

THE NINTH SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBAT SHUWAYKA 2005

Marwan F. Abu-Khalaf

Introduction

Khirbat Shuwayka is located 12 kilometers north of Jerusalem on the southern side of al-Bireh, a few hundred meters west of Tall an-Nasbeh.

The site was mentioned in the famous Survey of Western Palestine (1871-78), and in the work of the Franciscan monk Bagatti, who visited the site. The Khirba was known to local inhabitants as “Queen Helena’s Palace”, indicating notable monuments on the site. In 1935 the excavators of Tall an-Nasbeh dug a limited area of the site, discovering the mosaic floor which was covered over to protect its remains.

The Higher Institute of Archaeology at al-Quds University carried out a survey of the site in 1996 before the start of the excavation work. The area of Khirbat Shuwayka, which is about 2,750m², was divided into squares using the grid system (**Fig. 1**). This allowed a systematic mapping of the architectural and material finds of the site.

The distinctive archaeological features which have emerged from the excavation are: a residential complex in the north-west; a church in the north-east; a winepress installation in the south-east; and a paved courtyard in the middle divided by walls in a later period for other uses.

The excavations uncovered evidence of Roman-period occupation, but the heyday of the site was the Byzantine period (fourth-seventh centuries AD) and the early Islamic period (Umayyad and Abbasid, eighth-11th centuries AD). Later the site was completely abandoned and used for agricultural purposes – destroying much of the archaeological record.

Work on the site during the ninth season, as in the previous seasons, had concentrated on the southern area with the aim of finding more evi-

dence that would better relate the extant architectural features.

The ninth season started on June 21 and ended on July 11, 2005. The team consisted Dr Marwan Abu Khalaf, director of the Institute; two supervisors, Dr Salah Houdalieh and Dr Ibrahim Abu Amar; a surveyor, Ibrahim Iqtait; and eight MA students from the Institute. The excavations concentrated on three main areas: the residential complex (Square I7); the courtyard (Square K12); and the winepress area (squares R17, R16, S18, S16, Q16).

Square I7

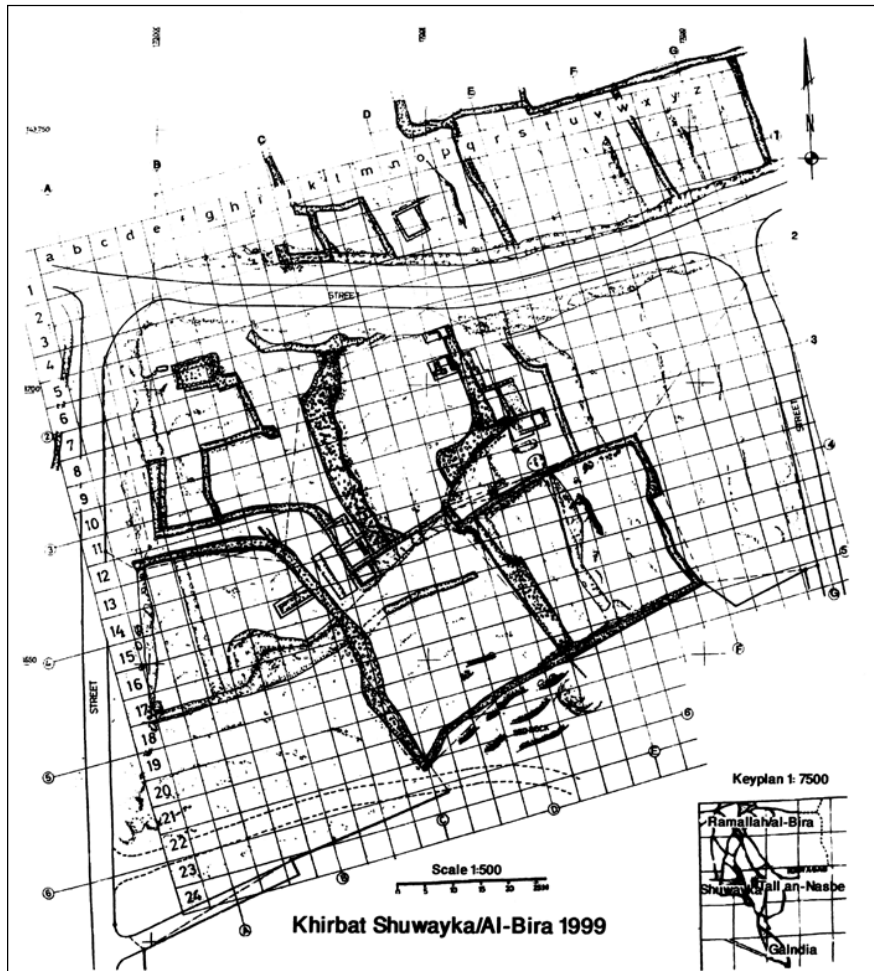
The main aim behind excavating this square was to follow the walls which were uncovered during previous seasons in squares H7, H8, and H9. This led to a clearer understanding of the residential complex. During the process of excavation, we were able to distinguish 17 loci. These ranged from the upper part locus, representing the surface which covers the whole area of the square, to the paved floor which represents the bottom layer (**Fig. 2**).

Locus 6 is a wall located on the northwestern part of the square, which extends from east to west. It is built of large and small stones, and believed to date to the Byzantine period, as a Byzantine coin was found beside it.

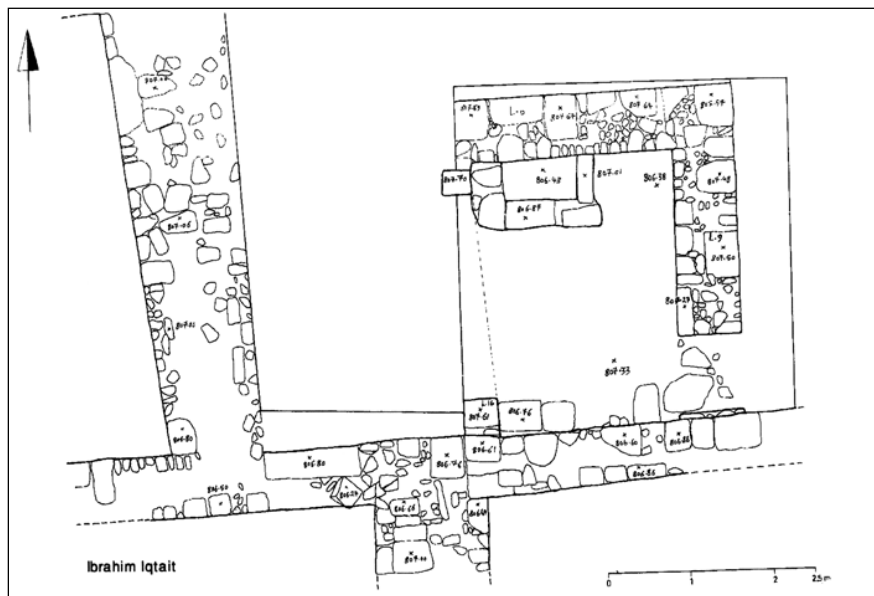
Locus 8 is also a wall, located on the southern part of the square and formed of large well-dressed stones.

Locus 9 is a wall located on the eastern part of the square, which extends from north to south and forms a vertical angle with the wall of locus 6. Its stones are very similar in character to those of locus 8, which indicates that both walls can be dated to the same period.

Other rectangular well dressed stones were



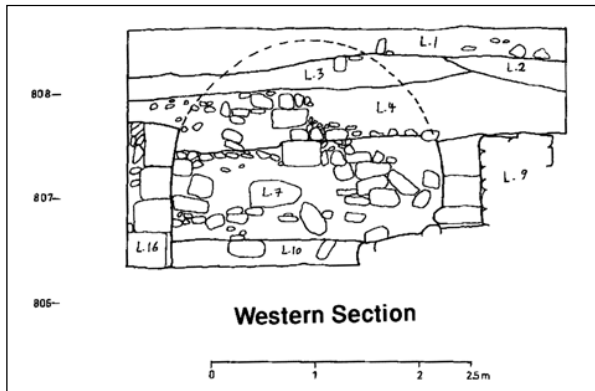
1. Survey map showing the various remains at the site.



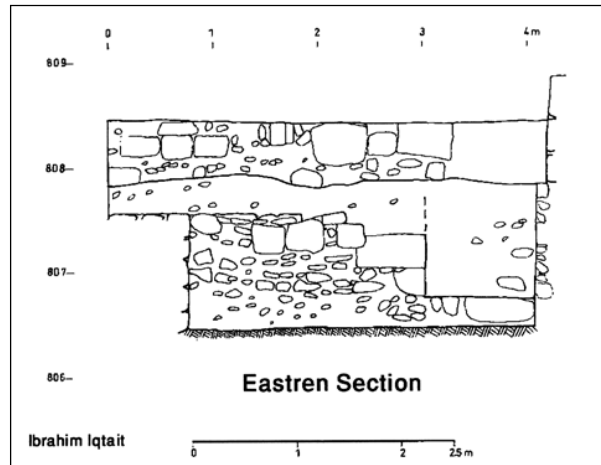
2a. Plan of square I7 and its neighboring area.

also uncovered in locus 12 joining the wall of locus 6 with which it forms a niche, a shape dated to a later period, probably the Abbasid. Other

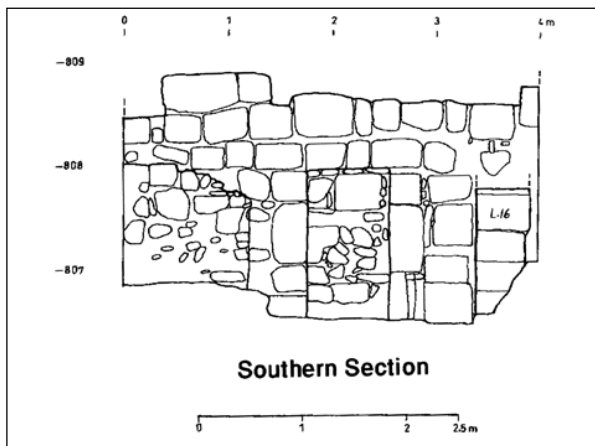
types of stones that were well cut and dressed were uncovered in locus 16 located at the western side of the square which also joined the wall



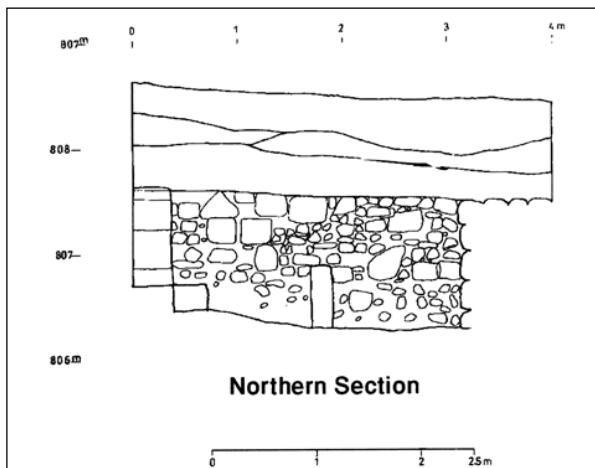
2b. Square 17, western section.



2e. Square 17, eastern section.



2c. Square 17, southern section.



2d. Square 17, northern section.

of locus 6. It is believed that these stones form the lower part of an arch to which the related residential complex found in square H7, dated also to a later period probably the Abbasid period.

A large amount of smooth soil and fallen stones of various sizes were also found in this square, as well as many pottery sherds, glass

and coins (Fig. 3).

Based on the architectural features and other finds that were uncovered, it is possible to distinguish two phases: the first phase is Byzantine, represented by the walls of locus 6 and 9, the Byzantine coin, and pottery sherds. The second phase is the early Islamic (Umayyad and Abbasid), represented by locus 12 and 16 and the large quantity of Umayyad and Abbasid pottery sherds.

Square K12

The aim of excavating this square was to better understand the courtyard area, the remains of which had appeared in other squares in previous seasons. The main architectural feature, which appeared in locus 2 of the square, was a wall of large irregular stones located at the middle of the square. The wall runs from east to west, and its structure showed that it was probably built in a later period – most likely during the Umayyad



3. Square 17, general view showing walls L9, L6.

period. Locus 5 also contained a wall, located on the southern side and running in a north-south direction. The wall, made of undressed stones of varying sizes, is not well-built, and probably dates to the Umayyad or Abbasid periods (**Fig. 4**).

In this square many fallen stones from walls 2 and 5 were also found, as well as a large quantity of smooth dark brown dirt – which probably indicates the existence of a hearth or *tābūn*. The soil in this square is mainly dark brown and smooth, and contains a large quantity of pebbles, tesserae, pottery sherds and charcoal.

The natural rock layer which we reached at the bottom indicates that the character of this square is not very different from the neighboring Square K11. The result of the work in this square shows again the three main periods of



4. Square K12, showing the stone pavement L5.

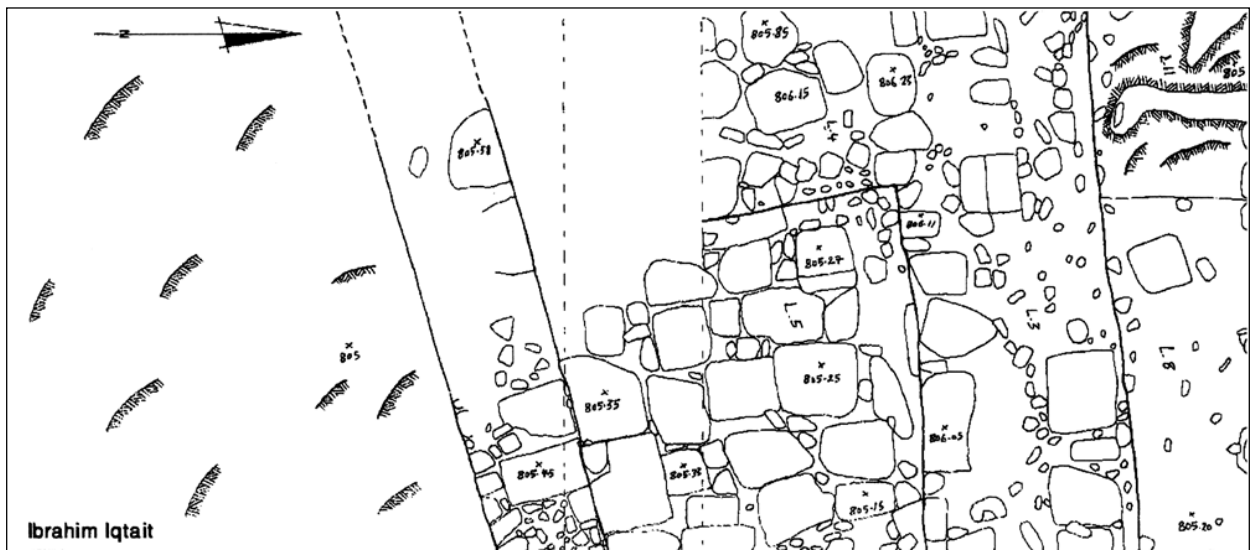
occupation on the site: the Byzantine, which was close to the natural bedrock, and then the Umayyad and Abbasid.

After completing the work in this square, we found it necessary to extend the work from its southern side (**Fig. 5a**). This was due to several reasons, including the continuation of the wall of locus 5 under the southern side of the square. After removing the layers and reaching the required level of the wall, an important feature was revealed: wall locus 7, this wall is one line of large well-dressed stones supported by small stones mixed with lime mortar. It runs in an east-west direction, and can be dated to the Byzantine period (**Fig. 5b**).

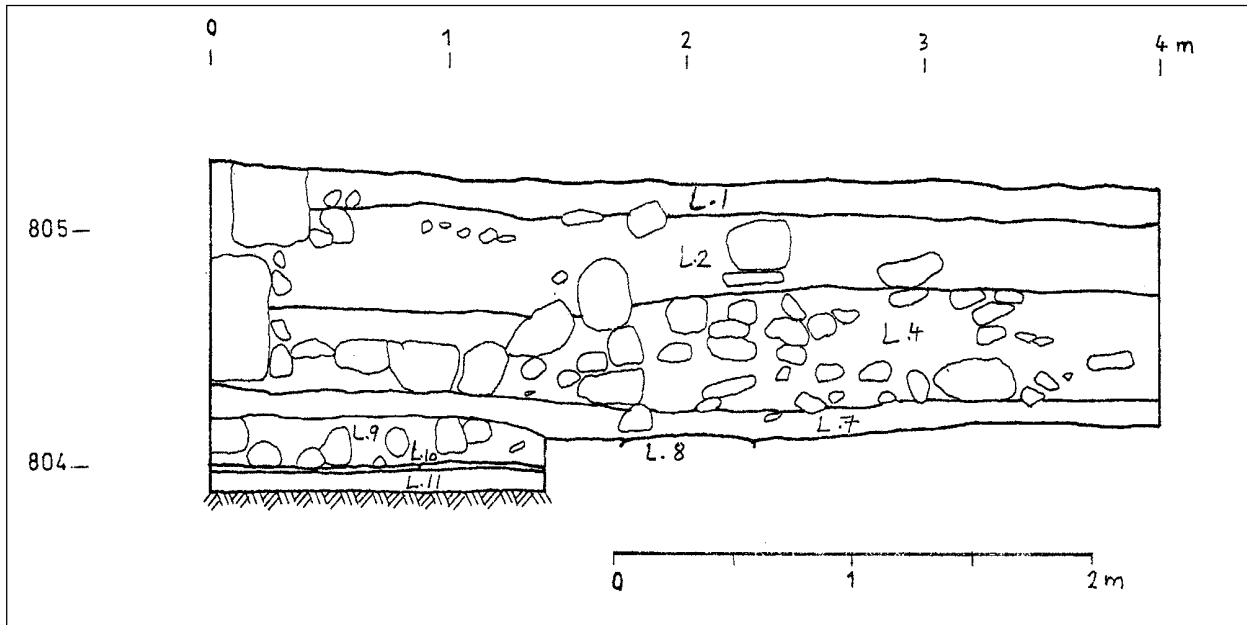
The Winepress Area

Seven squares were excavated in the Winepress Area. The principal aim was to uncover the other parts of the press. The most important discovery came in square Q16, where a wall running north-south was uncovered in locus 2. The wall, 80cm in width, is formed from two courses of different-sized stones filled with pebbles and built directly on the bedrock. The western end of this wall, about 70cm in height, forms the other part of the western wall of the winepress which was uncovered in 2003 (**Fig. 6**).

No architectural features were found in the other squares, which were excavated down to the natural bedrock, with internal grooves filled with dirt to different depths (**Fig. 7a**). The dirt covering them is brown, containing large, rough



5a. Plan of squares K12 and K13.



5b. Square K 12, northern section.



6. General view of the winepress area, showing the excavated squares.

grits mixed with pebbles, as well as Byzantine and early Islamic pottery. The lack of any architectural features in these squares shows that the area was used for agricultural purposes during and after these periods (Fig. 7b).

The Finds

Apart from the architectural features, the finds from the three areas consist of pottery sherds, glass, bones and mosaic tesserae, all dating largely to the Byzantine and early Islamic period.

Pottery

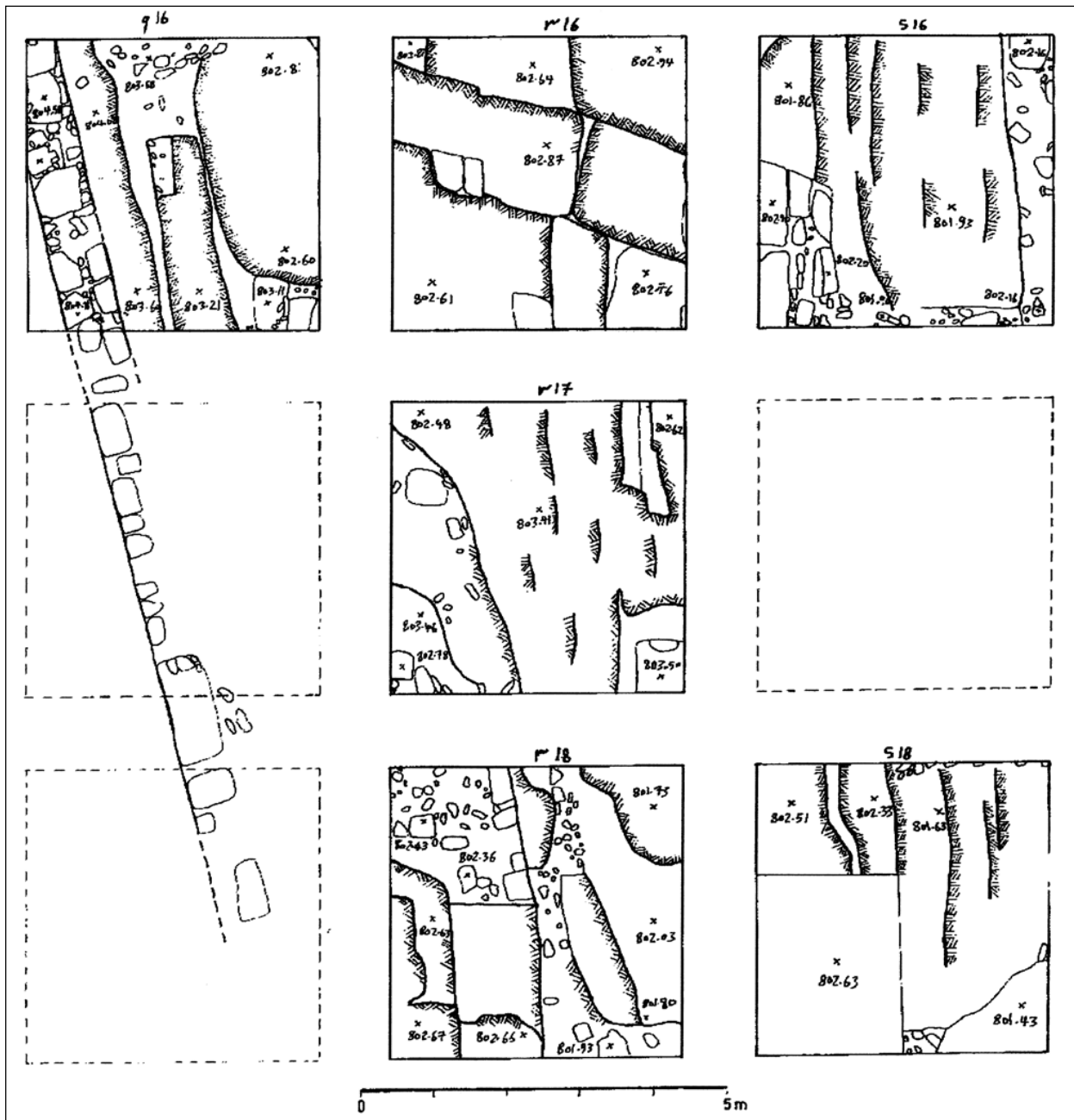
A large quantity of pottery sherds were found on the site during the excavations. These belong

to various types of vessels: large- and medium-sized jars, jugs and juglets, cooking pots, bowls and dishes, oil lamps and animal figurines.

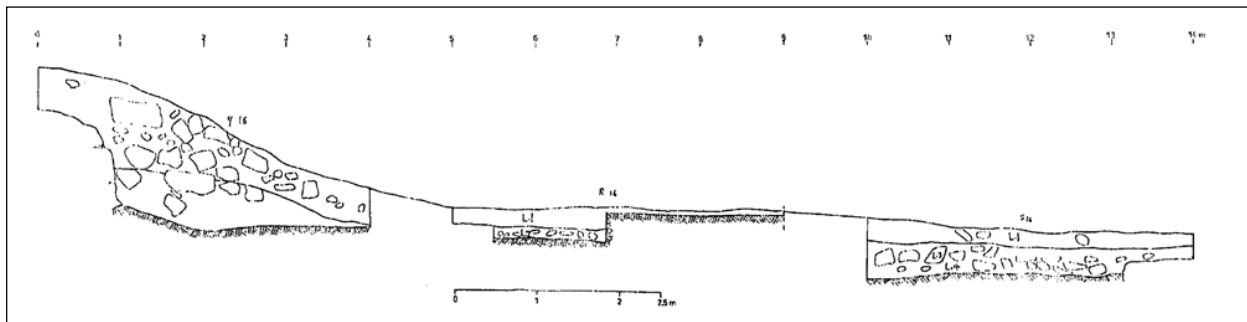
Jars (Figs. 8a, 8b): Fragments of large and medium-sized jars were found. These were used mostly for liquids – either oil or wine. Their handles are vertically placed, extending from the rim to the shoulder, and are sometimes decorated with stamps. Their rims are either flat or averted, and they are patterned with dental decoration. The bases of the medium-sized jars are either ring or flat; those of the large jars are oval.

Cooking Pots (Fig. 9): The cooking pots are of various sizes. They are spherical in shape, and decorated with light ribbing. The clay is brownish-orange, and is covered with traces of firing. The rims are either flat or beveled, mostly grooved so that the lids fit closely. The handles are mostly horizontal, and placed slightly under the rim. The lids of these vessels are also decorated with slight ribbing and have knobs or ring handles at the centre. The larger vessels have narrower openings, with vertical handles extending from the rims to the shoulders.

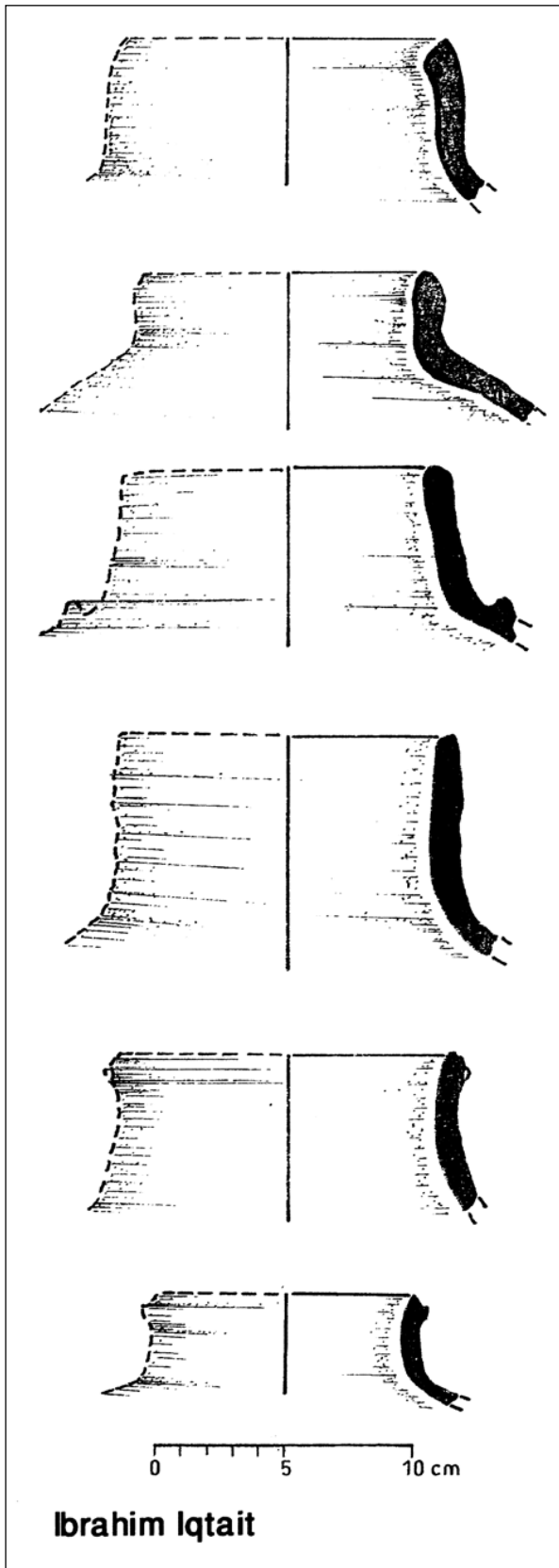
Jugs and juglets (Fig. 10): These vessels are made of pale yellowish or orange clay. They have thin walls, long necks, and handles extending from the neck to the shoulders. A few of them are formed of double or triple joined handles. Their bases are short and cylindrical.



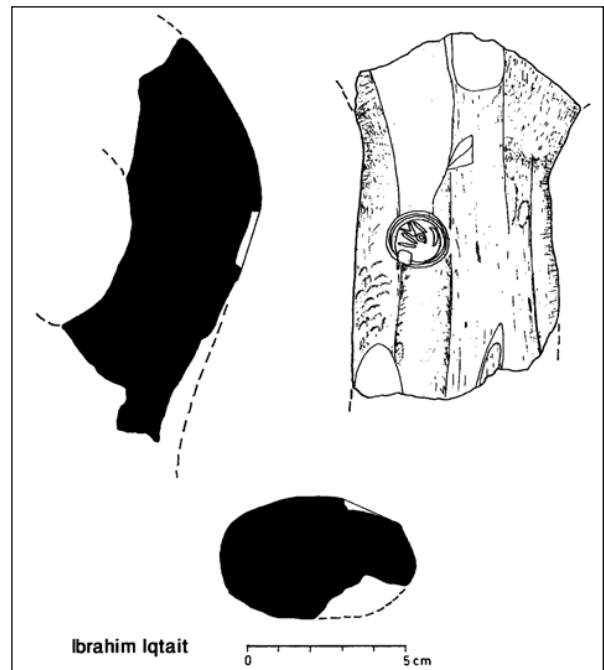
7a. Plan of the squares in the winepress area.



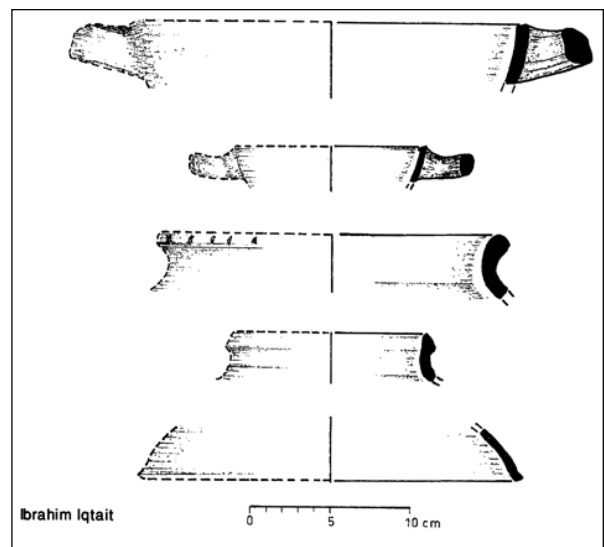
7b. The northern section of the winepress area.



8a. Jars.



8b. Jar handles with stamp decoration.

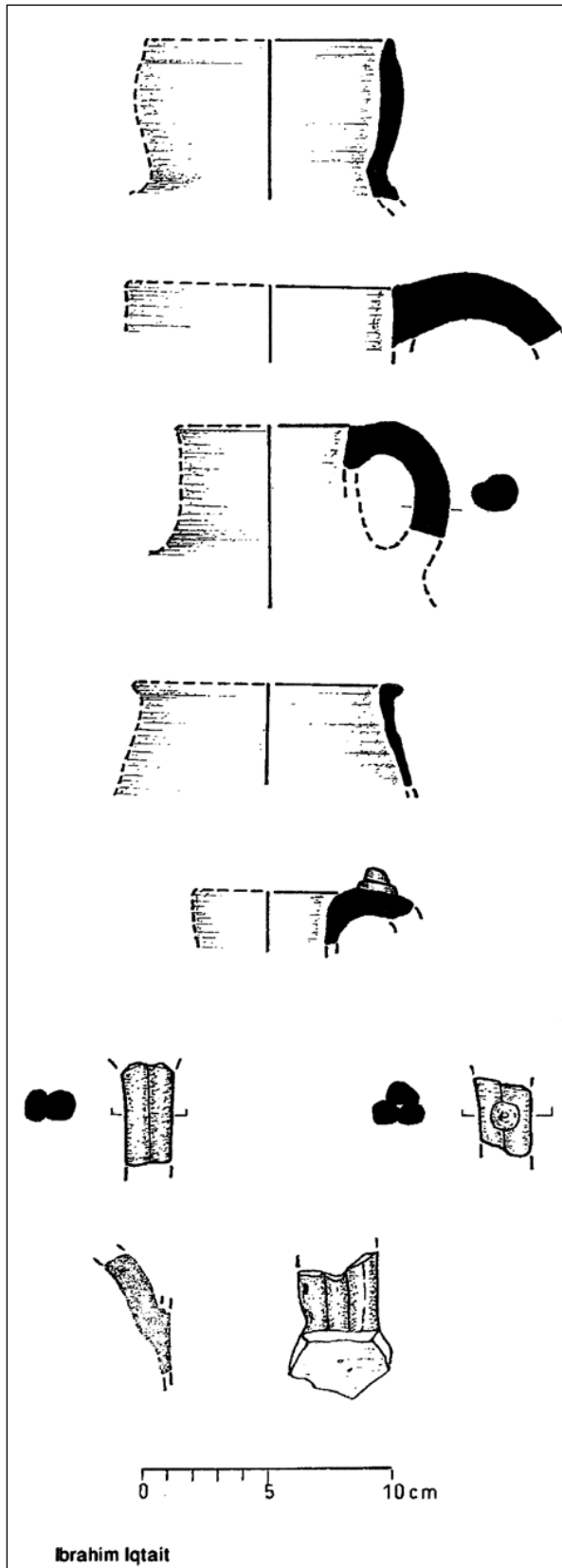


9. Cooking pots.

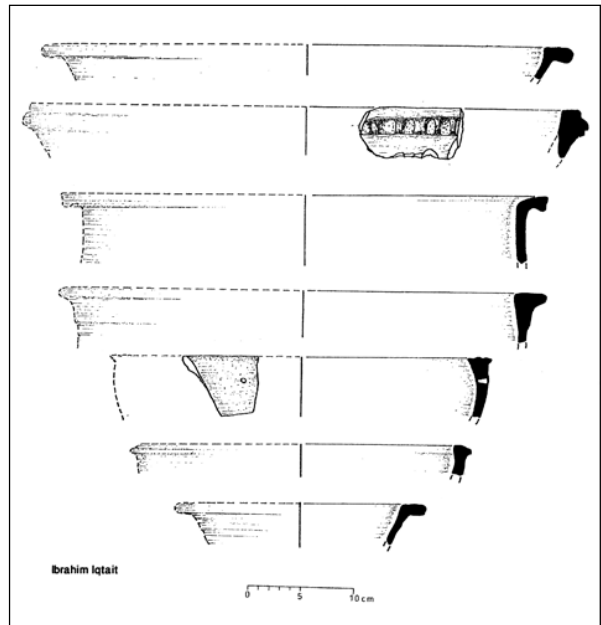
The juglets (ewers) have spouts on one side, protruding from the bottom of the neck.

Craters (Fig. 11): The craters are of large size, and made of brownish-orange clay. They have flat bases and arched or flat rims. The thick walls are straight or slightly rounded, and they are adorned with either painted patterns or bands of combed, zigzag, stamped or thumb-decorated.

Plates, bowls and cups (Figs. 12, 13): These are made of various colored clays, ranging



10. Jugs and juglets.



11. Craters.

from pale cream or light brown to orange and sometimes gray. Some of the vessels are wheel made, and others are handmade. The small vessels have thin walls, and flat or disc-like bases, whereas the large vessels have thicker walls with disc-like or rounded bases. These larger vessels are mostly decorated with combed patterns.

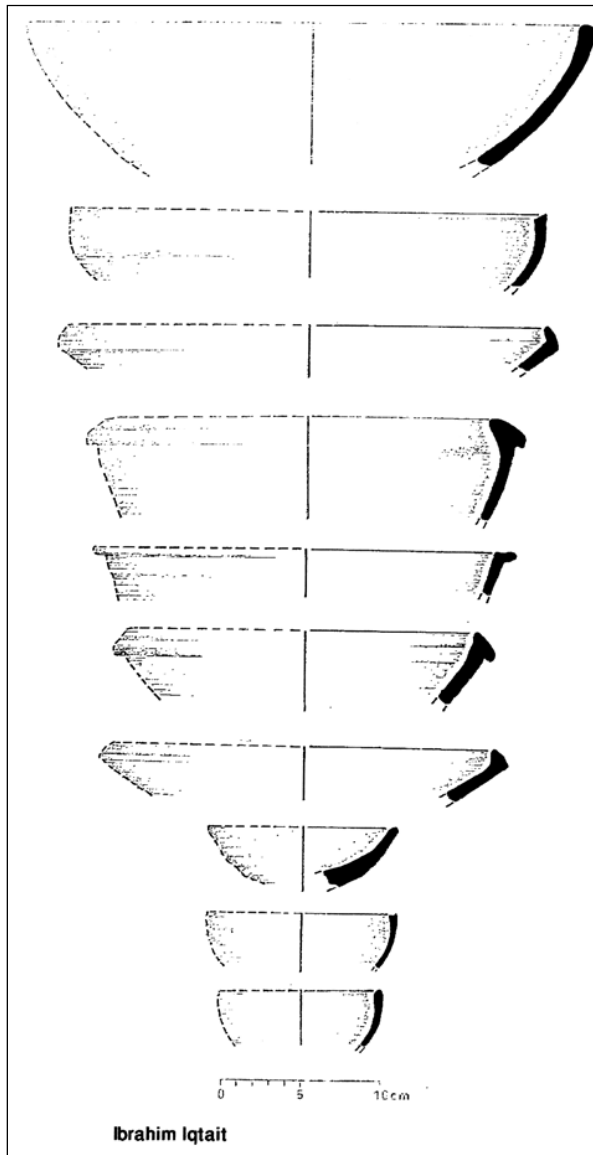
Other pottery fragments (Fig. 14): This season's excavations yielded many different pottery fragments. These include a fragment of a bull figurine made of yellowish clay; a fragment of an oil lamp decorated with vegetal motifs, such as palm trees, or grapes, which date most probably to the Umayyad period; and a fragment of a medium-sized pilgrim flask, made of brown clay.

Other objects (Fig. 15): Other objects uncovered during the season include iron nails, a copper ring, glass fragments, pieces of basalt, and coins.

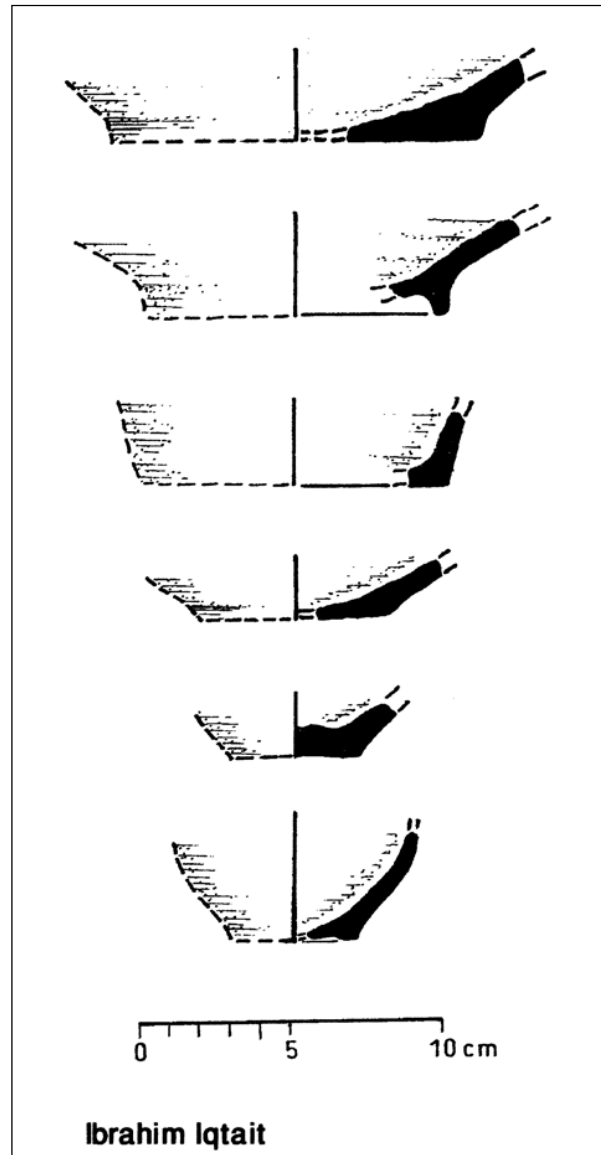
Byzantine pottery (Fig. 16): What little Byzantine pottery was found during the season came in the form of sherds from jars, juglets and craters found either on pavements or on the beaten floor. These were made mostly of orange clay.

Summary

The 2005 excavations uncovered various architectural features and material evidence which indicate three main phases of occupation at the site of Khirbat Shuwayka. The first phase is the surface, which was used for agricultural purpos-



12. Plates, bowls and cups.



13. Plates, bowls and cups.

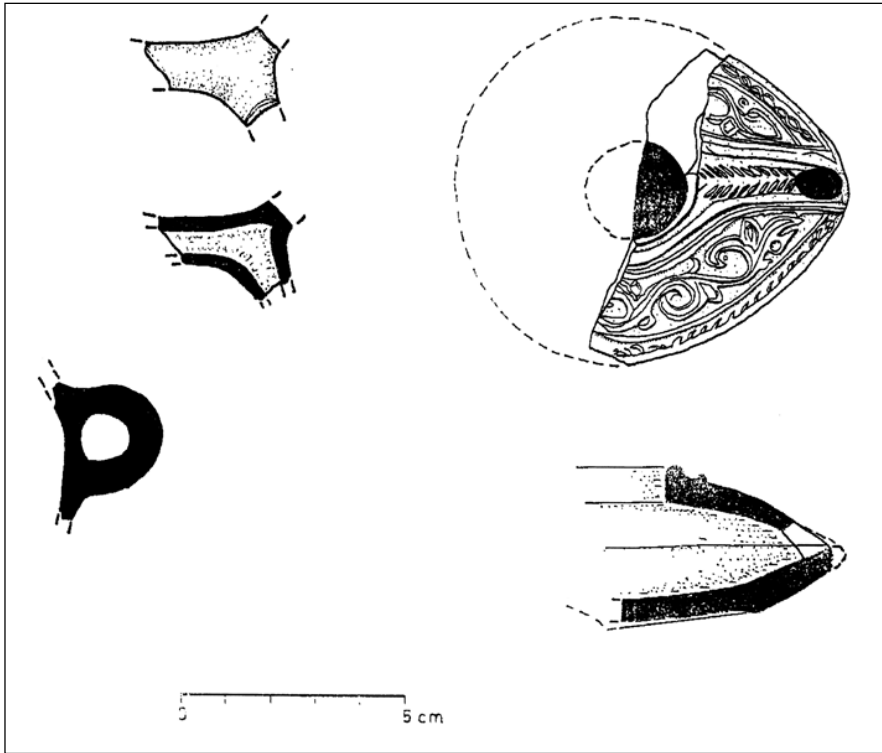
es for a long period. The second phase represents the Early Islamic period, mainly Umayyad and Abbasid. Walls found in square K12 and I7 (and then the extension of I7) indicate reuse of the site during this period. The third phase is Byzantine, indicated by walls and several coins discovered in squares I7, D12 and Q16.

The results of this season's excavations match to some extent the results from previous seasons. Square I, for example, shows connections to squares H6, H7, and H8; square K12 shows connections to squares L12 and K10; and, in the winepress area, square Q16 helps us better understand squares S15 and R15.

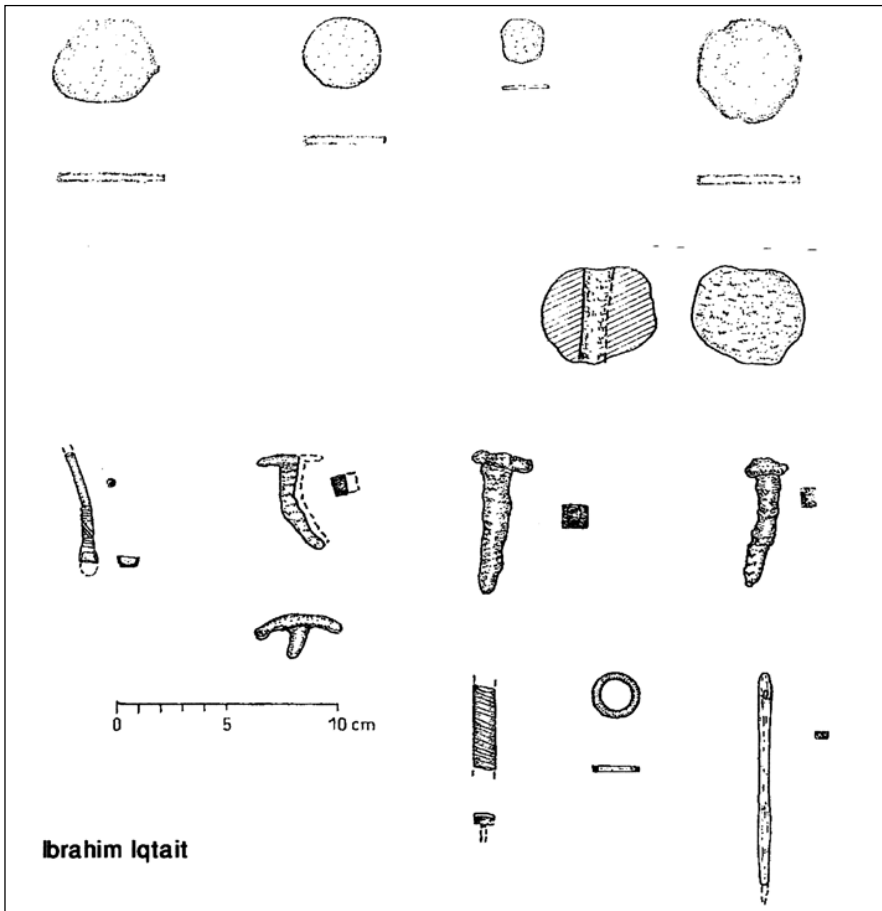
Acknowledgements

The field work of this season was generously funded by the Barakat Trust in Oxford, and I would like to thank first members of the Board of Trustees Hamida Ali Riza, Reema Qabbani, Prof. James Allan, and Prof. Jeremy Johns for their support. I am grateful to Dr. Mahmmod Hawari from al Khalili Research Center and Tim Moore from the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem for their recommendation letters endorsing our project.

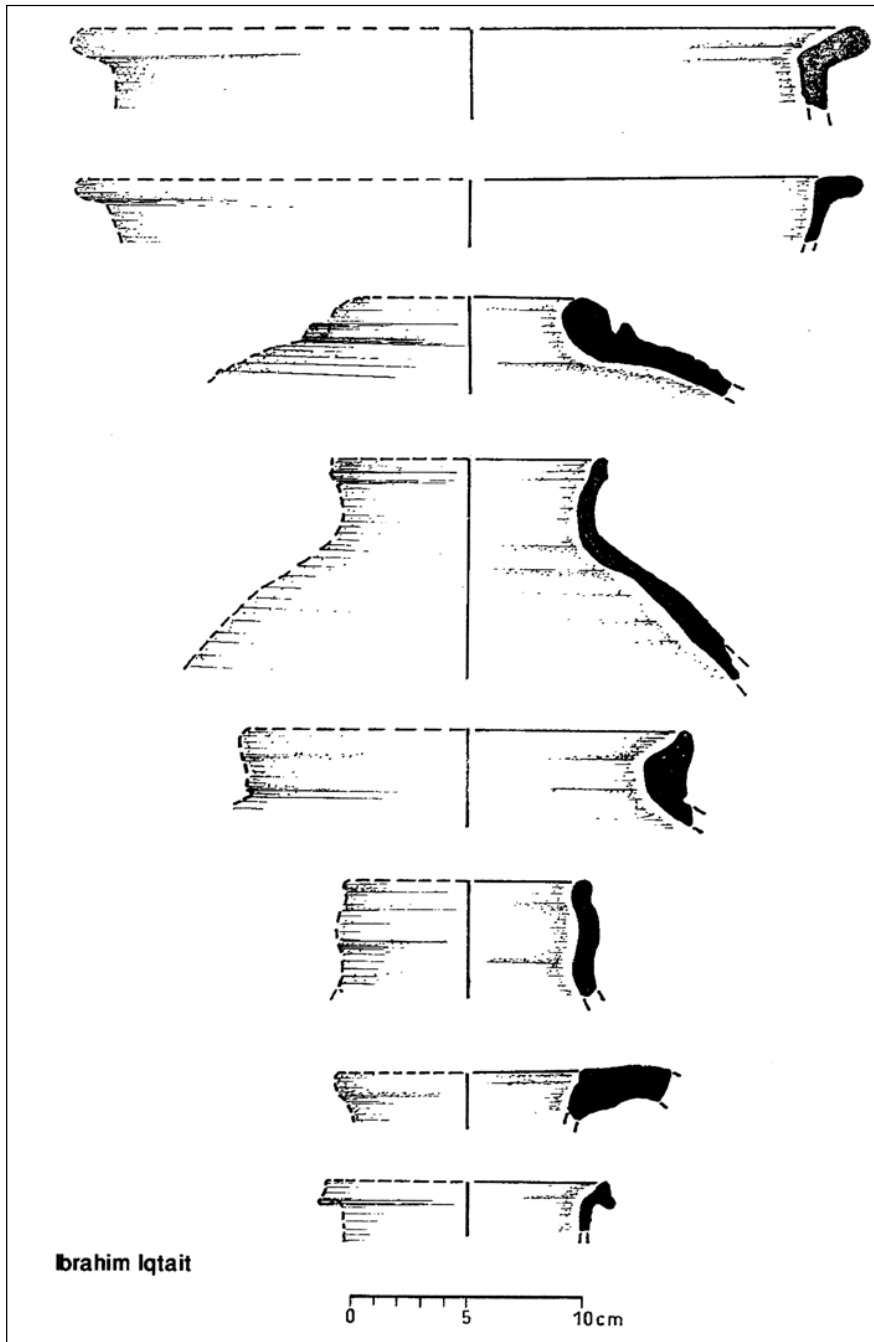
Marwan F. Abu-Khalaf
The Higher Institute of Archeology
Al-Quds University



14. Other pottery fragments.



15. Various objects.



16. *Byzantine pottery.*

