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Chalcolithic Ceramic Spoons from Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 and 2, Southern Jordan

Abstract

Ceramic spoons are one of the most common pottery groups in the Chalcolithic period of the southern Levant. They have been unearthed from ordinary dwellings and are considered to be one of the tools of daily use. Recently, ceramic spoons were unearthed from ritual features in Tel Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl and Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 and 2. Therefore, it is possible that ceramic spoons had a ritual function. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the functions of Chalcolithic ceramic spoons in the southern Levant. For that reason, this paper provides a data collection of Chalcolithic ceramic spoons and classifies them morphologically into three types: Type 1, 2, and 3. The paper concludes that Type 1, which has a short handle, was used for ritual activities.

Introduction

This paper explores the function of Chalcolithic ceramic spoons in the southern

Levant. Various pottery groups of the Chalcolithic period in the southern Levant have been discussed by scholars (Amiran 1969; Gonen 1992; Garfinkel 1999). Although opinions on them vary, ceramic spoons have always been considered to be one of the common tools in the Chalcolithic southern Levant. For example, R. Amiran (1969: 25) argued that the ceramic spoons are particular to the Ghassulian, but she did not discuss their functions. R. Gonen (1992: 55) suggested that ceramic spoons were kitchen tools and used for mixing food. Y. Garfinkel (1999: 25, 259), who classified Neolithic and Chalcolithic pottery in the southern Levant, suggested that ceramic spoons existed in the both periods. Furthermore, it is important to note that stone spoons also have been unearthed from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods in the southern Levant (Garfinkel and Miller 2002: fig. 127; Ibrahim 2016: pl. 38-1).

As stated above, the functions of the

Chalcolithic ceramic spoons in the southern Levant have not been considered carefully. However, two recent archaeological discoveries revealed that ceramic spoons are connected to ritual sites. A miniature ceramic spoon and small cup were unearthed from an infant burial feature in Area Q at Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl (Bourke *et al.* 2000; Lovell 2017). Also, Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 revealed two complete ceramic spoons and a small cup in a ritual feature (Fujii *et al.* forthcoming). These two findings raise the possibility that Chalcolithic ceramic spoons were used for ritual activities.

Research Methods: Classification for the Ceramic Spoons in the Southern Levant

This paper explores the morphological classification of ceramic spoons in order to clarify their functions. Garfinkel

has already provided a data collection of the Chalcolithic ceramic spoons in his monograph on Neolithic pottery (1999: fig. 161). For the purposes of this paper, TABLE 1 combines recent archaeological findings with those recorded in Garfinkel's monograph, while FIGURE 1 is a distribution map. In Garfinkel's data set (1999: 259), ceramic spoons were only recovered from the Late Chalcolithic period. More recent discoveries have yielded ceramic spoons dating to the Late Neolithic period in the southern Levant. Therefore, ceramic spoons must have been used in the Early and Middle Chalcolithic periods, even though they have not been observed in either the Early or the Middle Chalcolithic periods.

This paper classified the Chalcolithic ceramic spoons into three types: Type 1,

Table 1. Chalcolithic ceramic spoons from the southern Levant. L.= Length, W.= Width.
(Continued.)

No.	Site	Context	Type	L.	W.	L. of Handle	Bibliography
1	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1	F123, Area-1 loc.116	Type 1	9.3	5.6	2.5	Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
2	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1	F123, Area-1 loc.118	Type 1	9.2	5.5	2.5	Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
3	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2	F256, loc. 102	Type 1				Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
4	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2	F256, loc. 102	Unknown				Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
5	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2	F264. loc. 105	Type 1	10.5		2.5	Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
6	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2	F264. loc. 102	Unknown				Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
7	Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2	F264-2. loc. 527	Type 2				Fujii <i>et al.</i> forthcoming
8	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl	RN30035, QI 2.4	Unknown	3.1	1.2	0.9	Bourke 2000: fig. 22:13
9	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2	10.6	5.2	4.3	Lee 1973: 101, no. i
10	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 1	11.5	6.2	2.5	Lee 1973: 101, no. c

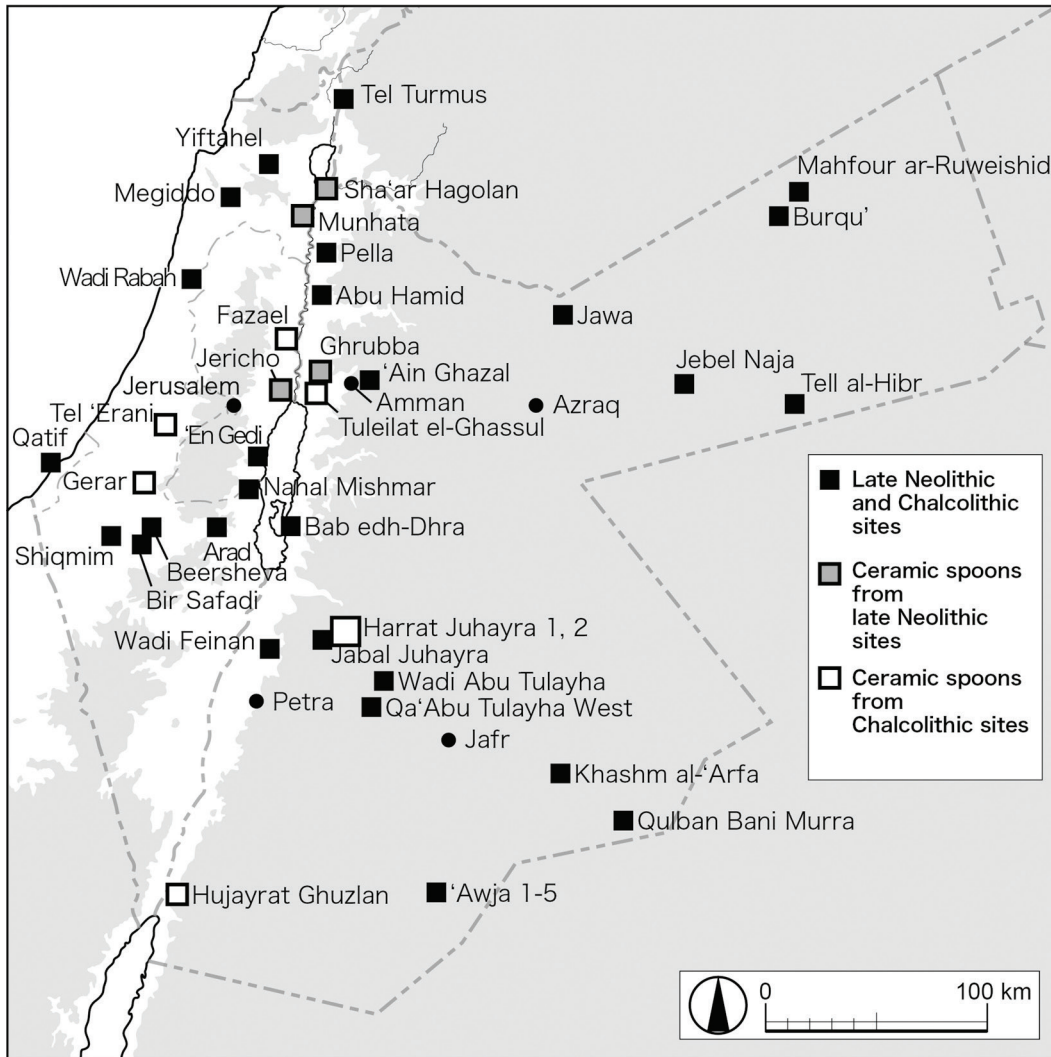
Table 1, *continued*. Chalcolithic ceramic spoons from the southern Levant. L.= Length, W.= Width.

11	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2	17.2	7.1	6.8	Lee 1973: 101, no. d
12	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2	19.8	9.8	7.5	Amiran 1969: pl. 19
13	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 1				Mallon <i>et al.</i> 1934: pl. 44: 55
14	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 1				Mallon <i>et al.</i> 1934: pl. 44: 56
15	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2				Mallon <i>et al.</i> 1934: pl. 44: 57
16	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2				Mallon <i>et al.</i> 1934: pl. 44: 58
17	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2				Mallon <i>et al.</i> 1934: pl. 44: 64
18	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl		Type 2				North 1961: pl. IX,8685
19	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl	Bag 128, Sanctuary A	Unknown		4.8		Seaton 2008: pl. 127.e
20	Grar	Area B, F49, 1089	Unknown				Gilead and Goren 1995: fig. 4.18.7
21	Grar	Area E, Z101, 2681	Type 2				Gilead and Goren 1995: fig. 4.18.8
22	Fazael		Unknown				Porath 1985: fig. 5:8
23	Fazael		Unknown				Porath 1985: 8
24	Fazael		Unknown				Porath 1985: 8
25	Tall 'Erani	Gath D57-587	Type 2				Brandl 1989: fig. 4:9
26	Tall 'Erani	Gath D60-165/10	Type 3				Brandl 1989: fig. 4:8
27	Tall Ḥujayrāt al-Ghuzlān	HG10/0666	Type 3				Kimscha 2013: fig. 34

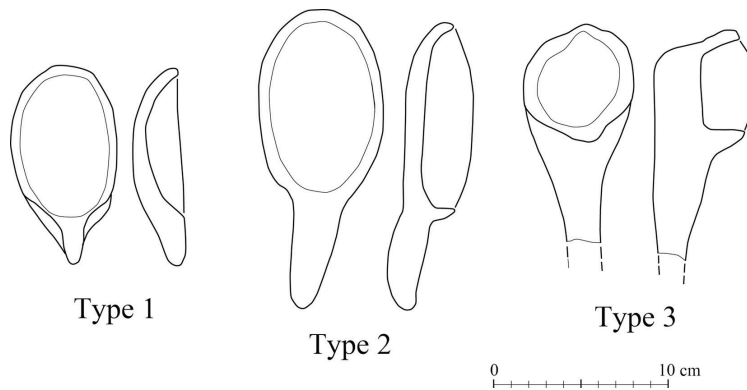
Type 2, and Type 3 (FIG. 2). Type 1 has an oval-shaped bowl in plan and a very small handle. Type 2 also has an oval-shaped bowl, but a long handle. Finally, Type 3 has a small round-shaped bowl and a long handle.

Type 1 has been unearthed from Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl and Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 in ritual contexts. Since the handle of Type 1 is approximately 2.5 cm in length, it is not large enough to pick up easily. It would be

hard to use Type 1 as a mixing instrument, as Gonen (1992: 35) assumed. Type 2 has the same shaped bowl as Type 1, but the handle of Type 2 is longer than that of Type 1. Most handles are curved vertically. Since the handle of Type 2 ranges from 4.5 to 7.5 cm in length, Type 2 is more suitable for stirring or mixing than Type 1. Type 3 was found at Tall Ḥujayrāt al-Ghuzlān (TABLE 1:27), and the specimen was reported as a crucible (Kimscha 2013: fig. 34). It was



1. Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites in the southern Levant.



2. Type 1, 2, and 3 ceramic spoons in the Chalcolithic period.

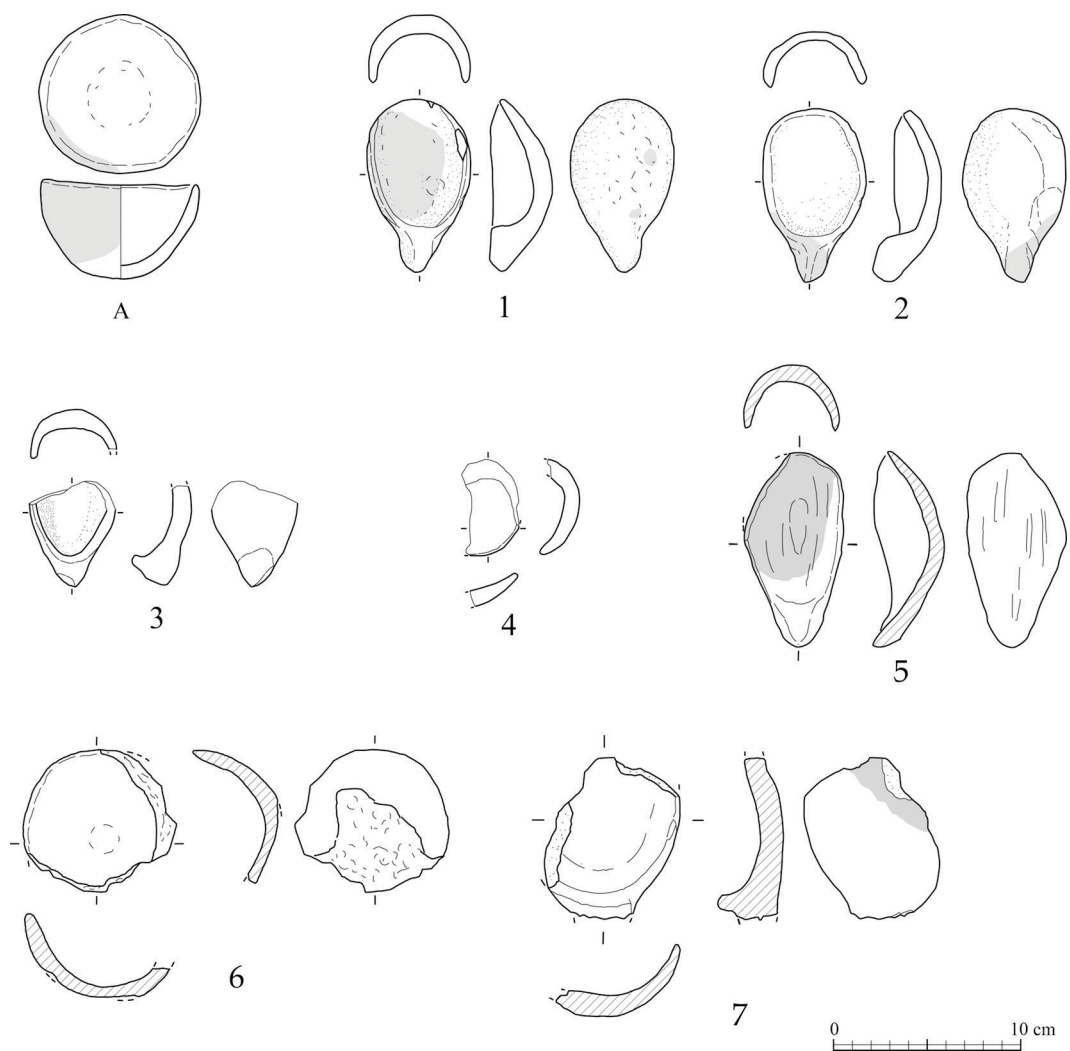
difficult to identify it as a ceramic spoon, but a similarly shaped specimen was uncovered from Tall 'Erani (TABLE 1:26), so Type 3 was established as an independent type.

The Chalcolithic Ceramic Spoons in the Southern Levant

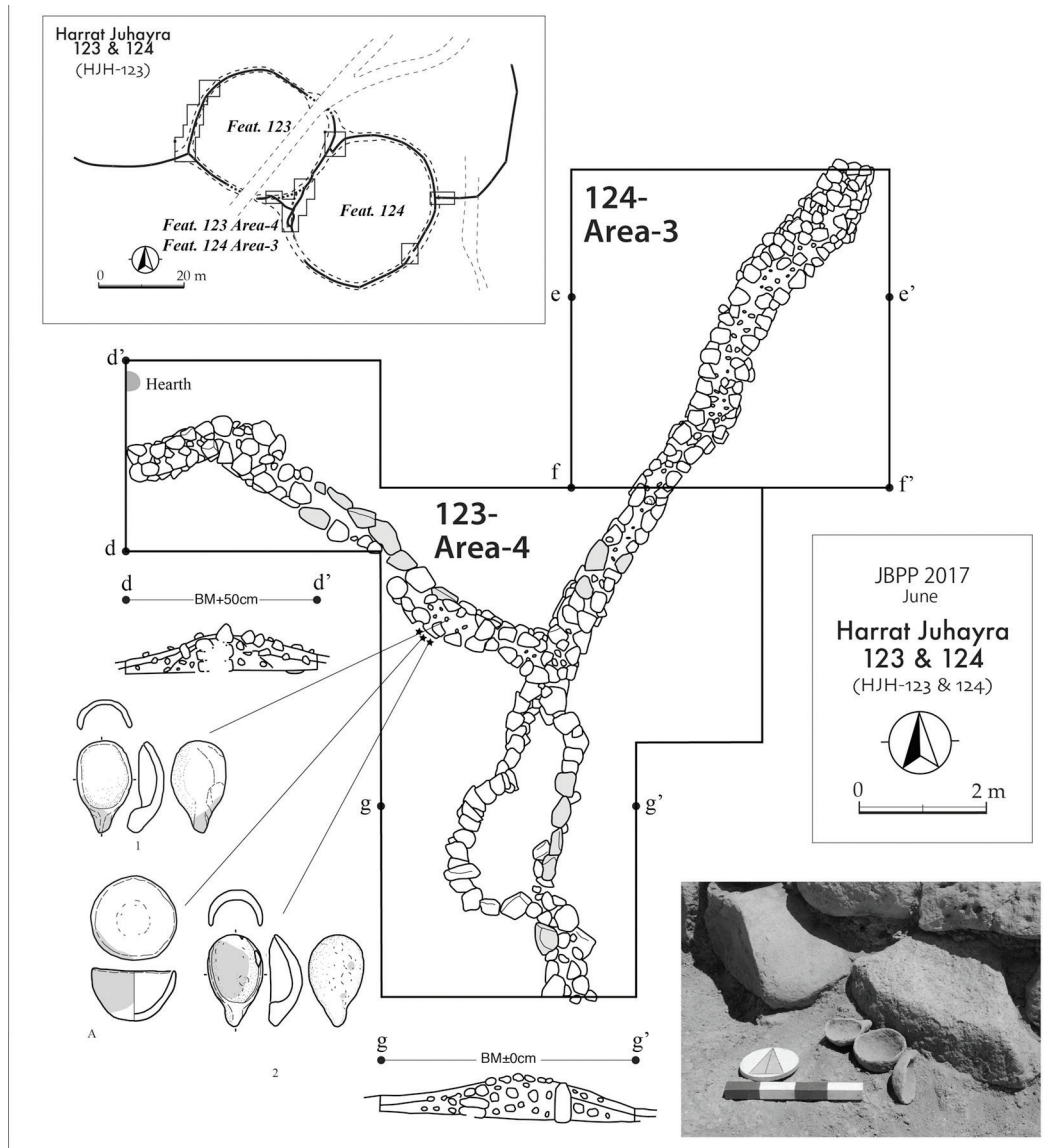
Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1

Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 is a Chalcolithic burial ground in the eastern foothills of Jabal Juḥayra, an isolated volcanic hill behind Jurf ad-Dārwish in south Jordan. The site is

an extensive composite site including tails and enclosures (Fujii *et al.* forthcoming). Two Type 1 ceramic spoons accompanied by a small cup were unearthed from tailed enclosures HJH-123 and HJH-124 (Fujii *et al.* forthcoming: fig. 13:1-3; TABLE 1:1, 2, FIGS. 3:1, 2, A). They were found *in situ* on the construction level in the connecting part between HJH-123 and HJH-124 (FIG. 4). HJH-123 and HJH-124 are typical enclosures. These kinds of features in the Chalcolithic period have been considered



3. Chalcolithic ceramic spoons from Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 and 2.



4. The Chalcolithic spoons and small cup from HJH-123 (Fujii et al. forthcoming; fig. 11).

to be ritual features, so the spoons and the small cup are also considered to be used for ritual activities. HJH-123 and HJH-124 will be discussed in the official excavation report in detail (Fujii *et al.* forthcoming). C-14 data collected from the construction level of HJH-123 revealed a date of 4252–4051 cal BC (95.4%; HJH-1, F-123, Area-4, loc. 114. hrf; IAAA-172623).

Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2

Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 2 is located adjacent to the southwest of Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1. Several dwellings and a few enclosures are found at this site. Five ceramic spoons were unearthed from the dwellings (TABLE 1:3–7; FIGS. 3:3–7); two of them are Type 1 and one of them is Type 2. HJH-264, which yielded one Type 1 ceramic spoon, has a ¹⁴C date

at the lowest level. The date ranges from 4200 to 4000 cal BC [HJH-2, F-264/2, loc. 528.chr; IAAA-181108; 4229–4199 cal BC (14.9%), 4172–4089 cal BC (36.3%), 4084–4034 cal BC (29.1%), 4025–3992 cal BC (15.0%)].

Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl

More than 11 ceramic spoons dating to the Chalcolithic period were unearthed at Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl (TABLE 1:8–19). Three of them can be classified as Type 1, seven can be defined as Type 2, and others are of unknown type. It is noteworthy that a small ceramic spoon was recently found from Area Q, Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl (TABLE 1:8). The small ceramic spoon was found in association with a small cup from the infant burial feature (Lovell 2017). J.L. Lovell, however, maintains that the function of the ceramic spoon is not significant in this context, and what matters more is that the spoon and cup are miniature objects.

Grar

Two Type 2 ceramic spoons were recovered from Grar (TABLE 1:20, 21), and one of these has incised decorations.

Fazael

One Type 2 ceramic spoon was illustrated in the excavation report and two ceramic spoons were found from there (TABLE 1:22–24). The details concerning the two spoons that were not drawn are unclear.

Tall 'Erani

Two ceramic spoons were uncovered at Tall 'Erani, one of which is Type 2 and the other is Type 3 (TABLE 1:25, 26). Type 3 ceramic spoons were only found at Tall 'Erani and Tall Hujayrāt al-Ghuzlān.

Tall Hujayrāt al-Ghuzlān

Although the only one Type 3 ceramic spoon was found at Tall Hujayrāt al-

Ghuzlān, it was recorded as a crucible (TABLE 1:27).

Discussion

Although this paper discusses the morphological classification of Chalcolithic spoons, the idea is still regarded as a working hypothesis, primarily because the existence of Type 3 is not confirmed. Type 3 is defined as those ceramic spoons with a round-shaped bowl. However, only two Type 3 ceramic spoons have been discovered, and one of them was recorded as a crucible.

On the other hand, there is stronger evidence for the classification of Types 1 and 2. The main criterion of the classification is the length of the handle. Type 1 is defined as a ceramic spoon with a very short handle compared to Type 2. Types 1 and 2 both have oval-shaped bowls. Although Type 1 and 2 ceramic spoons were reported in the first excavation report of Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl (Mallon *et al.* 1934: pl. 44), researchers have not paid attention to their morphological differences so far.

Type 1 ceramic spoons were intentionally produced with a shortened bowl, and the handle is too short to stir or mix something. Type 1 ceramic spoons could be used to carefully move a small amount of food. There is a possibility that Type 1 ceramic spoons were used for feeding infants foods such as milk, soup, and cream.

The data collection of the Chalcolithic ceramic spoons reveals that the number of Type 1 spoons is almost the same as that of Type 2. Type 1 ceramic spoons were only found at Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 and 2 and Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl. On the contrary, several Chalcolithic sites yielded Type 2 ceramic spoons. Because of this, it is likely that Type 2 was more popular than Type 1. The longer handle of Type 2 ceramic spoons is more suitable for stirring or mixing something, so it is possible that Type 2 was a daily tool similar to modern spoons.

Two ceramic spoons recovered from the ritual feature in Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1 shed light on another possible function. The two ceramic spoons were found *in situ* on the construction level near the wall of HJH-123 (enclosure). They are associated with the ritual feature, HJH-123, and considered to be used for a ritual activity. The two ceramic spoons are not classified Type 2, which is interpreted as a daily tool, but Type 1.

This paper argues that Type 1 ceramic spoons had a ritual function. A Type 1 ceramic spoon was also discovered in a dwelling (HJH-264; FIG. 3:5). It is a possibility that Type 1 ceramic spoons served both ritual and daily life purposes. HJH-264, however, is a peculiarly shaped dwelling that accompanied a round structure, providing further support for the possibility that this Type 1 ceramic spoon also had a ritual function.

Furthermore, Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl recently yielded a small ceramic spoon associated with a small cup in an infant burial feature (TABLE 1:8). Burials are ritual contexts, and the fact that this spoon's shape bears Type 1 characteristics supports the hypothesis of this paper. Moreover, it is important to note that small Type 1 spoons have been associated with small cups at Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl as well as HJH-123, Ḥarrat al-Juḥayra 1.

Conclusion

This paper provides a data collection of Chalcolithic ceramic spoons and their morphological classifications. Also, this paper suggests that Type 1 ceramic spoons served a ritual function. Although the Chalcolithic ceramic spoons have been considered to be one of the most common artifacts of the period, there has been little discussion about their functions. Additionally, this paper raises the possibility that Type 1 ceramic spoons were not only used ritually, but also to feed infants. Finally, this paper ends with the suggestion that if

ceramic spoons were indeed used to feed infants, they represented improved sanitary conditions and could have contributed to lower infant mortality in the Chalcolithic period.

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