

THE CONSORTIUM FOR THE EXCAVATIONS OF BETHSAIDA
BETHSAIDA BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT
LICENSE G49/2012
REPORT ON THE 2012 EXCAVATIONS



Figure 1, A fragment of grapes found on the surface of Bethsaida and a frieze of identical decoration from Chorazim

RAMI ARAV
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA



Figure 2, Bone scarab, Egyptianize



Figure 3, Bronze coin, Cleopatra VII, minted at Ptolemais (Acco) in 34/35 BCE

The Expedition

The 2012 season of excavations at Bethsaida took place during May 21th and June 28. There had been altogether 120 students and faculty working at the site. As every year the expedition was housed at Kibbutz Ginosar and we are very grateful for the long standing extraordinary hospitality that has been consistently shown to the expedition since 1994.

The following faculty, staff, students and volunteers took part in the 2012 excavations season:

Faculty (in alphabetical order)

Dr. Mark Appold, co-director, Truman State University

Dr. Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Senior Fellow, Zinnman Institute of Archaeology, Haifa University, Director of the Excavations

Dr. Donald Ariel, Numismatist

Dr. Toni Fisher, Engineering Corps, Zooarchaeologist, co-director, Area T Supervisor

Dr. Richard Freund, Hartford University, Project Director

Dr. Aaron Gale, co-director, West Virginia University, Area A East Supervisor

Dr. Jerome Hall, University of San Diego

Prof. Israel Hershkovitz, Tel Aviv University, Physical Anthropology

Dr. Greg Jenks, School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, St. Francis Theological College, Brisbane Australia, co-director

Dr. Stefi Keim, University of Munich, Germany, co-director

Dr. John Kloppenborg, University of Toronto Canada

Prof. Dr. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, University of Munich, Germany, co-director

Dr. Elizabeth McNamer, co-director, Area C Supervisor

Dr. Kate Raphael, Independent Scholar, Excavation Director, Area A South Supervisor

Dr. Nicolae Roddy, Creighton University, Co-Director, Area C Supervisor

Dr. Carl Savage, Drew University, Excavation Director, Area A West Supervisor

Sarah Yomans, West Virginia State University and the Biblical Archaeology Society, Assistant Area A East Supervisor

STAFF

Orna Cohen, Conservation

Maha Darawsha, University of Connecticut

Christina Etzrodt, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Cartography

Charlene Green, Pottery Reconstruction

DreAnna Hadash, artist

Hanan Shafir, Photography

Shai Schwartz, Kibbutz Ginosar, Recording, Land Surveying, Website master

Bernard Trams, Pottery Reconstruction

Students from the following institutions

Creighton University

Hartford University

Laidlow University, New Zealand

Rocky Mountain College

St Francis Theological College, Brisbane & School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Australia

Truman State University

University of Connecticut

University of San Diego

Wartburg College

Consortium Members Class of 2012

College of Idaho

Drew University

St Francis Theological College, Brisbane (CSU School of Theology)

Huntington University

Rocky Mountain College

University of Hartford

University of Nebraska at Omaha

University of Munich

University of San Diego

Wartburg College

The following volunteers are acknowledged for their multiple participations and long standing support to the Bethsaida Excavations Project:

Carolyn Aichele,

Andrea Bakas

Celso Beddinger,

Reggie Bollich,

Sarah Crawford,

Margaret and Ian Darnell,

Barry Davis,

Gloria Epps,

Annaliese Christina de Gooyer,

Lynn Hoy

Clare James-Jenks

Adam Keeton,

Jacqui Lloyd,

Karin Nobbs and Phillippe Bestion de Camboulas,

Sarah Richardson,

Patrick Russell

Kenneth Sparks,

Janet Sypkens,

Kelen and Emmit Wilson

The Excavation

The excavations were carried out in five different areas:

1. Area A South: this area is south of the Storage House situated at the south of the city gate.
2. Area A West: This area is located at the west of the City Gate.
3. Area A East, is at the east of the city walls north of the city gate.
4. Area C, this area is located at the north of the mound.
5. Area T, this is a new area started this year and is located south of Area A West, on the slopes of the mound.

The total amount of loci excavated in the 2012 excavation season is:

Area A: 66; Area C: 9; Area T: 1

Area A South

The top layers of this area suffered some major disturbances. A modern Syrian military trench cut through the top of the outer thick city wall at the angle where a buttress projects off the line of the city wall, the trench continued on the top of the city wall towards the south and a small “fox hole” was dug cutting the Roman city wall and some segments of the Stratum V city wall. This disturbance caused out of context mixture of pottery shards useless for dating this particular area.

However, the excavations at Area A South aimed in this season to examine the area which seems to be the city gate of Stratum VI. Therefore two areas were examined. An area within the city walls of Stratum V and an area outside of the city walls.

Outside the outer city wall (W315), Loci: 1146, 1149, 1152, 1155, 1159

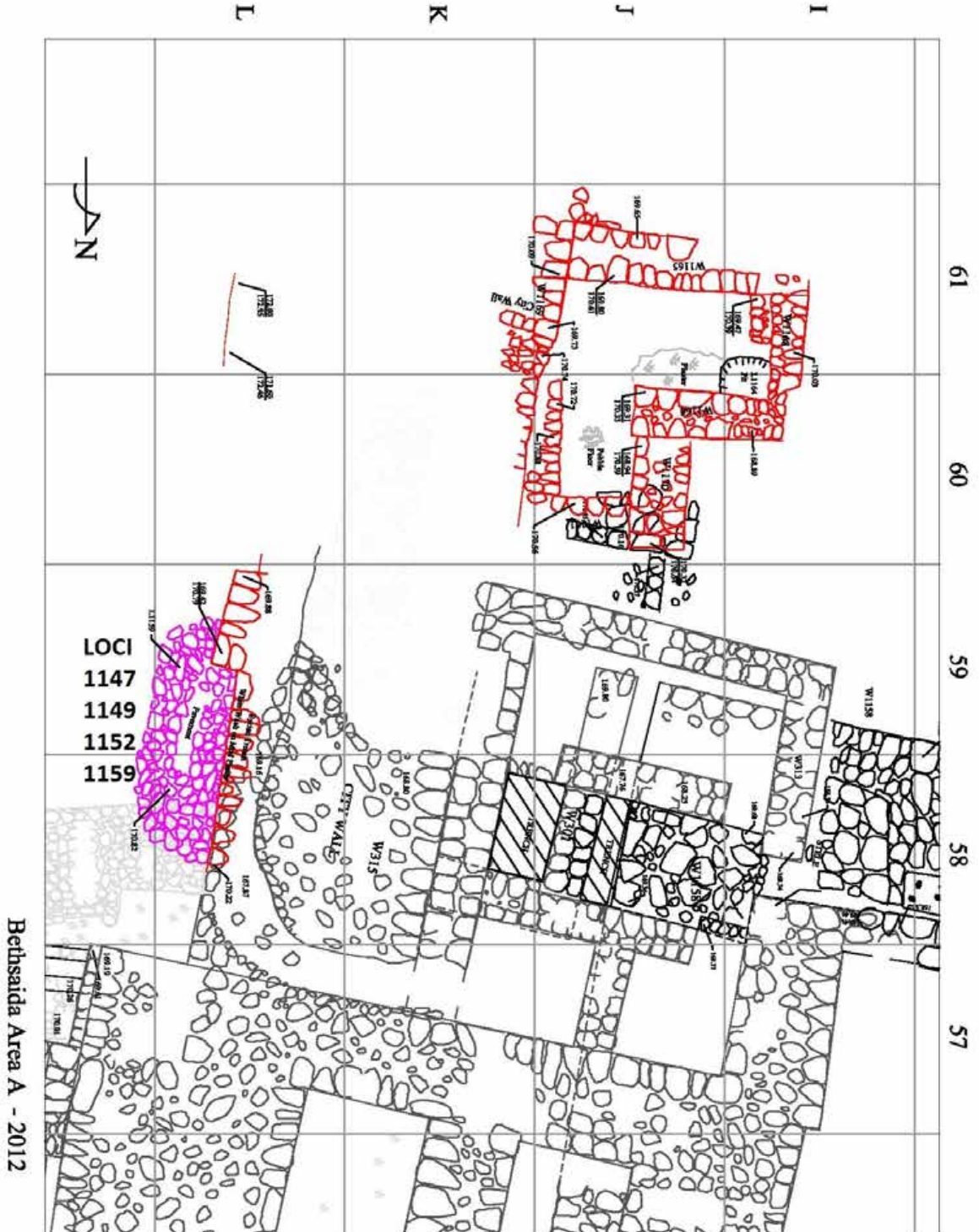


Figure 4, Area A South, Loci 1147, 1149, 1152, 1159 are located east of the Inner City Wall of Stratum V.

Locus 1146 is located above the Syrian military trench. In this area a buttress offset of the inner wall was discovered and the continuation of the pavement that stretches between the inner to the outer city wall. The buttress is 2.4 X 75 m. and is built of rather large boulders. The pavement is smooth and testifies to a long usage. Some patches of plaster and white wash were still attached to the outer face of the city wall.

The finds vary from late medieval shards of pottery including the Rashidia el-Fukhar shards of pottery, to Iron Age II shards including Cypro-Phoenician monochrome shards, this in addition to Early Roman casseroles with everted rim, fragments of Roman glass cups, Galilean bowls. Hellenistic black glazed shards and Black Figure Athenian shard of pottery. It is impossible to what is determine depicted on the Athenian shard.



Figure 5, pavement, city wall and some remains of plaster and white wash are still attached on the city wall.



Figure 6, Locus 1152, In the picture: the pavement near the city wall, the Syrian trench is on the right side of the picture and a telephone line is seen running in the trench. Near the scale sticks there are the debris boulders fallen off from the city wall.

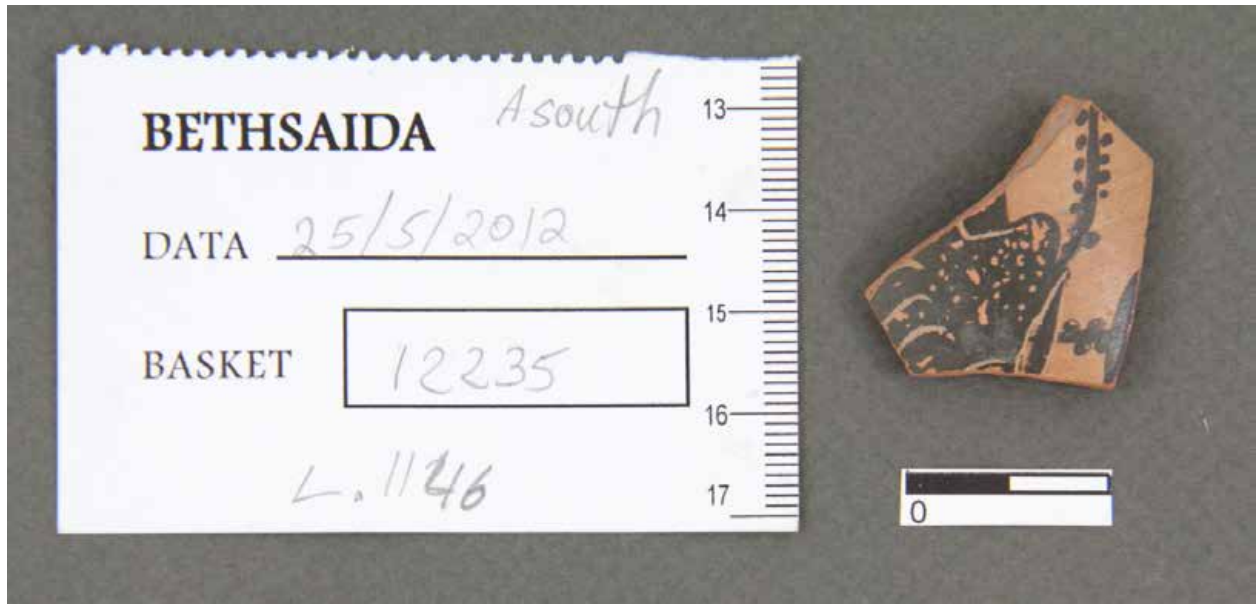


Figure 7, Black figure Style of unidentified picture.



Figure 8, Diagnostic shards from locus 114. From upper left: Cypro-Phoenician shards, Galilean bowl. Early Roman cooking pots, casseroles with everted rim, Megarian bowl.



Figure 9, Bronze coin, autonomous Tyros, 98 - 84 BCE



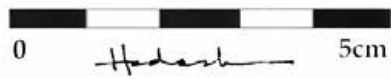
Figure 10, Bronze coin, Tyche of Tyre, autonomous Tyre, 98 - 84 BCE

Locus 1149 is still above the Syrian trench and the finds are mixed. Among the special finds was a bronze coin found in elevation 169.03. It is the mint of autonomous Tyros and dates from 98-84 BCE.

Locus 1152 is located at the eastern city wall and is primarily a sifting pile of debris. The finds are still mixed and contain Roman Hellenistic pottery shards together with Iron Age II shards and a few medieval glazed shards.



Figure 11, Diagnostic shards from Locus 1152.



BS
 Area A South
 Locus 1152
 Basket 11263
 Drawing #267-12

Figure 12, Early Roman cooking pot.

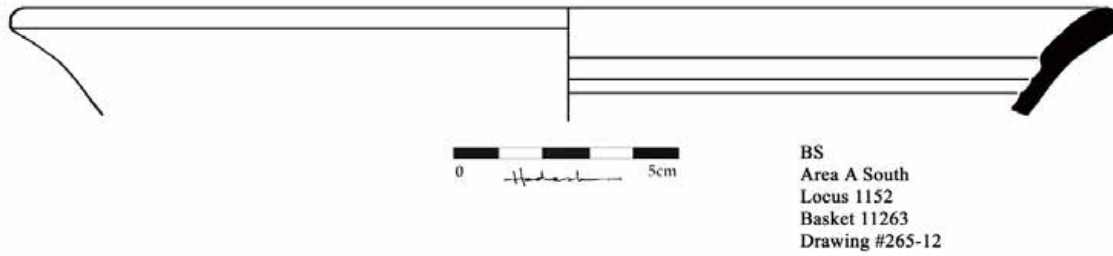


Figure 13, Galilean bowl

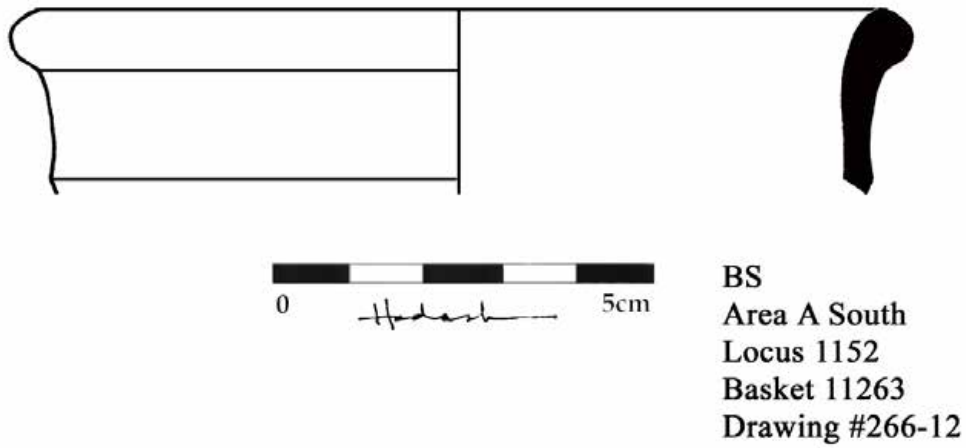


Figure 14, jar

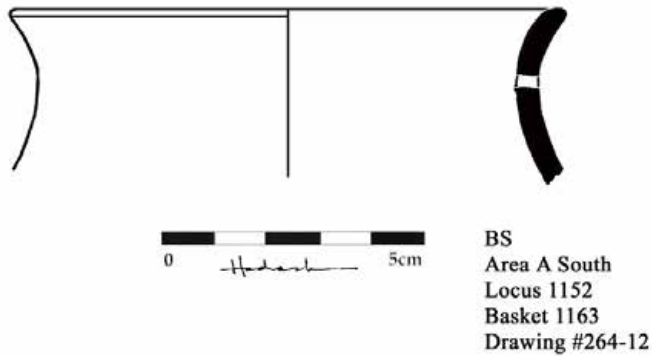


Figure 15, perforated cup on three legs, Iron Age IIB

Locus 1155 is located in the Syrian trench and therefore the finds are mixture of periods. Some diagnostic finds are below.

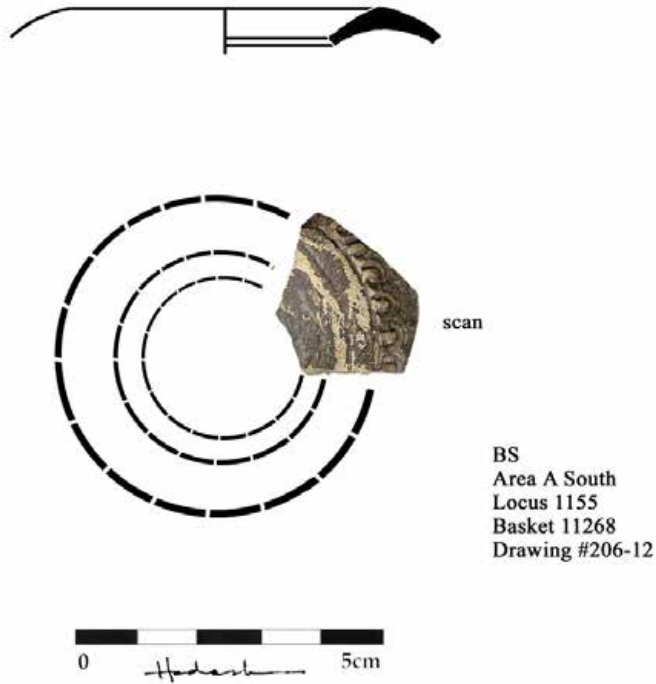


Figure 16, Early Roman oil lamp



Figure 17, diagnostic shards from locus 1155, among the shards there are Roman cooking pots and Galilean bowls.

Locus 1159 is a sealed locus and is located under vast boulders that fell from the upper courses of the city wall. The pavement was exposed all the way to the southern tower of the inner city gate.



Figure 18, Inner city wall, w160, the offset is on the right side of the picture.



Figure 19, In the picture: the city wall W 160, the Syrian trench is in the corner of the city wall and the offset.



Figure 20, in the picture: The pavement of Locus 1159, the city wall w160, a patch of plaster and white wash is still on the lower part of the wall, the offset tilting slightly to the left and the breach of the Syrian trench at the corner of the city wall and the offset.



Figure 21, an Iron Age IIB jar with potters thumb mark.



Figure 22, An iron fibula (?)

Area A South, within the City Wall

Stratum VI

Loci: 1144, 1147, 1162, 1165

These loci continue the following loci of 2011: 1133 and 1134. It is east of wall W1170.

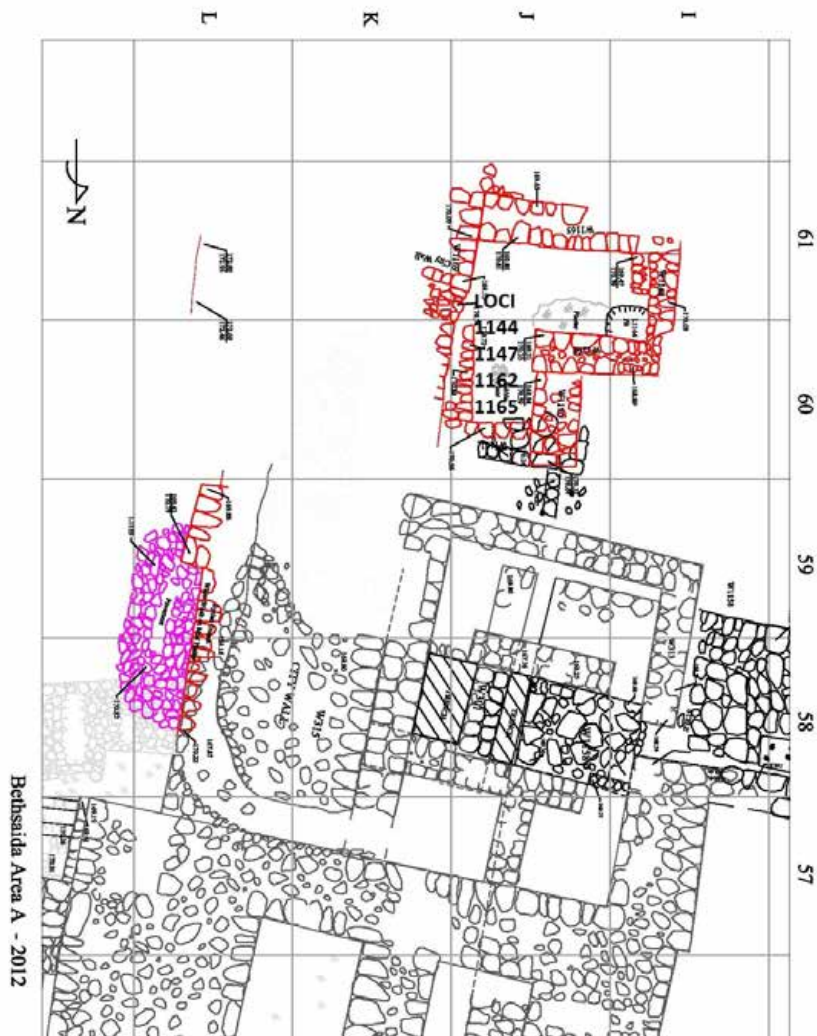


Figure 23, Loci 1144, 1147, 1162, 1165



Figure 24, W 1171 touches the base of W1170 on which the meter stick rests. It might have been a threshold or a wall connecting to the all W1170. A segment of wall runs north-south at abutting W 1171. The floor was made of crushed limestone, small stones and bricks.

This area was presumed to be the southern chamber of the city gate of Stratum VI. This presumption was not confirmed during the 2012 excavation period. A wall, perhaps a threshold to the chamber was found in an east-west direction abutting a face of a wall running north-south. This area needs further excavations in order to determine its function. The floor of loci 1147, 1162 and 1165 was found to be made of crushed limestone, together with small stones and broken bricks, layers of ash and bricks on top of an ash layer and continues under W1166, W 1165. The elevation of this floor is - 170.63.

An Iron Age IIA jug was found in situ on the floor in locus 1147.

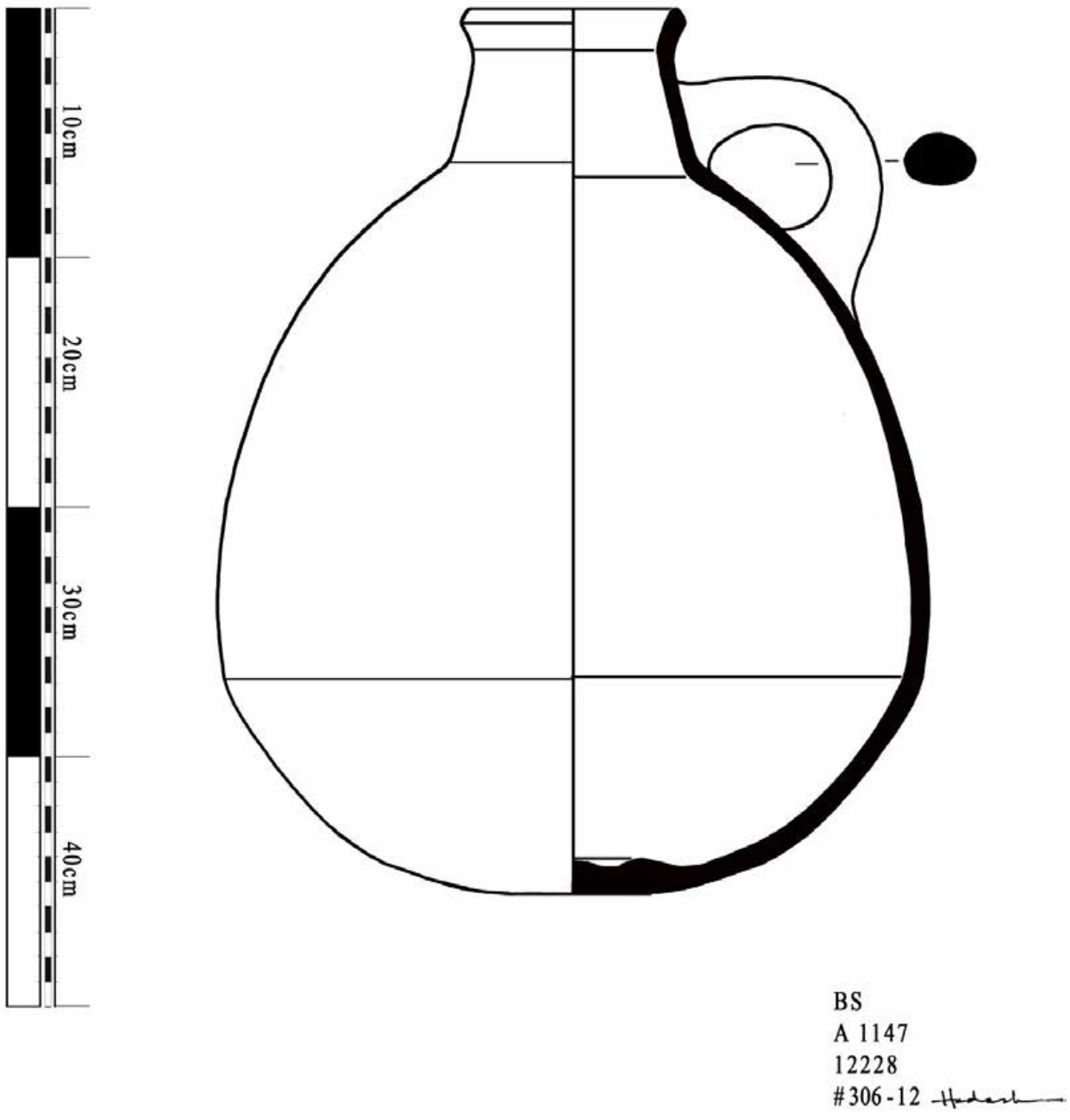


Figure 25, Stratum VI, Iron Age IIA jug found in situ on the floor of L. 1147.

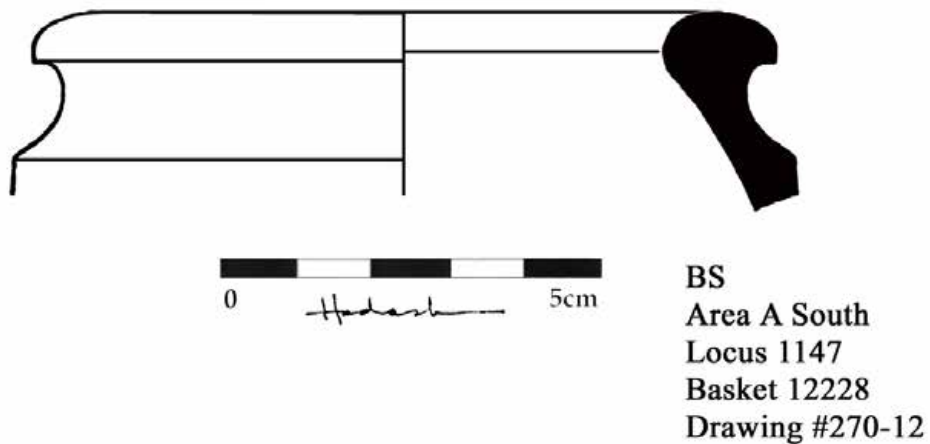


Figure 26, Stratum VI, a rim fragment of a Hippo jar.

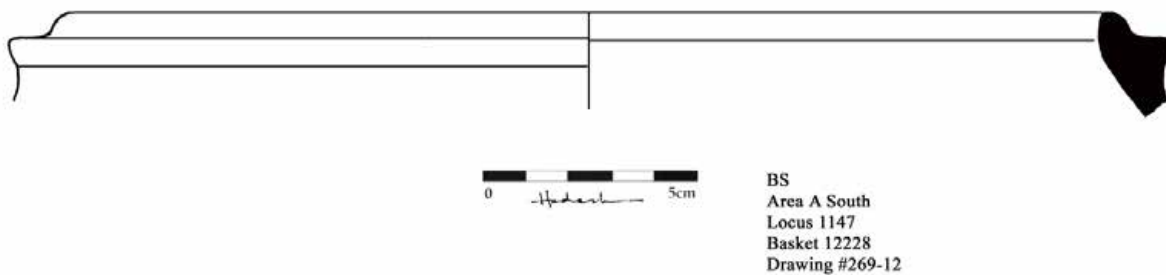


Figure 27, Stratum VI, Iron Age IIA cooking pot

Stratum V

There was a great amount of construction during Iron Age IIB discovered in Stratum V. This construction included a few walls that as yet do not form a coherent structure. The walls included in this stratum are W 1165, 1166, 1168, 1169. Loci excavated in this stratum are: L 1144, L 1147, L 1162, L 1165.

A nice segment of a crushed limestone floor in elevation of -169.94 was found in locus 1153 running under W 1166 making this wall Stratum II. The foundation trench of this wall is obviously seen in the picture.

Finds from this floor were meager and included a diagnostic Iron Age IIB cooking pot.



Figure 28, Iron Age IIB cooking pot from the packed crushed limestone floor



Figure 29, Locus 1164 is a medieval pit dug into the earlier strata.

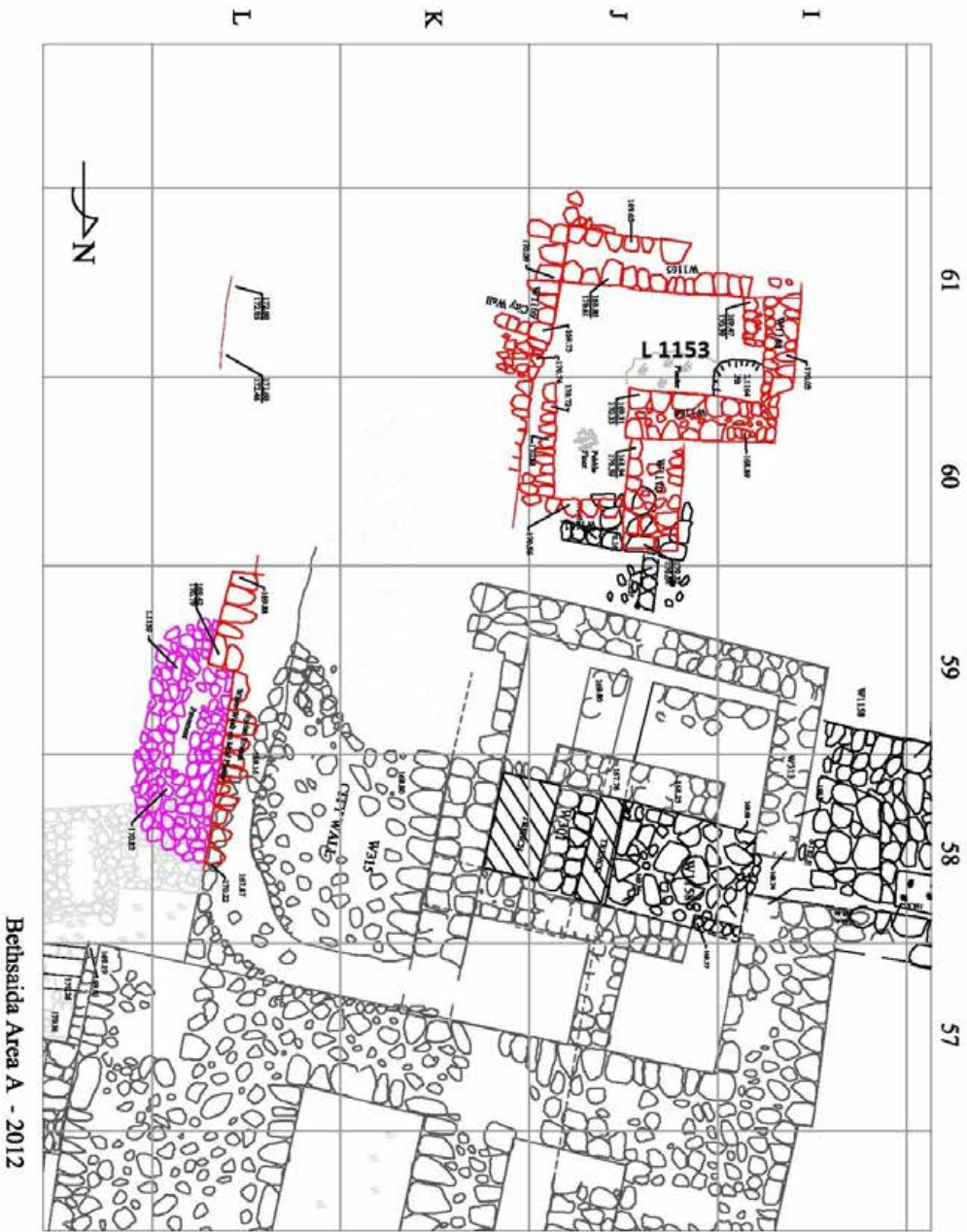


Figure 30, Locus 1153 is the pavement of Stratum V south of W1166



Figure 31, crushed limestone floor running below W1166



Figure 32, Locus 1164, a medieval pit cut into a Stratum V packed floor level, near W1166.

Locus 1158 is located in square I 58, west of wall W 1170 and contains a patch of a crushed limestone floor. On top of it there were scattered remains of a 19th century tomb. A group of clay pierced through round objects was found on this floor.



Figure 33, Clay round, pierced through objects, usually identified as Iron Age II loom weights were found on fragmentary remains of crushed limestone floor.

Stratum I

This stratum contains scattered remains of 18th-19th centuries tombs that were disturbed by Syrian military construction, and a few scattered poor architectural features. Locus 1160 is located between W1166 and W1165 and contains fragments of a large clay pipe like jar.



Figure 34, Locus 1160, W1166 is at the right of the picture while W1165 is at the left. The number of the wall in the picture is incorrect.



Figure 35, A medieval tube shaped jar near W1166

Area A East

This area is practically one square and its excavation was carried out to discover more information about this area. Since most of this area had its remains of Stratum V removed by Syrian military fortification, we proceeded to examine the vestiges remaining under this disturbance. Three loci were excavated and most of the finds were mainly from the Iron Age II. Loci numbers: 1816, 1817, 1818. Very little architecture was discovered, but among that which was uncovered were some remnants of a wall.



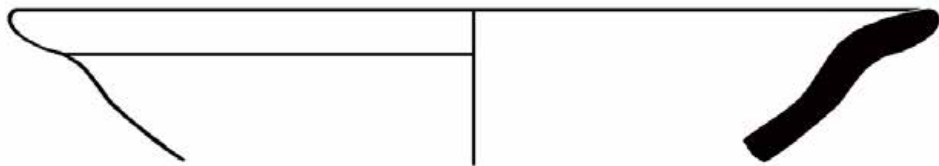
Figure 36, Locus 1816, a remnant of a wall is in the left side of the locus.



Figure 37, pottery from area A East

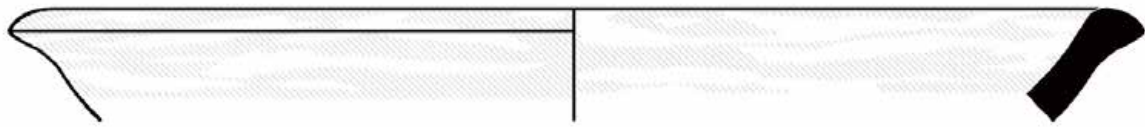


Figure 38, pottery from locus 1816, notice Iron Age IIA cooking pot, Iron Age tall neck jar, Early Bronze Age shard and Medieval glazed shard.



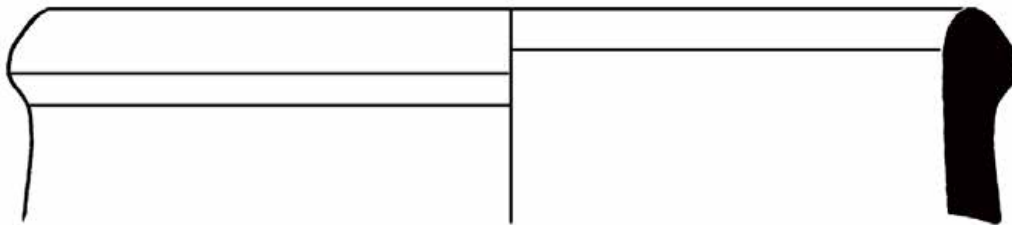
BS
Area A East
Locus 1816
Basket 18842
Drawing #296-12

Figure 39, Iron age bowl



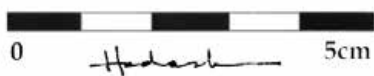
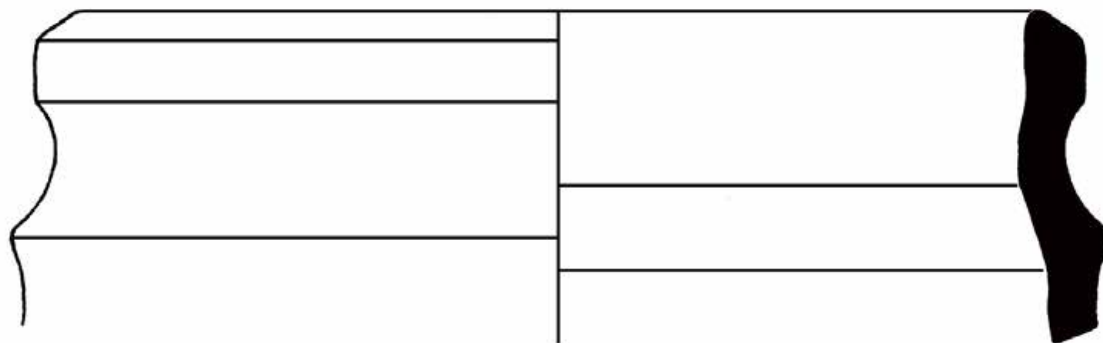
BS
Area A East
Locus 1816
Basket 18842
Drawing #297-12

Figure 40, Iron Age IIA bowl, red slip and burnished



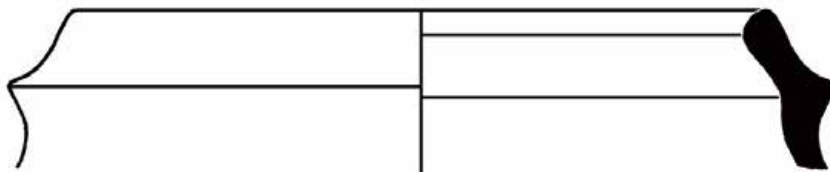
BS
Area A East
Locus 1816
Basket 18842
Drawing #294-12

Figure 41, Iron Age IIB tall neck jar



BS
Area A East
Locus 1816
Basket 12842
Drawing #290-12

Figure 42, Iron Age Hippo jar



BS
Area A East
Locus 1816
Basket 18842
Drawing #293-12

Figure 43, Iron Age IIB cooking bowl

Two iron arrow heads were found in this area and it is not surprising. This area is located outside the city walls and presents remains of the siege.



Figure 44, Iron arrowhead



Figure 45, Iron arrowhead



Figure 46, basalt fishing net weight

Area A West

Area A West is located at the summit of the mound and revealed mostly Hellenistic and Early Roman remains designated as various phases of Stratum II. Twenty loci were excavated in 2012 in area A West, most continue the former excavated area to the south. However, this area was found to be severely disturbed to quite a deep level.

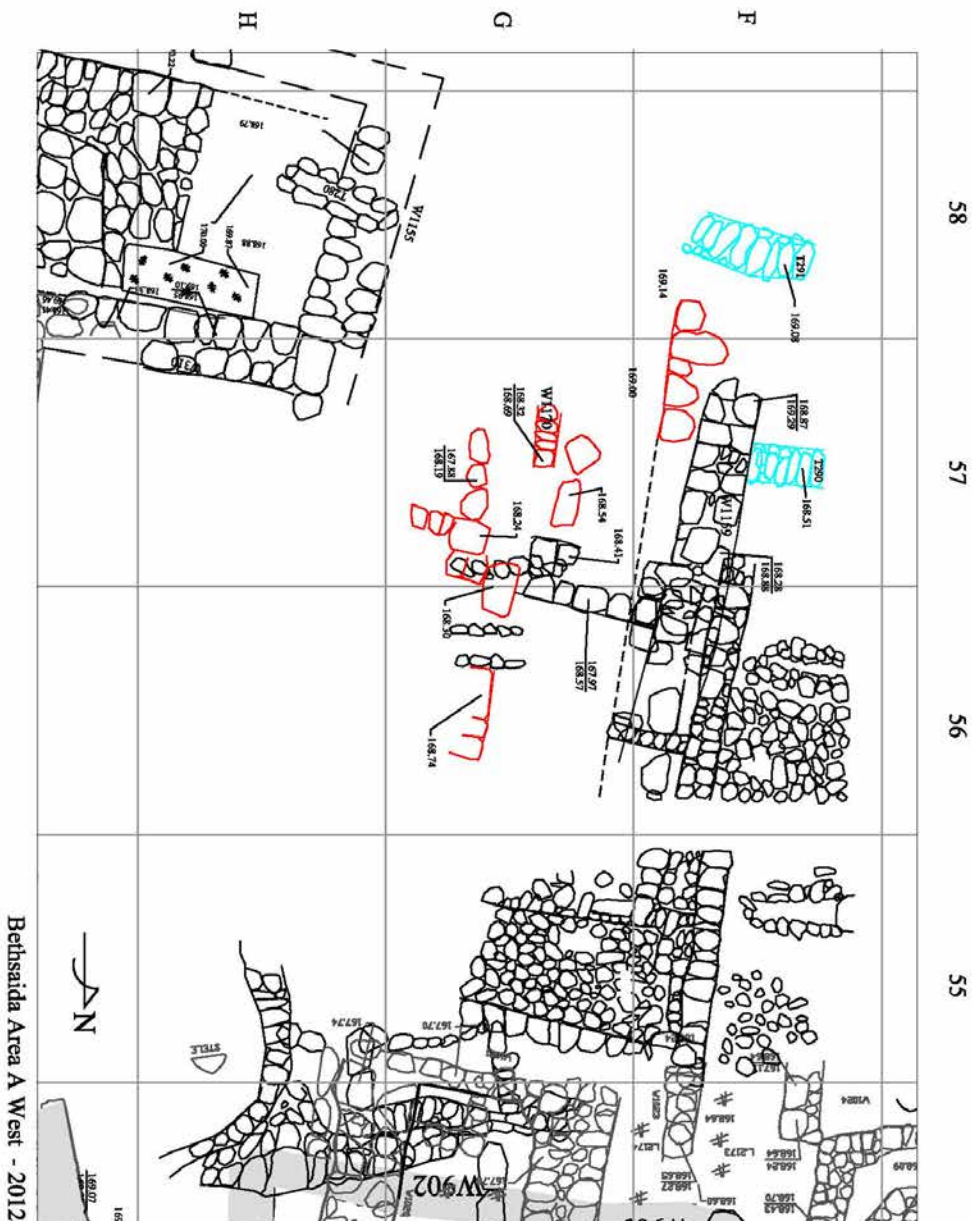


Figure 47, Area A West



Figure 48, Area A West looking north.



Figure 49, This section shows the disturbances in Area A West. No particular stratum is seen in the section. The disturbance is due to modern Syrian military fortifications and to 18th - 19th centuries Bedouin tombs.

However, at the bottom of the excavations we have come across a thick wall that runs north-south direction and begins with the round structure west of the temple. This wall dates from the Hellenistic period, is 1.4 m thick, and runs under Roman period structure and pavement. The remains of this Roman structure was absent (probably because of later disturbance) in most of the area excavated this season so it is unclear how the structure appeared in this area. On top of this wall were remains of another wall that is either late Hellenistic or early Roman. No remains of floors that connect to this wall were discovered thus far.

Some of the finds from this area are below:

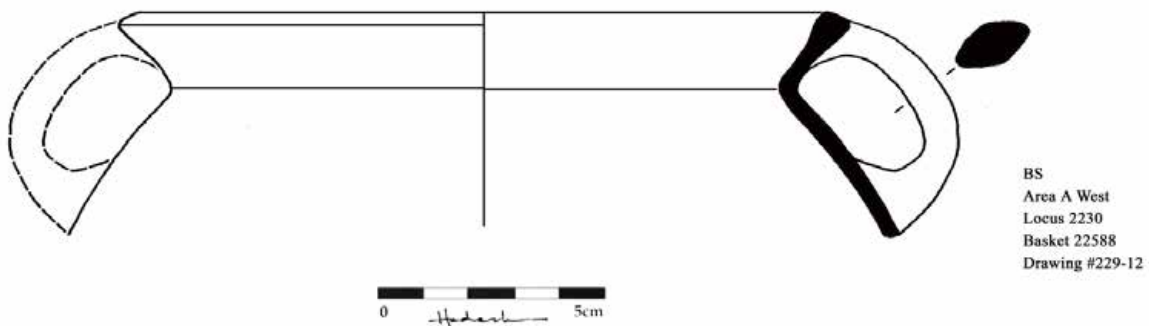


Figure 50, Hellenistic globular cooking pot

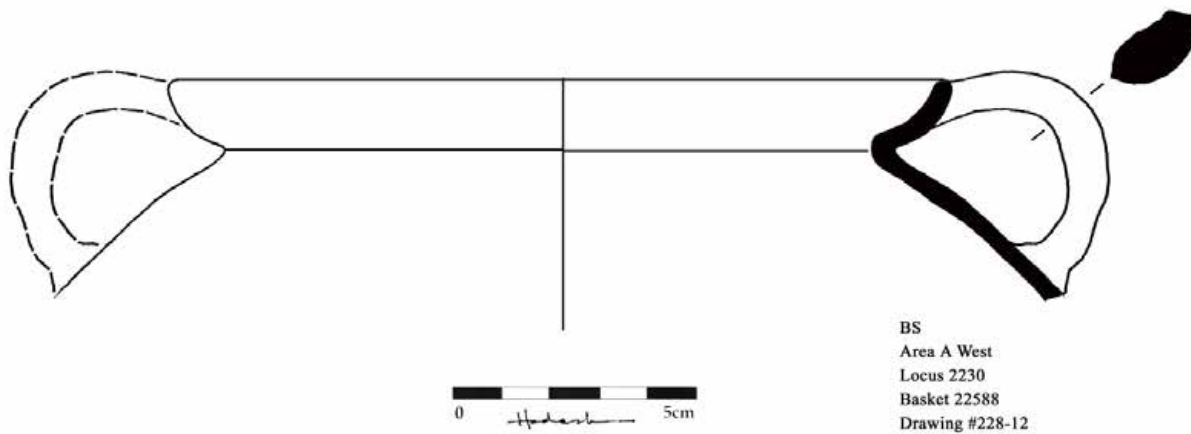


Figure 51, Hellenistic - early Roman cooking pot



Figure 52, Diagnostic shards from Area A West. The eclectic assembly indicates a disturbed area with mixture of pottery from various periods. Among the finds there are Iron Age II jars, Hellenistic shards, Early Roman cooking pots, glass and medieval glazed shards.

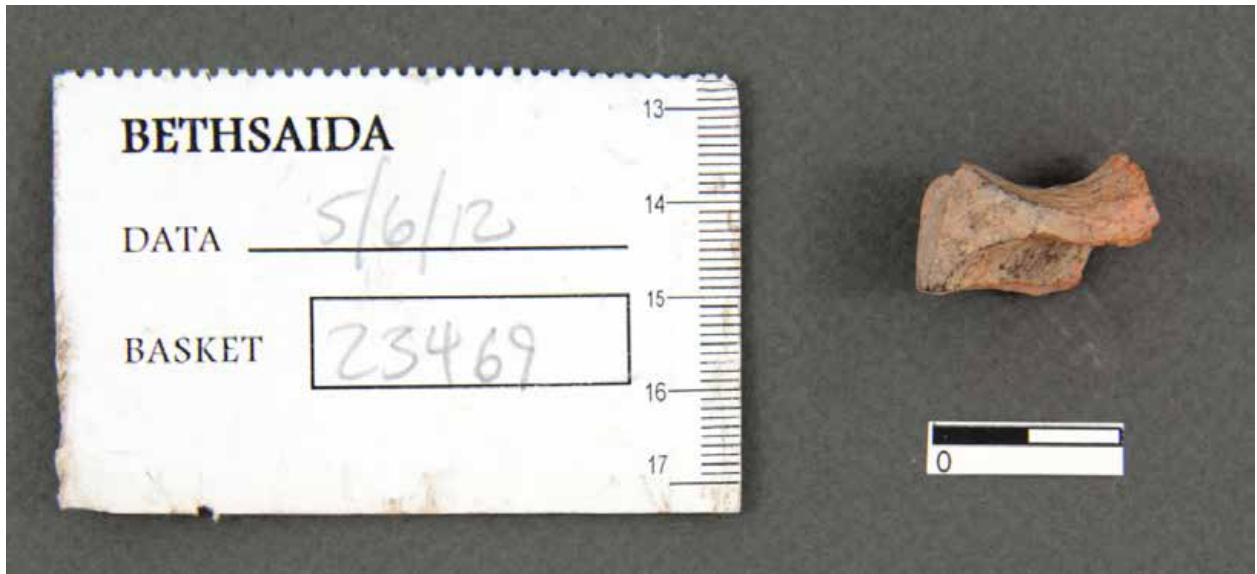
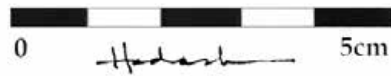


Figure 53, "Herodian" oil lamp



scan



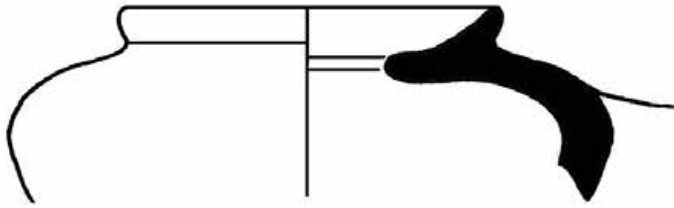
BS
Area A West
Locus 2230
Basket 23469
Drawing #299-12

Figure 54, "Herodian" oil lamp

Among the exceptional coins there was a bronze coin of Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony minted in Ptolemais apparently in 34/35 BCE.



Figure 55, bronze coin, Cleopatra VII, minted at Ptolemais (Acco) in 34/35 BCE



BS
Area A West
Locus 2230
Basket 23518
Drawing #211-12

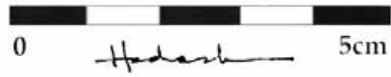


Figure 56, "Herodian" oil lamp, sometimes referred to as "Shabbat oil lamp".



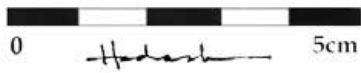
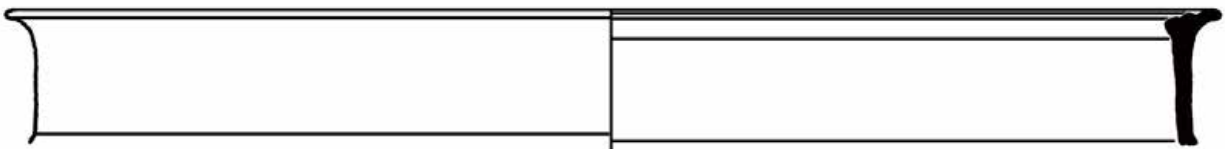
Figure 57, Bronze Coin, Caracalla



Figure 58, Bronze coin, Caracalla

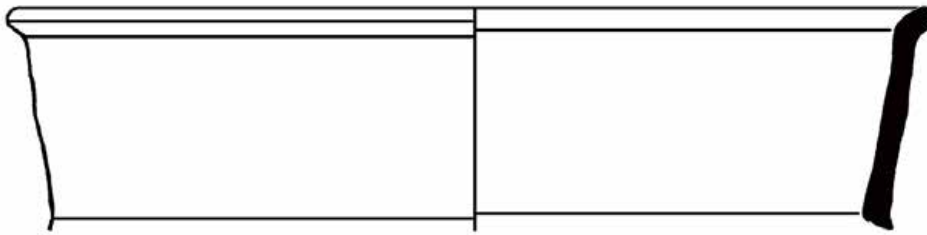


Figure 59, bone scarab, Egyptianize, Iron Age II



BS
 Area A West
 Locus 2243
 Basket 23502
 Drawing #227-12

Figure 60, Earl Roman cooking pot with triple ridge on rim



BS
Area A West
Locus 2243
Basket 23502
Drawing #225-12

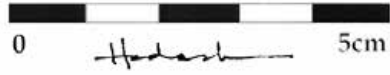
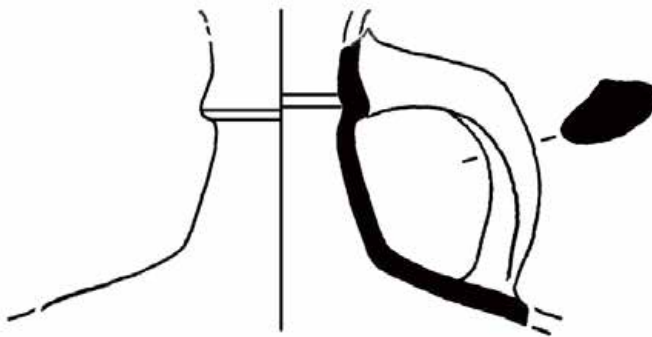


Figure 61, Early Roman cooking pot with tall neck



BS
Area A West
Locus 2243
Basket 23502
Drawing #223-12



Figure 62, Early Roman juglet

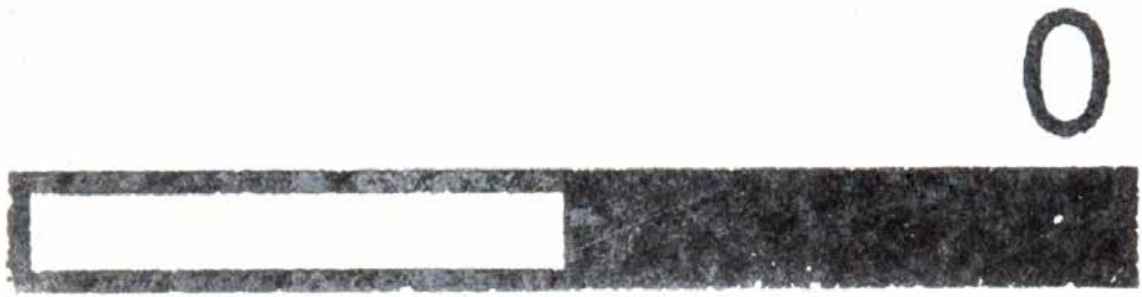


Figure 63, Hasmonean coin

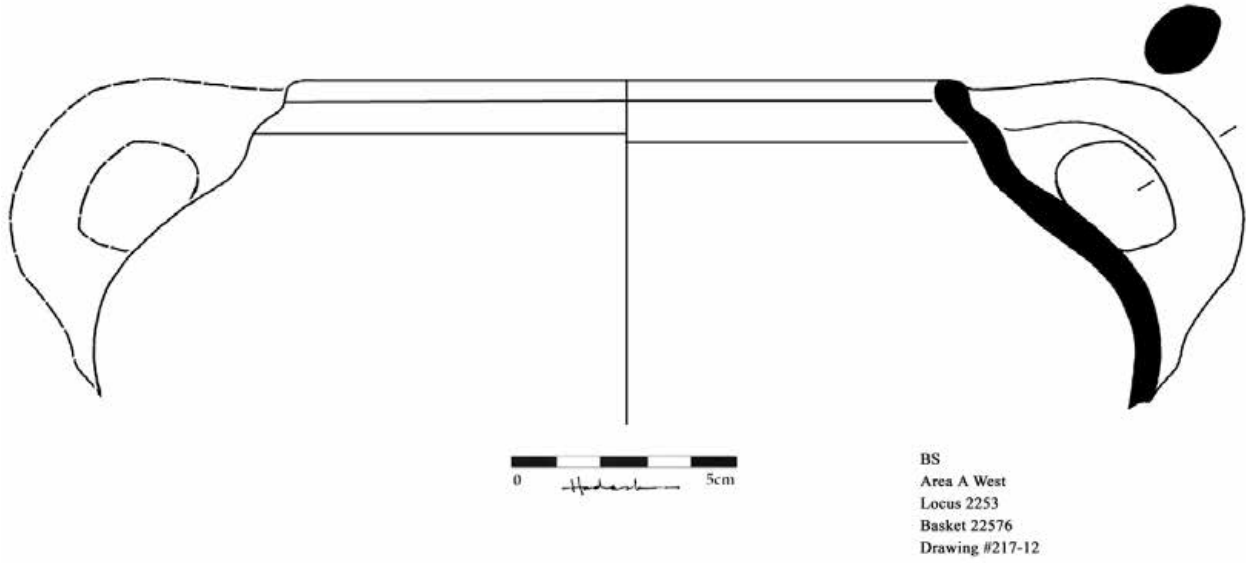


Figure 64, Iron Age IIB cooking pot

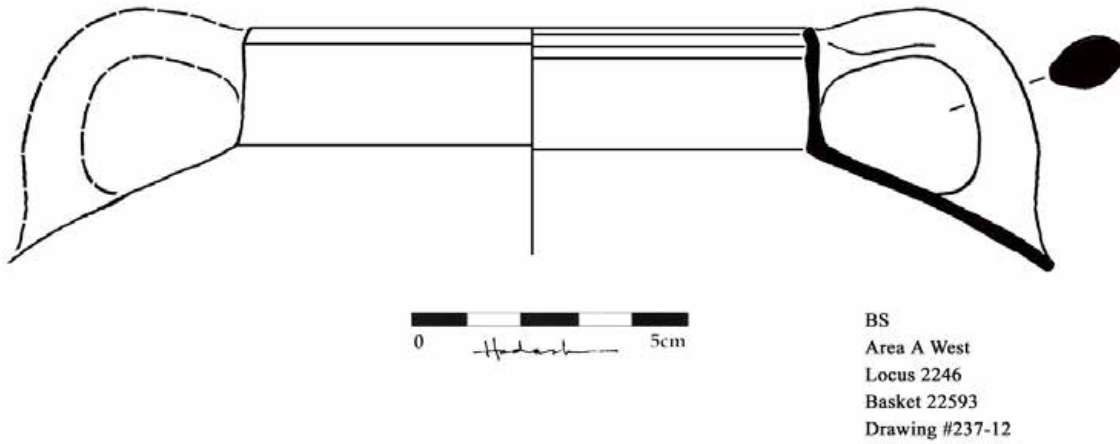


Figure 65, Hellenistic cooking pot



Figure 67, Bronze coin, Alexander Severus, minted in Orthosia. dated: 221/222 CE.



Figure 68, Bronze coin, Alexander Severus, minted in Orthosia, date: 221 / 222 CE

Disturbances in Area A West is seen in locus 2246 where some remains of wall are seen and scattered stone fill the locus.



Figure 69, Locus 2246 in Area A West. In the left part of the picture there are two walls, one runs north south and the other east west making a corner. Debris and disturbance fill in the rest of the locus.



Figure 70, an iron object in locus 2246



Figure 71, Ottoman coins



Figure 72, Agrippa II coin, 82-83 CE



Figure 73, Agrippa II 82 -83 CE



BS
Area A West
Locus 2051
Basket 22582
Drawing #220-12

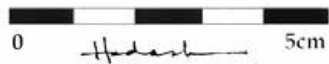


Figure 74, Hellenistic Cooking pot with tall neck

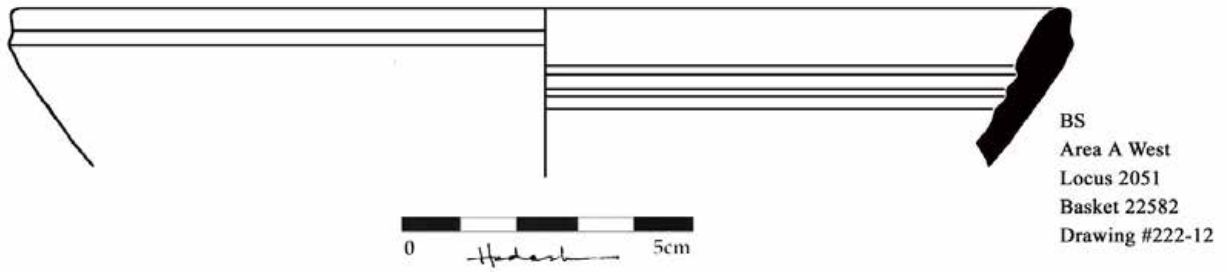


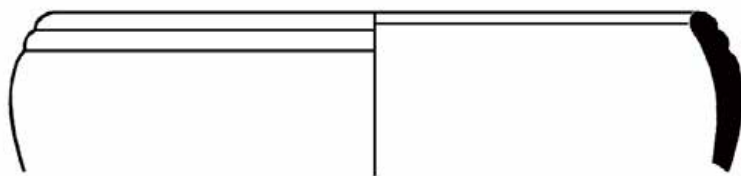
Figure 75, Galilean bowl



Figure 76, Bronze coin, Demetrius I, Tyros, 153-152 BCE



Figure 77, Bronze coin, Demetrius I, Tyros, 153 – 152 BCE



BS
Area A West
Locus 2253
Basket 22606
Drawing #245-12

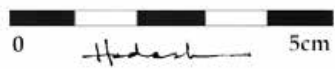
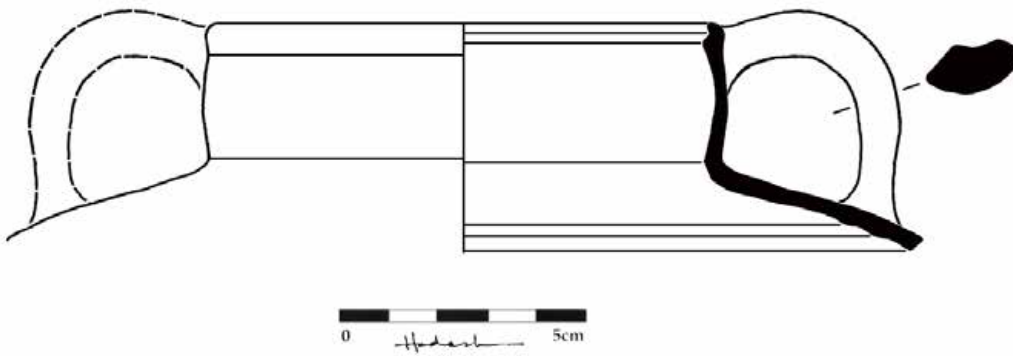


Figure 78, Globular bowl



BS
Area A West
Locus 2253
Basket 22606
Drawing #243-12

Figure 79, Hellenistic cooking pot



Figure 80, Rhodian wine handle with inscription, the letters PAN are identifiable.

Area C

Area C is located at the north part of the mound and contains a residential quarter dating from the Hellenistic and the Roman period. In the past we have excavated there a few homes and a lane that turns to the west. This year we have continued to dig the extension of the street and found that it slopes and turn into a plaza.



Figure 81, map of area C, red color is the walls excavated and surveyed this year. Purple is the road and the plaza.



Figure 82, L 5732 and L 5728 near wall W671. Beyond the wall are remains of the plaza at locus 5729.



Figure 83, segment of the street between two buildings.



Figure 84, The lane turns into a plaza that some of it is largely destroyed.



Figure 85, diagnostics shards from Area C.

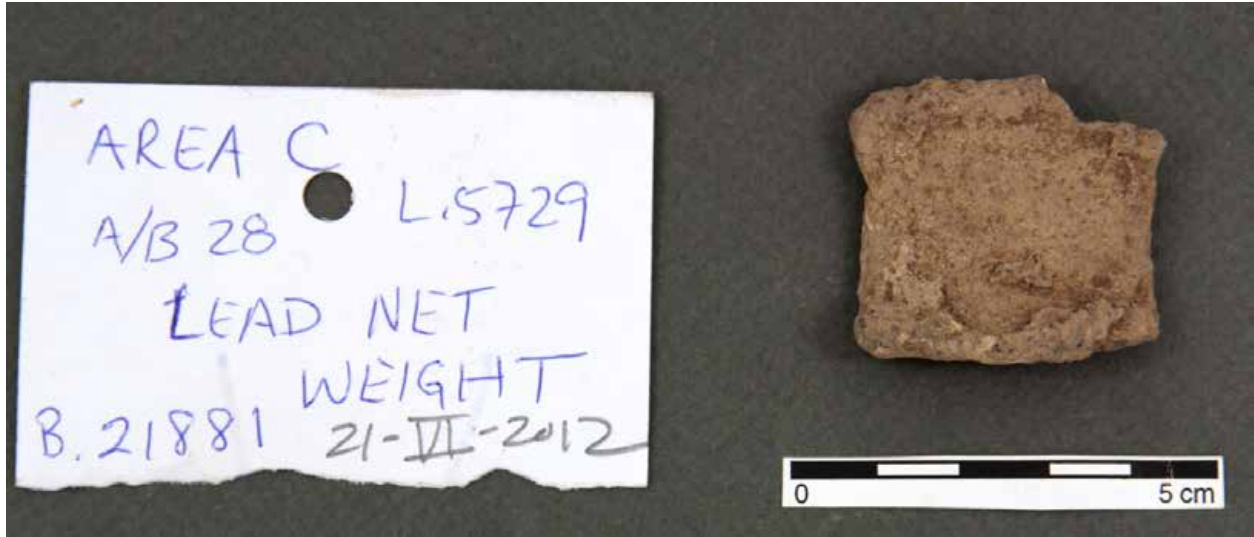


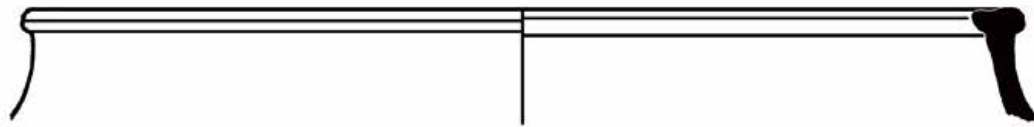
Figure 86, unfolded led net weight



Figure 87, bronze coin, Ptolemy III, Tyros, 246-222 BCE



Figure 88, Ptolemy III, Tyros. bronze, 246-222 BCE



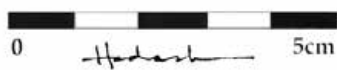
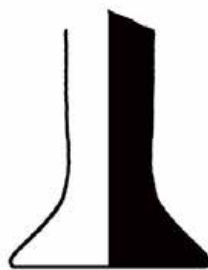
BS
Area C
Locus 5728
Basket 21893
Drawing #283-12

Figure 89, Hellenistic Cooking pot with ledge rim



BS
Area C
Locus 5730
Basket 21864
Drawing #279-12

Figure 90, Hellenistic hemispherical bowl



BS
Area C
Locus 5730
Basket 21864
Drawing #275-12

Figure 91, Ungentarium base



Figure 92, Demetrius II, Tyros, Bronze 144-143 BCE



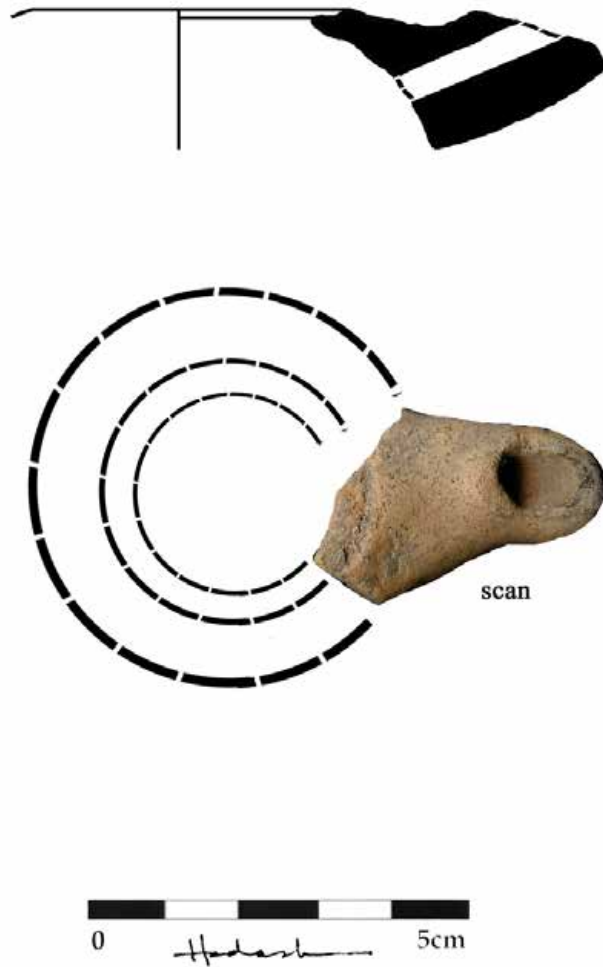
Figure 93, Demetrius II, Tyros, bronze, 144-143 BCE



Figure 94, Ptolemy I, Alexandria, 305 - 282 BCE



Figure 95, Ptolemy I, Alexandria, 305 - 282 BCE



BS
Area C
Locus 5732
Basket 21890
Drawing #205-12

Figure 96, Hellenistic oil lamp

Area T

Area T is a new area that was launched this year. It is located in the south slope of the mound in squares B, C 70, 71. The purpose of digging in this area was to examine an area not located near the summit of the mound and therefore probably does not contain monumental buildings as does the summit.

The excavations revealed thus far a beaten earth floor and a wall at the north of it. The wall is slightly over than one meter wide and is built of field stones. The finds in the building are primarily medieval with Mameluk coins.



Figure 97, Area T, the wall at the left of the picture abuts the beaten dirt floor.



Figure 98, Typical collection of shards from Area T. Most shards are medieval glazed pottery.



Figure 99, A Mameluk coin



Figure 100, Mameluk coin



Figure 101, Mameluk coin



Figure 102, Mameluk coin



Figure 103, fragments of a painted Hellenistic jar