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The ‘Abbasid Family Estate at Al Humaymah: New Insights from Analysis of the Ceramics from Field F103

Introduction

Al Humaymah is a large, multi-period site in southern Jordan, located *ca.* 60 km northeast of Ayla/Al-‘Aqaba at the northern edge of the Hismā Desert (FIG. 1). The site was founded as Hawara (Nabataean *hwr*, Greek *Auara*) in the 1st century BC, probably by the Nabataean king Aretas III (or possibly Aretas IV) and continued to be occupied for centuries thereafter (Oleson 2010: 51–52). Settlement at the site continued into the Early Islamic period, as demonstrated by evidence for 7th-century AD occupation of many of the excavation areas reported in Oleson and Schick (2013). According to 9th- and 10th-century AD Arabic historical sources, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Al ‘Abbās purchased the site during the period AD 687–705 and built a *qasr* and mosque, after which the settlement became the residence of the ‘Abbāsīd family until shortly before

the revolution leading to their ascent to the caliphate in AD 750 (Foote 2007: 458; Oleson 2010: 61). The ‘Abbāsīd family *qasr* and mosque complex has been identified as Field F103 (FIG. 2), which was excavated from 1992 to 2002 by Rebecca Foote, as part of the Humayma Excavation Project, directed by John P. Oleson. Preliminary reports of those excavations have appeared, focusing on the layout of the structure and the remarkable ivory panels and frescoes found in Room 02 (Foote 1999; 2007). Given the importance of the site, and of Field F103 in particular, however, complete analysis and publication of the excavated material is necessary. Although as Milwright (2010: 193), following Robinson (2003: 53), notes, the finds from Field F103 “are unlikely to provide new evidence concerning the crucial events leading up to the coup of 749–50,” it is also the case that “the

historical sources ... say little about the site itself” (Schick 2007: 352). As such, the excavations do have the potential to provide insight into the daily lives of the ‘Abbāsīd family and other residents of the site prior to the revolution, the maintenance of an early 8th-century elite estate in southern Jordan—*albeit* on a smaller scale than the large Umayyad estates in the north, as noted by Schick (2007: 354)—and the nature of the site after the departure of the ‘Abbāsīd family in the mid-8th century. In 2021, renewed analysis began with the primary goal of completing the final publication of the Field F103 excavations. This paper presents the preliminary results of analysis of the ceramic finds from Field F103. While the conclusions that can be drawn at this stage are limited by the fact that much of the final analysis, notably the stratigraphy and architectural phasing, is in progress, the ceramic finds do add substantially to our understanding of the structure’s history and use.

The F103 Ceramics

As part of the final publication project, all available ceramics from all six seasons of excavation in Field F103 (1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998, and 2002) were analyzed. This amounted to 749 baskets containing 9,579 sherds. This material was somewhat uneven, however, as during the earlier (1992–1996) seasons, field ceramic readings had also involved picking “diagnostic” sherds (primarily rims, but also bases, handles, and some decorated sherds) and returning the majority of ceramic material to the site, while this was not done during the later (1998 and 2002) seasons, allowing for analysis of the “non-diagnostic” material from these seasons as part of the present project. The lack of non-diagnostic ceramics for four of the six excavation seasons limits

the quantitative analysis that can be performed on the assemblage but does not entirely preclude it. All 9,579 sherds from Field F103 were subjected to initial analysis, including separation into broad component elements (*e.g.*, rims, handles, bases, *etc.*) and, where possible, assignment to period and fabric categories. The 1,124 registered diagnostic sherds were subjected to more detailed analysis, including measurement and macroscopic fabric description. Future plans include petrographic and chemical analyses of a selection of the ceramics.

Although stratigraphic analysis of the excavations is not yet complete, the majority of the ceramics can be placed in four broad periods, each corresponding to a specific phase of the building’s use: (1) pre-7th-century AD ceramics, many residual but some related to apparent use of the area for refuse disposal around the 2nd century AD, (2) 7th–early 8th-century AD ceramics, related to the ‘Abbāsīd family’s construction of and residence in the *qasr*, (3) late 8th–10th-century AD ceramics, demonstrating continued use of the site after the ‘Abbāsīd family’s departure, and (4) 10th–11th-century AD ceramics, providing a unique window into life at the site during a poorly known period, particularly in the south.

Pre-7th-Century AD Ceramics

The ceramics falling into this dating category cover the majority of the period from the foundation of the site in the 1st century BC to the construction of the *qasr*, but certain periods, notably the 1st–2nd century AD, are much better represented than others. While most of the sherds falling into this category were residual finds in later contexts, a 2nd-century pottery dump was excavated in Square 3A (20) during the 2002 season. Similar dumps were found around Cis-

tern 64 in Field F102, *ca.* 120 m to the southwest, and interpreted as possibly related to settlement around the cistern in tents (‘Amr and Oleson 2013: 153). Given the proximity of Fields F102 and F103, it is not surprising to find that the area on which the ‘Abbāsīd family *qasr* was built saw similar use around the 2nd century AD.

Overall, the pre-7th-century assemblage is what would be expected for the site, containing a mixture of identifiable fabrics produced in Petra and Ayla/Al-‘Aqaba, as well as some possible local fabrics, perhaps indicating ceramic production at Al Ḥumaymah. Although the focus of this paper is on the later ceramics, description of some of the key “early” types is informative, particularly the ceramics from the dump in Sq. 3A (20). Ceramics from this dump included Petraean and Aylan common wares dating to the early 2nd century AD, *e.g.*, 2002.0300.7 (FIG. 3), which has parallels in Field F102 (‘Amr and Oleson 2013: 104, fig. 5.12.1992.0378), as well as in early 2nd-century contexts at Petra, Az Zantūr (Stucky *et al.* 1994: 290, fig. 16.D), and Kiln VI at az Zurrāba in Wādī Mūsā (‘Amr and al-Momani 1999: 185, fig. 12.25). Typical Nabataean–Roman beveled-rim cooking pots were also very common, both in the 3A (20) dump and in later contexts (FIG. 4.2).

Nabatean finewares, both painted and unpainted, were also found in F103. Of the painted wares, the most typical, unsurprisingly, are those belonging to Schmid’s (2000) Dekorphase 3b, *e.g.*, 2002.0300.12 (FIG. 4.1) from Sq. 3A (20), whose emergence he places in the late 1st century AD. Painted wares belonging to Schmid’s Phases 3a–c (1st–2nd/3rd century AD) and 4 (date of appearance uncertain, but common in Byzantine contexts) were found in later contexts throughout F103, but the earlier Phases

1 and 2 are, perhaps unsurprisingly, absent. The unpainted finewares follow a similar pattern. Sherds belonging to Schmid’s (2000) Groups 5–8 (1st–2nd/3rd century AD) were found in F103, with the ubiquitous carinated Group 6 and 7 bowls being the most common. Several issues in the dating of these later Nabataean fineware types remain unresolved, notably the date of the introduction of Phases 3b and 3c, the degree to which production of these two decorated types overlapped, the dating of the emergence of Phase 4, and the degree of continuity between the Phase 3c finewares and Phase 4 semi-finewares (recent summaries of both sides of this debate appear in Erickson-Gini 2021; Wenner and Parker 2021). As most of the Nabataean fineware sherds found in F103 are residual, they do little to resolve this disagreement.

Another issue raised by the pre-7th-century assemblage in F103 concerns the so-called “Byzantine Painted Wares” found in 4th–5th-century AD contexts at Ayla/Al-‘Aqaba (Parker *et al.* 2014). Their designs are similar to those found on Nabataean painted finewares, and although not generally discussed as such, they seem to present an Aylan production of NPFW 4. A painted sherd in this fabric (2002.0081.2) from Sq. 68, L. 18 (FIG. 5), however, is in a carinated form more typical of NPFW 3c and may suggest production of Petraean-style finewares in Ayla already in the Late Roman period. As these wares have seen little discussion, more work is necessary to resolve this issue. Among the better-known Aylan forms are the Nabatean cream wares of the 1st–2nd century AD (‘Amr 1992; Dolinka 2003: 63–64), which were also present in both the 3A (20) dump (FIG. 6) and in later contexts.

Imports from beyond southern Jordan are uncommon but present in the

pre-7th-century assemblage. The earliest of these are sherds of Roman-period Eastern Sigillata A, found in the dump in 3A (20) and in later contexts. Late Roman Red-Slip Wares were also present in small quantities in later contexts, including several sherds of 6th-century Phocaean Red Slip (PRS) Hayes Form 3 and a sherd (see FIG. 4.3) of late 5th–6th-century Late Roman D (LRD) Hayes Form 2 (Hayes 1972: 329–338, 373–376). Only one sherd of African Red Slip (ARS) Ware was found, belonging to Hayes Form 103, dating to the 6th century AD (Hayes 1972: 157–160), but forms similar to ARS 99/LRD 9 in local fabrics were more common, although this production might have continued into the Early Islamic period, and thus these forms may belong to the 7th–early 8th-century assemblage.

Lamps of this period include earlier Nabataean and Roman types, notably a nearly complete 1st–2nd-century AD Firmalamp (“factory lamp”) or local interpretation thereof (on the type, see Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2015) found in the pottery dump in 3A (20) (FIG. 7.1). Later finds include several sherds of the ubiquitous South Jordan lamp (FIG. 7.2), probably produced at several sites in the region, including Petra, apparently from the 4th–8th century AD (da Costa 2012: 239–249), which could potentially associate these sherds with the next assemblage, although these lamps are more typical of the Byzantine period.

7th–Early 8th-Century AD (Early Islamic I) Ceramics

Ceramics definitively dating to the 7th–early 8th century were not as common as might be anticipated, although this might be explained both by members of the ‘Abbāsīd family taking functional household items with

them when they left the site for Iraq and the still imprecise definition of early 8th-century ceramics in southern Jordan, discussed below. Nonetheless, several types, including imported types, seem to be associated with this period.

Ceramics produced in Ayla/Al-‘Aqaba continue to be found, including sherds of 5th–8th century Ayla-Axum amphorae (see FIG. 4.4) (for a summary of this type, see Raith *et al.* 2013) and basins, *e.g.*, 1995.0210.6 (see FIG. 4.5), with parallels in the 7th-century Ayla kilns (Melkawi, ‘Amr and Whitcomb 1994: 456–457, Fig. 8.j, k, n, o). Other coarse wares probably belonging to this assemblage include 5th–8th-century Magness (1993: 219–220) Form 4B and 4C cooking pots and taller necked forms of the same period (FIG. 4.6) with parallels in northern assemblages, *e.g.*, Bārsīniā (El-Khourī 2014: 321, Fig. 9.3).

Finewares of this period include the so-called Fine Byzantine Wares of the 6th–10th century AD, particularly Form 1E (FIG. 4.7)—dated 8th–9th century—and 1F—dated 7th–8th century—bowls (Magness 1993: 193–201). Also notable is the presence in the assemblage from Room 2 (the “Fresco Room”) of a sherd of Red-Painted Ware (FIG. 8), common in early 8th-century assemblages in the north (see, *e.g.*, Northedge 1992: fig. 131; Walmsley 1982: 147) but rare in the south, although present in the elite residence at Shuqayrā Al Gharbiyya on the southern Karak Plateau (Shdaifat and Ben Badhann 2008: 186) and farther to the south at Gharandal (Walmsley and Grey 2001: 149–150, fig. 8.3).

This assemblage also includes a variety of imports, primarily Egyptian, that likely arrived at the site via Ayla. Among these are several sherds of Red-Brown Ovoid Amphorae (FIG. 4.8), a development of the Palestinian Late Roman Amphora (LRA) 5, which was produced

in Egypt from the mid-7th–10th century but appears in the southern Levant primarily in the late 7th–early 8th century (Watson 1995: 319–320), although it has been found in late 8th–10th-century contexts (Taxel and Fantalkin 2011: 89). Several sherds of Egyptian LRA 7, primarily toes (FIG. 4.9), were also found in Field F103. This is a long-lived form, produced from the 4th–9th century AD (Vogt *et al.* 2002: 66), and while I discuss it here due to the presence of other Egyptian types of this period, it must be noted that hundreds of LRA 7 sherds have been found at Ayla in contexts spanning the 4th–7th centuries AD (Parker 1998: 388–389), making a pre-7th-century date equally plausible. Indeed, as Taxel and Fantalkin (2011: 81–82) note, LRA 7 are very rare outside of Egypt during the Early Islamic period, which makes an earlier date perhaps more likely. The majority of the LRA 7 sherds from Field F103 come from contexts containing 10th–11th-century pottery and are therefore residual. Small quantities of other Egyptian types were present in the Field F103 assemblage, including the rim of a Coptic Painted Ware jar or jug. A much more complete example, probably of this type, was found in Field F102 and dated to the early 8th century (‘Amr and Oleson 2013: 142–143, fig. 5.59.1995.0227.01). Perhaps the most remarkable import was a partially reconstructable amphora in a cream-colored fabric lined with bitumen. Although unfortunately no rim or toe sherds were found, this is almost certainly a “torpedo jar”, an amphora type produced in southern Iraq or southwestern Iran from the 1st/2nd–9th/10th century AD (Kennet 2004: 85; Tomber, Spataro, and Priestman 2022). Despite this long period of production, it seems very likely, given the apparent absence of these vessels elsewhere in the southern Levant, that it arrived at

the site during the period in which the ‘Abbāsid family occupied the *qasr*. This conclusion is also supported by the similarity of the fabric to the cream-colored “TORP-C” fabric, generally thought to be characteristic of mid-8th-century and later vessels (Tomber, Spataro, and Priestman 2022: 241–242).

Lamps were, as with the preceding assemblage, uncommon, but included several sherds of “Early Channel-Nozzle” (Magness 1993: 255–257) or knob-handled slipper lamps (FIG. 7.3), typical of the 7th–early 8th century.

Mahesh Ware and the Chronology of Field F103

An interesting uncertainty in the chronology of Field F103 is raised by the presence of substantial quantities of Mahesh Ware. This ware was defined by Whitcomb (1989b) based on his excavations at Ayla/Al-‘Aqaba named after an Aramaic inscription, found on a jug of the ware referring to a demon named Māḥish, and dated to the early ‘Abbāsid period, or the late 8th–early 9th century AD. It is a cream-surface ware—although some vessels are fired more toward greenish-cream, yellowish-cream, orange-cream, or tan—in the tradition of earlier Ayla Wares, with aplastic inclusions usually including quartz, feldspar, and biotite mica, often calcareous inclusions, and occasionally vegetal voids. The range of typical forms includes basins, bowls, cups, jugs, and jars, often with bands of wavy, or less commonly straight, comb incising. The range of vessels present in F103 includes essentially all these types (FIG. 9).

This ware has become one of the key indicators of early ‘Abbāsid-period occupation in the region surrounding Al-‘Aqaba, particularly in southern Wādī ‘Araba. While often considered a local variant of Islamic Cream Ware

(ICW) (see, *e.g.*, Walmsley 2001b: 311, Table 3), Damgaard and Jennings (2013: 484) note that it is also a development of earlier traditions, arguing that Mahesh Ware represents an “emulation” of ICW forms in Ayla Ware, although it might be more appropriate to speak of an integration of these (and other Early Islamic-period) forms into the Ayla Ware tradition. This raises questions about the chronology of the transition between the 5th–8th century Ayla Ware tradition and the mid-8th–9th century Mahesh Ware tradition. As Whitcomb (1992: 386) has argued, political changes do not necessarily correspond exactly to observable shifts in settlement patterns or ceramic types, and, as such, it should not be assumed that a ceramic marker of the early ‘Abbāsīd period emerged in exactly AD 750. In Al Humaymah Field F103, however, a key chronological question concerns exactly this political transition, which also corresponds to the end of the ‘Abbasid family’s occupation of the *qasr*. If Mahesh Ware appears only after AD 750, it would serve as an indicator of settlement after the ‘Abbasid family left the site.

With this in mind, it is worth briefly revisiting the evidence for this dating. At Ayla, Whitcomb (1989b: 270–273; 1991: 48) argued that Mahesh Ware first appears in levels associated with the construction of floors as repairs after the earthquake of AD 748—the same levels in which glazed wares first appear—which would make a compelling case for an appearance at essentially AD 750. A critical example is the Pavilion Building in the center of the town, where Mahesh Ware and glazed wares first appear in a remodeling phase that Whitcomb (2009: 125) associates with repairs to damage from the AD 748 earthquake. More recently, however, Damgaard (2013: 77–81) has revisited the stratigra-

phy of this building and argued that this remodeling phase, which he calls Phase 2, should be dated to the late 9th century on the basis of glazed pottery and that the construction phase below, Phase 1, can be dated to the late 8th century by the quantities of ICW present in these *loci*. While the late 9th century is too late a date for the introduction of Mahesh Ware, this does highlight several difficulties in its dating. While a *ca.* AD 748 earthquake destruction has been identified across the site of Ayla (Al Tarazi and Korjenkov 2007), including in the Ayla Archaeological Project excavations, where the rebuilding phase is also associated with the appearance of Mahesh Ware (Damgaard and Jennings 2013: 483–484), if the redating of the Pavilion Building is accepted, this points to some unevenness in the appearance of the ware. This also raises a question of definition. If Mahesh Ware is defined specifically by its wavy comb-incised decoration, essentially as a local variant of Walmsley’s (2001b: 308) ICW-A2, following, for example, Meyer (2017: 399), some non-incised Early Islamic forms produced in Ayla fabrics, for example, the typical Early Islamic cup/bowl (FIG. 9.4), may instead be a local equivalent of ICW-A1 and appear already in the early 8th century. Likewise, as Damgaard and Jennings (2013: 484) note, “wavy-line decorations” appear already in the early 8th century on ceramics produced in Ayla, and some of these are similar to decorated vessels Whitcomb includes in the Mahesh tradition (compare, *e.g.*, Damgaard 2013: 91, fig. 4, center left; Whitcomb 1989b: 280, fig. 3.c, e). While the distinctive comb-incised Mahesh Ware is most common in the late 8th and 9th centuries, if Mahesh Ware is instead defined by the incorporation of typical Early Islamic forms into the Ayla Ware tradition, this is a process that seems

already to have begun in the early 8th century. Considering the ubiquity of this ware in Field F103, the assemblage has the potential to shed light on this problem, but more analysis of the stratigraphy will be required. At this point, it is possible only to say that Early Islamic-period Ayla cream-surface wares, including Mahesh Ware, are among the most common ceramics in the Field F103 assemblage.

Late 8th–10th-Century AD (Late Early Islamic I–Early Islamic II) Ceramics

As discussed above, Mahesh Ware and related cream surface wares are among the most common ceramics found in Field F103, and while some of them likely date to the period of the 'Abbāsid family's residence at the site, many of them, particularly the examples with wavy comb-incising, likely date to the late 8th–9th century. Likewise, some of the unglazed finewares discussed above, notably FBW 1E and 2B, could date to this period and might indicate continued importation of these northern forms. Completion of the stratigraphic analysis of Field F103 will allow for more precise discussion of the wares that span the entire 8th century.

The majority of the glazed wares found in F103 can be more solidly attributed to this period. The first of these are monochrome lead-glazed wares (FIG. 10.1), the fabric and forms of which are very similar to the late 8th century Coptic Glazed Wares found at Ayla/Al-'Aqaba (Whitcomb 1989a; 1991: 48, 53), although none of the sherds from F103 have the painted decoration common on this ware. These glazed vessels are common in the Levant in the late 8th–11th century (Taxel 2014: 124–126), but the fabric of the majority of the sherds from F103 does seem to indicate an earlier date in that range. The second glazed ware

typical of this period is turquoise alkaline-glazed ware. This ware generally has a thick, turquoise glaze applied to a cream-colored body and was produced primarily in southern Iraq, particularly the Baṣra region, although some examples are attributed to sites in the region surrounding Baghdād to the north, e.g., Sāmarrā' (Mason 2004: 24). A variety of forms are known, but the most common is a jar (*hib*) with incised and relief decoration (FIG. 11). The ware is common at sites along the Persian Gulf and Red Sea (Kennet 2004: 35–37), but it is very uncommon in the southern Levant. While it has been found at more than a dozen sites in Early Islamic Palestine (Taxel 2014: 121–123, table 1), in Jordan it has been found only at Ayla (Whitcomb 1988: 212–213, fig. 3), Umm Al Walīd near Mādabā (Bujard and Joguīn 2001: 142, 147, fig. 5.29–30), and Qaṣr Al Ḥallābāt (Walmsley 2016: 240). In Iraq, production of this ware began in the Sasanian period, but in the southern Levant it is generally found in late 8th–11th-century contexts (Taxel 2014: 124). Mason (2004: 24) has argued that in Iraq and Iran these vessels are not found in post-9th-century contexts, but at Ayla they do not seem to appear until the 10th century (Whitcomb 1991: 53). This would seem to provide a reasonable date for the examples found in Field F103, but it should be noted that the examples from Qaṣr Al Ḥallābāt were found “in an Umayyad context” (Walmsley 2016: 240). Qaṣr Al Ḥallābāt and Al Ḥumaymah were, of course, differently connected to trade networks during the Early Islamic period, but given the rarity of this ware, it is quite possible the examples found at Al Ḥumaymah are earlier than those found at Ayla. In Field F103, this type is commonly found in association with sherds of Mahesh Ware, but as discussed above,

this would allow for a dating anywhere in the range of this type's occurrence in the southern Levant. Nonetheless, the presence of this type at the site does seem to indicate a continuing connection to the Indian Ocean trade through Ayla after the departure of the 'Abbasid family.

Lamps were, as with previous periods, uncommon but included several examples of tongue-handled slipper lamps (FIG. 7.4), or the "Abbasid Standard" lamp (see da Costa 2012: 258). This lamp has generally been dated to the late 8th–11th century AD, becoming most common in the 9th–10th century (see, e.g., da Costa 2012: 258; Magness 1993: 258). Based on excavations of Building 600 at Tall Jāwā in southern 'Ammān, however, Daviau (2010; Daviau and Beckmann 2001; see also Beckmann and Daviau 2010) has argued that these lamps appear already in the early 8th century, or the late Umayyad period. Cytryn-Silverman (2013) has rejected this redating, arguing that the latest material in Tall Jāwā Building 600 is consistent with a late 8th-century date, but da Costa (2012: 260) has also identified several examples of this type, including two complete lamps, in Phase IVc, dating to the Umayyad period, at Dayr 'Ayn 'Abātāh in Ghawr Aṣ Ṣāfi. Regardless of whether the 'Abbasid Standard lamp appears already in the late Umayyad period, it certainly does not become common until the late 8th century AD, and the examples from Field F103 are likely of this date.

10th–11th-Century (Late Early Islamic II–Middle Islamic I) Ceramics

Among the most intriguing ceramics found in Field F103 are a group of hand-made vessels (FIG. 12) associated with a later remodeling phase of the *qasr*. Although many of these ves-

sels are painted, they are distinct from the Hand-Made Geometrically Painted Wares (HMGPW) typical of Middle and Late Islamic-period assemblages in Jordan (see Johns 1998, among many others). Instead, these bear an array of circle, dot, and net patterns (and, very rarely, Arabic inscriptions or pseudo-inscriptions) executed, generally fairly loosely, in red or red-brown paint. These were originally dated to the early Ottoman period (Foote 2007: 460), based on characterizations of early Ottoman HMGPW as "defined by surface decoration of less complicated geometric designs ... executed in a broader line and in a reduced palette" (Walker 2009: 44), but further analysis indicates that these hand-made wares are, in fact, early.

In her excavations at Al Wu'ayra, near Petra, Brown (1987: 279, 284) identified a group of "linear red-painted" ceramics with designs consisting of dots, lines, and geometric patterns in Phase IA, dating to the early 12th century AD, preceding the appearance of HMGPW, and a similar ware was identified in the excavations at KHirbat Fāris on the Al Karak Plateau (McQuitty and Falkner 1993: 54). Around the same time, Whitcomb (1988: 212) identified an early hand-made ware, which he called "Tupperware", in an 11th-century assemblage at Ayla, some examples of which bore similar red-painted designs. Since then, the dating of the emergence of hand-made ware in southern Jordan has been pushed back even further. At KHirbat Al Mu'allāq, south of Petra, a calibrated radiocarbon date of AD 785–1015¹ was published from Stratum III, the ceramic assemblage of which was primarily characterized as an early, unpainted hand-made ware (Lindner, Knauf, and

¹ Unfortunately, only the calibrated radiocarbon date was published, as it would be informative to recalibrate the date to a more recent calibration curve.

Zeitler 1996: 125–126). More recently, Sinibaldi (2016: 203–207) has argued that hand-made wares appear already in the 10th century AD at Jabal Hārūn near Petra, and Oleson, 'Amr, and Holmqvist-Saukonnen (2013: 14) have suggested that hand-made wares may appear at Al Ḥumaymah as early the late 'Abbāsīd period, or the late 9th–early 10th century AD. In his study of the hand-made ceramics from KHirbat Adh DHārīh, south of Wādī Al Ḥasā, Makowski (2020: 255–262), while acknowledging the regionalism that characterizes ceramics of this period, argues that the early hand-made wares of southern Jordan share several characteristics, notably their smaller size compared to later hand-made wares. While Makowski (2020: 116) has already noted the similarity of some ceramic objects, notably lamps, found in Al Ḥumaymah Field F102 to those found at KHirbat Adh DHārīh, it is worth noting here the surprising similarity of these assemblages given their distance from one another; several bowl forms from KHirbat Adh DHārīh (e.g., Makowski 2020: 289, Pl. 4a–b, 293, Pl. 6.g) have very close parallels in the ceramics discussed here (FIG. 12.2–3).

In addition to their small size, formal parallels to Early Islamic wares in the early hand-made assemblage also indicate an emergence in the late 9th–early 10th century. Whitcomb (1995: 494) has noted the similarity of some forms to imported 9th-century schist vessels, and to this can be added the clear influence of late 9th–early 10th-century ICW-B forms (e.g., Walmsley 2001b: 313, fig. 2.8) on a painted hand-made vessel from Ayla (Whitcomb 1988: 216, Fig. 5.e). The first are interpretations of the cup/small bowl forms (FIG. 12.1, 3) typical of several Early Islamic wares, paralleled in (currently unpublished) Early Islamic-

period contexts at KHirbat Faynān (for a brief summary, see Jones *et al.* 2022: 658). In addition to the form, the painted dot decorations also have parallels in painted FBW 1E vessels (e.g., Taxel 2009: 141, fig. 3.28.4). One vessel (FIG. 12.2) has a rim that seems broadly inspired by Late Roman red slip ware forms, e.g., PRS Form 3 or Egyptian Red Slip A Form J (see Hayes 1972). It is worth noting, as well, that both of these forms also appear in Ayla cream-surface ware/Mahesh Ware (e.g., Jones *et al.* 2017: 304, fig. 9). This may indicate, as implied by Damgaard (2013: 73), a shift from wheel-made to hand-made ceramic production in Ayla during the Fatimid period, perhaps beginning already in the late 'Abbāsīd period.

Post-11th-Century AD Ceramics

Very few sherds certainly postdating the 11th century were found in Field F103. A glazed base found in Locus 0 of Square 96 (FIG. 10.2) was identified in the locus summary sheet as an Ayyubid-period luster-painted Syrian stonepaste bowl, but unfortunately it could not be located for reanalysis. The illustrated base form is consistent with late 12th–early 13th-century Syrian stonepaste vessels, but similar bases are also found on 11th-century Egyptian luster-painted bowls (see Mason 2004: 83–85, 115–117). A luster-painted bowl is a remarkable find regardless of dating, but the earlier dating would be more consistent with the identified pottery from Field F103. It is hoped that the sherd will be located as part of the ongoing reanalysis of this material. A single sherd might be identifiable as belonging to a late Ottoman-period Gaza Gray Ware jar (FIG. 10.3), but the two applied bands below the rim are atypical compared to other examples (see, e.g., Salem 2009: 121, Fig. 4.2, 125, Fig. 4.4.1) and

the latest securely identified material in the context (Sq. 100, L. 6) is Ayla cream-surface/Mahesh Ware, which would otherwise indicate an Early Islamic-period date. Perhaps more notable, however, are the absences. None of the painted hand-made sherds were identified as “classic” HMGPW, and the form and fabric of the unpainted hand-made sherds places the majority in the “early” assemblage, as well. Diagnostic glazed and unglazed wheel-made sherds of the Middle Islamic II are, likewise, absent. Indicators of the Late Islamic II (17th–20th century AD), such as *chibouk* heads and Gaza Gray Ware, are likewise, with the tentative exception noted above, absent. On the whole, settlement after the 11th or perhaps 12th century seems to have been quite limited.

Discussion

While still quite tentative, the analysis presented above allows for several conclusions to be drawn about the settlement history of Field F103. The 1st–2nd century AD is well represented in Field F103, particularly in the pottery dump in Square 3A (20). This should be understood as part of the probably tent-based early settlement of this part of the site, also seen nearby in Field F102. Some pottery of the 3rd–5th century AD, a period during which Field F102 was used primarily for burials, was found in Field F103, but the increasing presence of imports dating to the Late Byzantine period may indicate use related to the Byzantine church in Field F102, although some of the imports in F103 do seem to predate the construction of the church in the late 6th or early 7th century (‘Amr and Oleson 2013: 96). It is interesting that the use of the church in Field F102 overlaps with the ‘Abbasid family’s occupation of the *qasr* in Field F103, speaking to a population at al-Ḥumayma

that, unsurprisingly, continued to be primarily Christian, while prayer in the small mosque in Field F103 was probably limited to the ‘Abbasids, as suggested by Schick (2007: 353). The continuity of 6th–early 8th-century ceramic types in the region poses some difficulties for separating pottery potentially associated with use of the church from the pottery associated with the ‘Abbasid family *qasr* itself, a problem that will hopefully be remedied by further work on the site’s stratigraphy.

Certainly, however, many of the 7th–early 8th century types are associated with the occupation of the ‘Abbasid family, particularly some of the notable imports. While fine tablewares were imported from the north, particularly from Jerusalem, it is interesting to note that most of the imported Egyptian vessels attributed to this period are amphorae. There is no widespread agreement on what Red-Brown Ovoid Amphorae contained, and suggested possibilities include wine, date molasses, grain, fish sauce, and natron, while LRA 7 were primarily used to transport wine (Taxel and Fantalkin 2011: 81–82; Vogt *et al.* 2002). Regardless of the goods these amphorae contained, they reflect the wealth of the residents of Field F103, although it must be noted that the LRA 7 could be associated with 7th-century use of the church in Field F102, as well. Torpedo jars were also likely used to transport liquids such as wine or oil (Tomber, Spataro, and Priestman 2022: 241) and, like the Egyptian amphorae, reflect an ability to purchase imported goods. Given the rarity of these amphorae in the southern Levant—Al Ḥumaymah may, in fact, currently be the only southern Levantine site where a torpedo jar of this type has been found—it is also tempting to interpret its presence in Field F103 as a reflection

of “the historically reported close affiliation between the popular power base for the Abbasids in Khurasan (northeastern Iran) and al-Humayma, which had become their revolutionary headquarters after the 730s CE”, as Foote (2007: 463) interprets the ivories found in Room 02. On the whole, although this is perhaps the most historically interesting period in the history of Field F103, it is not the best represented in the ceramic assemblage, and the picture one gets from the ceramics, as Schick (2007: 354) argues for the *qasr* as a whole, is of the presence of a relatively wealthy family, although without the historical evidence it is unlikely one would guess a family as important as the 'Abbasids were to become.

As noted previously, the large quantity of Mahesh Ware found in Field F103 raises the possibility that this ware emerged before AD 750, even if it is primarily characteristic of the late 8th–9th century. As with the preceding periods, the issue here is one of continuity of ceramic types across historically documented transitions, in this case the 'Abbasid family's late 7th/early 8th-century purchase of Al Ḥumaymah and their mid-8th-century departure from the site. It is unlikely that this issue can be completely resolved—as Adams (1979) argued decades ago, the connections between ceramic and political changes are rarely straightforward—but the ongoing analysis of Field F103's stratigraphy will help clarify this issue, although it must be noted that the beginning of the 'Abbasid family's occupation, corresponding to the construction of the *qasr*, will almost certainly be more stratigraphically evident than their departure.

Nonetheless, the amount of Mahesh Ware certainly indicates continued occupation of Field F103 into the late

8th and 9th centuries. The appearance in the assemblage of glazed wares of this period, probably including alkaline-glazed transport containers from southern Iraq, presents a picture of continued prosperity at the site, paralleling the increase in trade evident at Ayla during the 'Abbasid period (Whitcomb 2009: 123). It seems reasonable to conclude from the ceramic assemblage that the *qasr* in Field F103, despite the lack of information from historical sources (Schick 2007: 353), remained the center of a relatively wealthy estate during the 'Abbasid period.

The association of “early” hand-made pottery with the remodeling phase of the *qasr* places this activity in the 10th–11th century. This has, with good reason, long been considered one of the least-known periods in the archaeology of southern Jordan (Schick 1997: 81–82), but as Walmsley (2001a: 554) has argued, historical sources present a picture of a thriving economy and shifts in regional centers of power associated with the rising political power of local tribes, notably the Jarrahids, whose conflicts with the Fatimids often affected Ayla, most directly when they raided the town in 1024 (Schick 1997: 76–77). This can perhaps be seen in the remodeling of the Pavilion Building at Ayla and the appearance of “Tupperware” (Damgaard 2013; Whitcomb 1988) but is more archaeologically evident at sites to the north, for example, Gharandal and Ruwāth near Aṭ Ṭafilah (Walmsley and Grey 2001; Walmsley and Barnes 2002), KHirbat Adh DHārīḥ (Makowski 2020), and various sites in the Petra region, including KHirbat Al Mu'allāq (Lindner, Knauf, and Zeitler 1996). The 10th–11th-century remodeling likely relates to these shifts, and it is possible that Al Ḥumaymah briefly became a political center during this period,

particularly if the luster-painted sherd tentatively dated to the late 12th–early 13th century is instead dated to the 11th century, a possibility discussed above.

To judge from the pottery, the 11th century was the last major period of occupation in Field F103, and the period following this is represented by, at most, a small handful of sherds. This is perhaps not surprising and confirms the picture presented by Schick (2007: 354) of a continuing but much-reduced settlement at Al Humaymah as the site's importance faded. Little can be said about this period based on the ceramic assemblage, particularly because none of the sherds discussed here can be firmly dated as post-11th century.

Conclusion

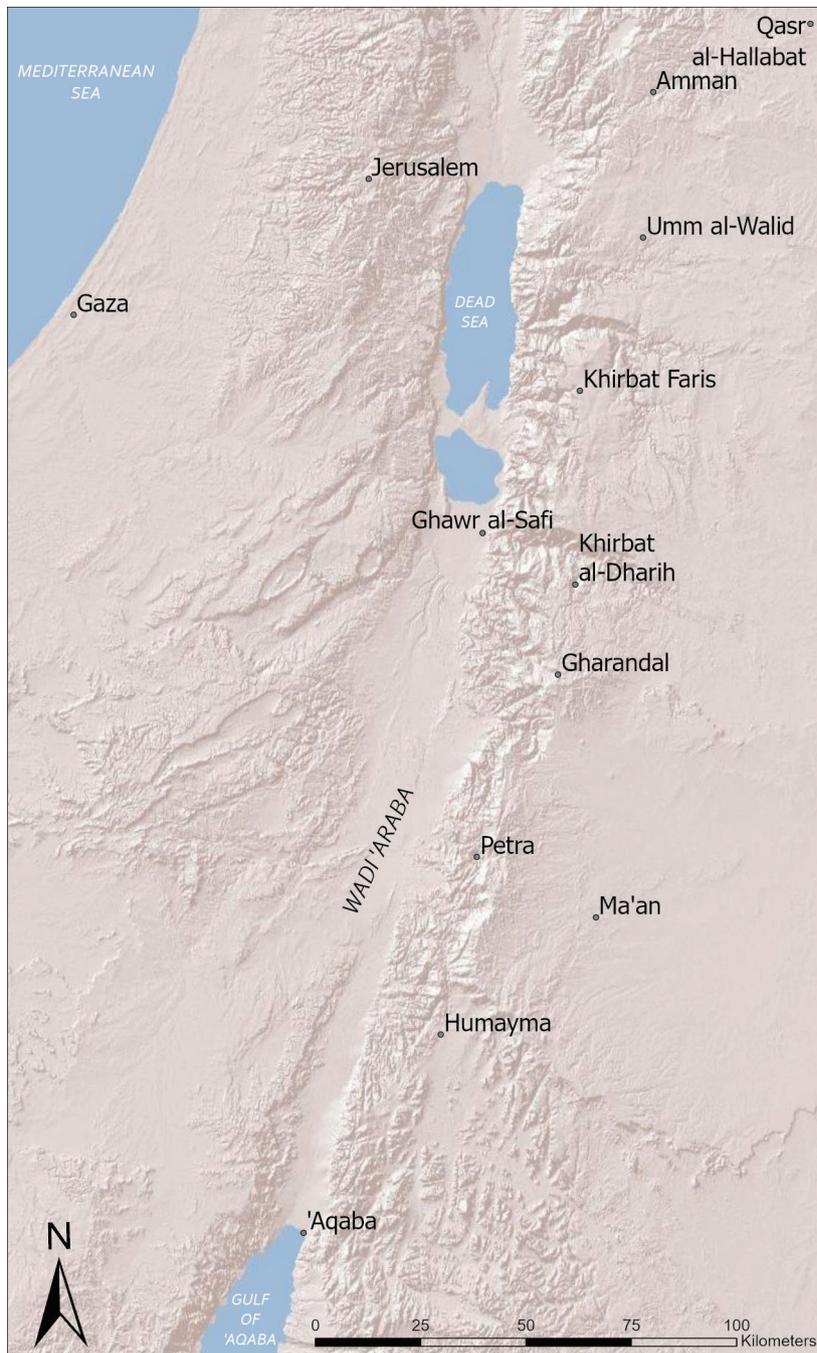
The analysis presented above represents the first stage of an ongoing project to bring the 1992–2002 excavations of Al Humaymah Field F103 to publication. Although the conclusions based on the pottery analysis are, particularly in the absence of a complete stratigraphic picture of the excavations, tentative, they do allow for the reconstruction of a picture of settlement in this part of the site before and after the construction of the *qasr* and mosque complex. While, from a historical perspective, the brief period of the 'Abbasid family's occupation of Field F103 in the early 8th century is most interesting, the ceramics present a much fuller picture of the structure's history. The fact that the *qasr* likely continued to be the center of a fairly wealthy estate into the late 8th and 9th centuries, after the departure of the 'Abbasids, is notable, and from the

perspective of the research questions currently being posed by archaeologists of the Islamic period in southern Jordan, perhaps the most tantalizing aspect of the assemblage is the 10th–11th-century hand-made painted pottery. Continued research into this aspect of Field 103 has the potential to contribute substantially to ongoing discussions of social and political changes in southern Jordan during this period, processes in which Al Humaymah certainly seems to have played some role.

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THE 'ABBASID FAMILY ESTATE AT AL ḤUMAYMA



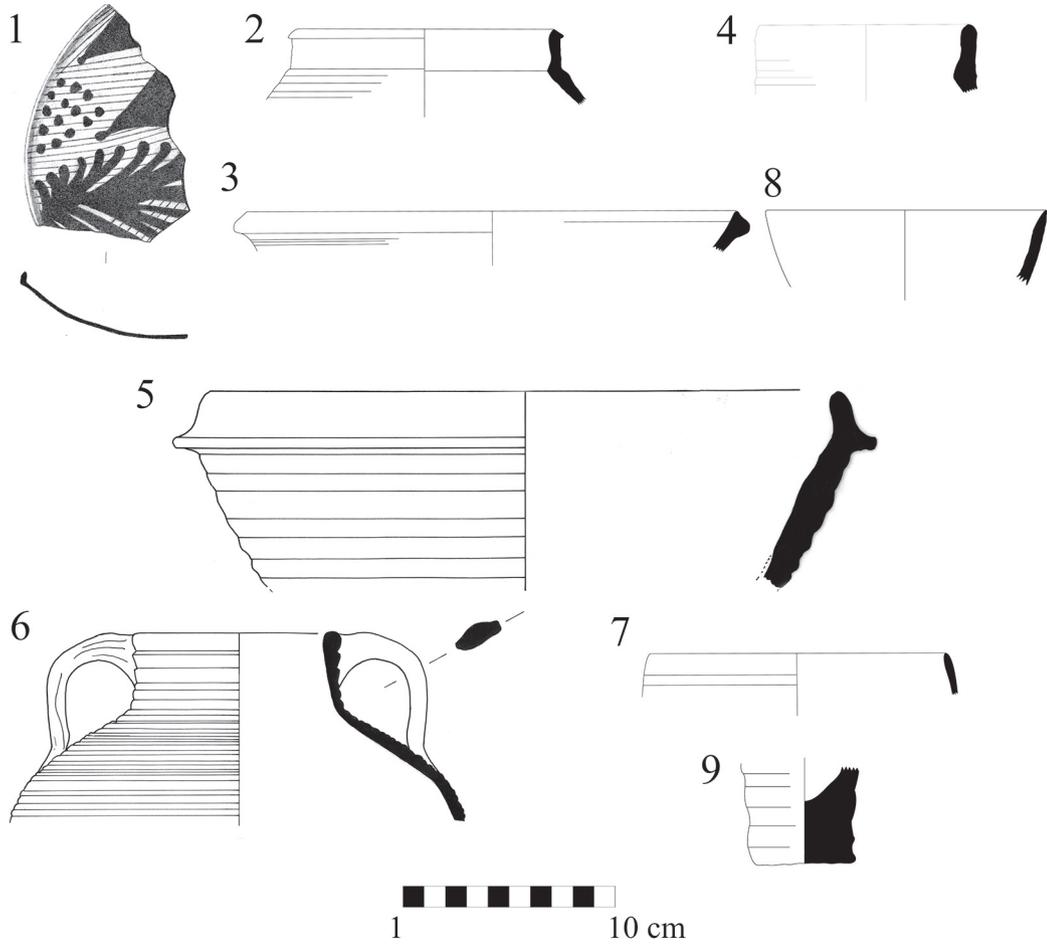
1. Map of selected sites discussed in the text (basemap © Esri).



2. Al Humaymah Field F103 (ʿAbbāsīd family *qasr* and mosque complex) photographed during excavations (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



3. Ceramic fragment 2002.0300.7, an early 2nd-century AD jar, found in Sq. 3A (20) (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



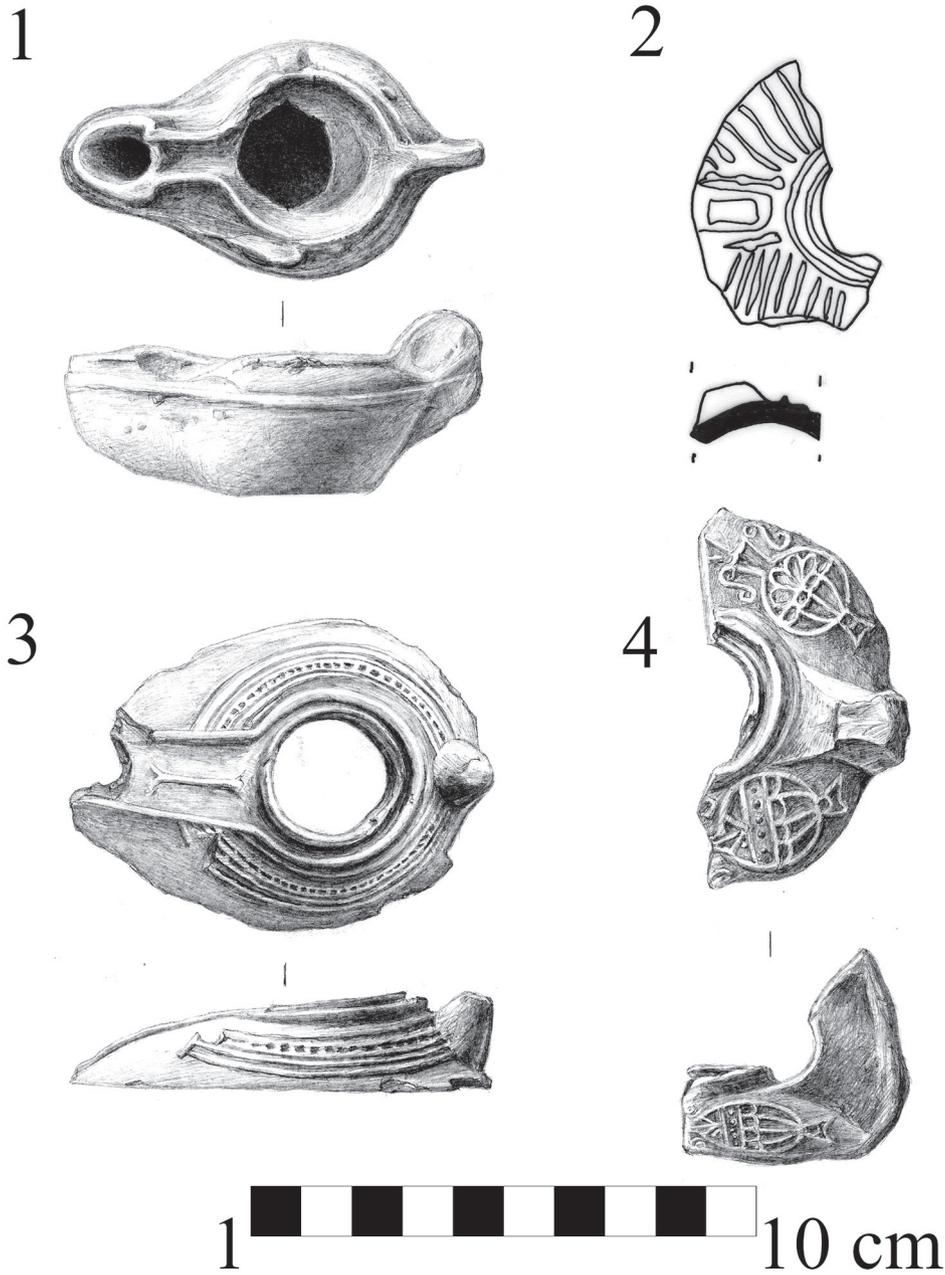
4. First–second-century AD (1–2), 5th–6th century AD (3), and 6th–8th century AD (4–9) ceramics from Field F103 (drawings courtesy of the Humayma Excavation Project).



5. Rim of a Nabataean-style painted bowl in Ayla fabric (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



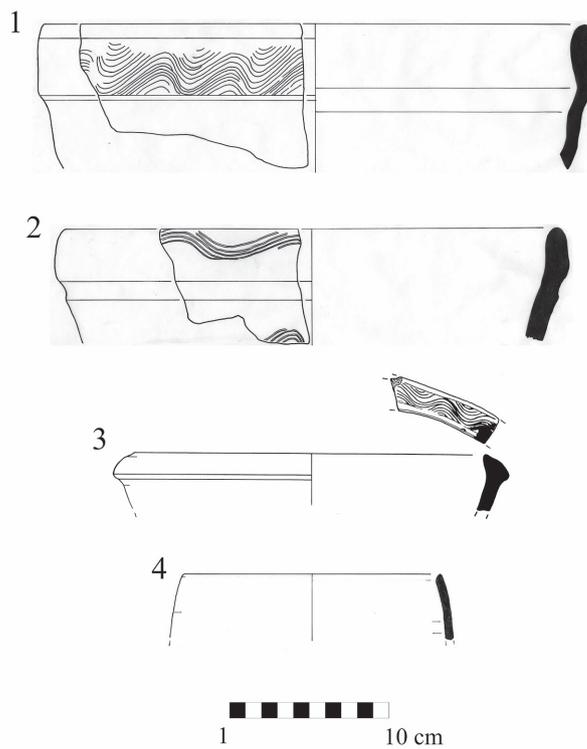
6. Incised Nabataean cream-ware rim in Ayla fabric from Sq. 3A (20) (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



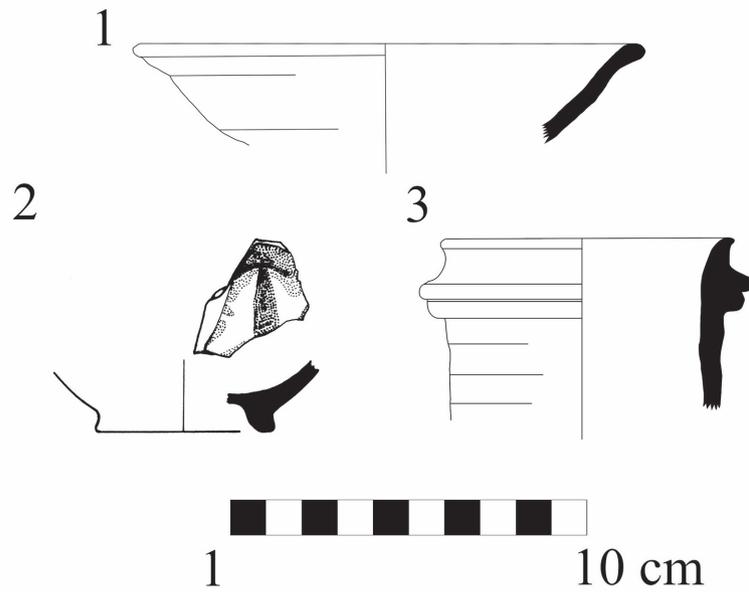
7. First-second-century AD (1), 4th-8th century AD (2), 7th-early 8th century AD (3), and late 8th-10th century AD lamps from Field F103 (illustrations courtesy of the Humayma Excavation Project).



8. Body sherd of early 8th-century AD Red-Painted Ware from Room 02 (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



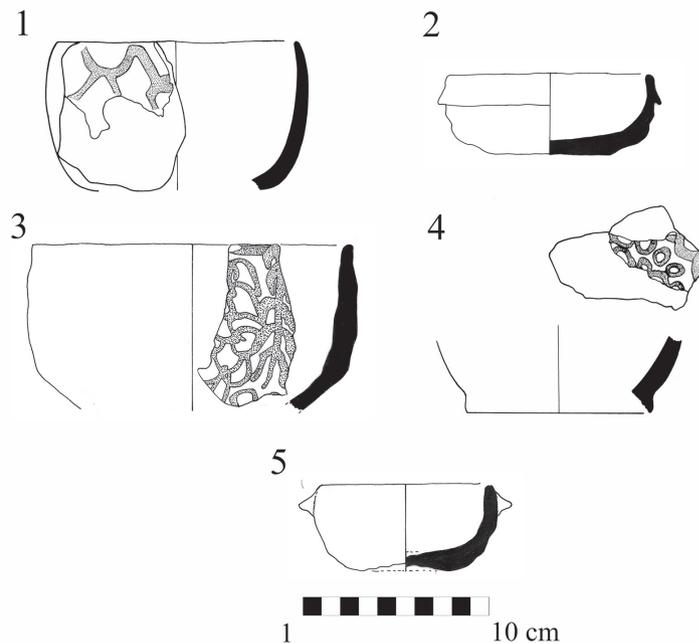
9. Late 8th-9th-century AD Mahesh Ware basins (1-2) and bowls (3-4) from Field F103 (illustrations courtesy of the Humayma Excavation Project).



10. Late 8th–9th-century AD monochrome lead-glazed bowl (1), 11th–13th-century AD luster-painted base (2), and gray-ware jar rim, possibly late Ottoman-period Gaza Gray Ware (3) (drawings by the Humayma Excavation Project).



11. Selection of alkaline-glazed jar sherds imported from southern Iraq found in Field F103 (photo by I.W.N. Jones).



12. Tenth–eleventh-century AD hand-made bowl (1–4) and miniature pot (5) forms from the remodeling phase in Field F103 (drawings by the Humayma Excavation Project).

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