they ranged between 0.41 and 0.54 m, resembling the measurements of our mill.

In summary, the millstones from Naḥal Qidron can be typologically associated with a variety of household rotary hand mills from southeastern France that first appeared during

the sixth century CE. As the scientific analysis of the basalt from our example demonstrates a provenance in northern Israel (see Segal, this volume), it can be concluded that it was made by a well-skilled monk of Gallic origin, who used the technical ability and knowledge that he brought from his homeland to craft a new type of basalt millstone that is unique in the assemblage of basaltic objects found in Israel.

DISCUSSION AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE SITE

The majority of the finds from the site of Naḥal Qidron—pottery, roof tiles, glass (see Winter, this volume) and mosaic floors (see Habas, this volume)—can be dated to the Byzantine–Early Islamic periods, up to the eighth century CE. Fragments of a few ossuaries date to the Early Roman period, but they lack a clear stratigraphic context. The monastic complex belongs to the one-story *coenobium* type that flourished in the Judean Desert during the Byzantine period (Patrich 1995). In size (900 sq m), it can be attributed to Hirschfeld's (2002:144) medium-sized group of Judean Desert monasteries, and according to his estimation of Byzantine hermit populations (Hirschfeld 2002:187–189), the Naḥal Qidron *coenobium* was inhabited by a community of some 50 monks.

A number of scholars (Corbo 1955; Chitty 1966; Hirschfeld 1992; Patrich 1995) have documented over a dozen sites between the two holy cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem, identified as rural monasteries based on hagiographic, toponomic and archaeological data (see Fig. 1). They are all of the *coenobium* type (Hirschfeld 1992:33), which includes a chapel and a number of cells around a courtyard. According to Seligman (2011:478–481), such monasteries and their monastic farms were the most common settlement form in the hinterland of Jerusalem during the Byzantine period. Their livelihood was based on the cultivation of grapes, olives and grain, which comprised the daily dietary staples in the Roman–Byzantine periods in general, and in Byzantine Palestine specifically (Seligman 2011:414–421).

Identification of the Site

The remains at Naḥal Qidron comprise a well-preserved complex with components characteristic of a typical Judean Desert Byzantine monastery. Corbo (1955) and Hirschfeld (1992) have discussed these sites in detail and attempted to identify them according to geographical references and historical events mentioned in ancient literary sources. For example, Corbo identified the monastery at Giv'at Homa (Jebel Abu Ghunneim) with the monastery of Photinius (Corbo 1955:141–145, Fig. 42); the remains at Kh. Luqa, with the monastery of Luke, the disciple of St. Euthymius (Corbo 1955:146–148); the Georgian monastery of Kh. el-Qatt, as dedicated to St. Theodore (Corbo 1955:113–140, Fig. 30); and the monastery at Kh. el-Makhrum, as that of St. Theognius (Corbo 1955:255).

An account by Paul, a monk from Elusa, relates that St. Theognius travelled on a donkey from Jerusalem to his monastery in the desert. On the way, his donkey tripped and tumbled down the slope opposite the Monastery of Eustathius (Paul of Elusa *Vita Thgn* 10:78–118; Vaillhé 1900:22). The main road from Jerusalem through the Judean Desert to the Great Laura of St. Sabas runs along the eastern side of Naḥal Qidron (see Fig. 1) and was probably the route taken by St. Theognius.

Based on an ancient path that branches off from the main road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, leading to Kh. el-Makhrum (the monastery to which St. Theognius was travelling), Hirschfeld (1990:47) suggested that the remains he surveyed at Kh. Bureikut be associated with the Monastery of Eustathius. However, the identification of Kh. Bureikut with

the monastery of St. Eustathius is problematic. The site was not excavated, the material remains are limited, the architecture lacks any special characteristics, and the site occupies a remote location off the main road. Seligman and Abu Raya (2002:137) proposed the site of Kh. Umm Leisun as an alternative candidate for the Monastery of Eustathius, based on several salvage excavations at that site located 1 km north of Kh. Bureikut. These excavations revealed a chapel with a mosaic floor and finds dating to the Byzantine period, interpreted by the excavators as the remains of a small rural monastery. However, in a recent comprehensive article, Seligman now proposes to identify Kh. Umm Leisun as a Georgian monastery, due to the discovery of a rare Georgian inscription on a tombstone bearing the name of the bishop Iohane (Seligman 2015:162–163). Thus, if this site, situated along a secondary roadway, was a Georgian monastery, it cannot be identified with that of St. Eustathius.

Based on historical and geographical considerations, we suggest that the monastery unearthed in Naḥal Qidron is that of St. Eustathius. As one of the main roads from Jerusalem runs through the Judean Desert along the eastern side of Naḥal Qidron past our site, it is reasonable to posit that St. Theognius would have ridden to his monastery (identified at Kh. el-Makhrum) along this route, and that he fell from his donkey near this spot. Paul's death in 522 CE establishes a *terminus ad quem* for the story of St. Theognius, and thus provides a date for the existence of the Monastery of Eustathius. This date is well-supported by the ceramic finds, which are mainly of the sixth–seventh centuries CE.

NOTES

¹ The excavation (Permit No. A-3994), on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and financed by the Ministry of Defense, was directed by Hervé Barbé and Yehiel Zelinger, with the assistance of Rafi Lewis and Yonathan Mizrahi (area supervision), Yossi

Nagar (physical anthropology), Avraham Hajian, Tanya Slutzkaya and Viachislav Pirskey (surveying and drafting), Tsila Sagiv (photography), Ariel Berman and Robert Kool (numismatics), Raleb Abu Diab and Haim Finkel (mosaic conservation), Niki

Davidov (digital photography), Raed Abu Khalaf (administration), Oded Raviv (stone restoration), Rony Gat (pottery restoration), Noga Ze'evi (pottery drawing), Clara Amit (studio photography), Olga Shorr (glass restoration), Elizabeth Belashov (preparation of the plans for publication), Ilena Kupersmidt (metallurgical laboratory), Irena Segal (basalt analysis), Tamar Winter (glass analysis), Lihi Habas (mosaic analysis), Malka Wacks-Watkins (preliminary English editing). Special thanks are due to Shelley Sadeh for her insightful editing.

² The standard length of a Byzantine foot seems to have been 0.3123 m; although in practice, the length fluctuated between 0.308 and 0.320 m (Kazhdan 1991:1708).

³ The eastern burial complex (L1102) was excavated as part of Area 10, but will be discussed together with the burial complex below the northern courtyard in Area 30.

⁴ The wood sample (IAA No. 865826) was very fragile and highly degraded. It was examined by

Dafna Langgut and Mordechai Benzaquen of the Laboratory of Archaeobotany and Ancient Environments, Tel Aviv University, with the aid of a Hitachi TM3030 Tabletop Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM). The sample was identified as *Cupressus sempervirens* (Mediterranean cypress) based on the absence of vessels and resin canals in the transverse section, the presence of exclusively uniseriate rays of up to 19 cells in height within the tangential section, and the presence of rounded, uniseriate tracheid pitting in the radial walls.

⁵ The coin (IAA 135229) was identified by Ariel Berman. A second coin (IAA 112098), from a robbers' pit in Area 20 (L2024), was dated to the Ottoman period (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries CE) by Robert Kool of the IAA. Two other coins were unidentifiable.

⁶ The authors wish to thank Samuel Longepierre (2011) for his help.

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