

A FATIMID RESIDENCE AT AQABA, JORDAN

by
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Introduction

The 1986 and 1987 seasons of excavations in Aqaba uncovered a central structure called the Pavilion Building, as reported in *ADAJ* 31 (1987).¹ While the outline of this building was discovered in 1986, most of that season was devoted to the exterior yards and street. Hypotheses on the city plan, determined between these seasons, suggested the centrality of this building and its likely importance. Thus, one of the goals of the 1987 season was the complete excavation of this structure, at least in its latest phase.

The building lies within four 10 x 10m squares (G10b, G10d, G11a, G11c; see Fig. 1). North of the building was an open area, the junction of the two axial streets of the town. Southwest was a mass of burnt mud brick, both fallen debris and walls, which was not investigated. On the southeast were the yards investigated in 1986 (A1b and A2d) and a deep probe against the exterior of the building (H11a, see below). The results of this important probe and other exterior areas will be reserved for other reports; the present study will concentrate exclusively on the excavation of the Pavilion building itself.

The structure is composed of walls, 70-90cm wide, made of sandstone and granite with mud (and occasionally plaster) mortar. Fallen brick detritus, particularly a section of wall in G10b-13, indicates upper courses made of mud brick.² Most rooms had 1.0-1.5m of debris above the latest

floor; excavation to a significant depth beneath this floor took place only in room 2 (see below). Already in 1986 the basic pattern of room deposition was discovered in the eastern corner of the building, "dark brown ashy deposits containing a number of Samarran artifacts (blue-green storage jar and lustre wares) under brick detritus." It should be noted that the surface was featureless sand before excavation; this obscured cement foundations of modern structures in G10b-9, G10d-3 and 4. Contamination with modern artifacts was not otherwise a problem in this area.

Architecture and Stratigraphy

Room 1 was an *iwan*, a deep covered porch, opening to the northeast. The boundary with the central courtyard is marked by a row of flat stones, perhaps originally a step, with a large flagstone in the center. The *iwan*, from which two opposing doors opened into flanking rooms 2 and 6, was probably the focus for this floor of the building. About 50cm of brick detritus (G10d-9) lay above sandy soil with ash pockets (G10d-10; 45cm deep) containing numerous artifacts, including pieces of grinding stones. The relatively clean layer of sandy brown soil (G10d-22; 22cm) was taken to be the dirt floor of the *iwan*.

Room 2, entered only from the *iwan*, forms the western corner of the building and, at 4.2m square, is the largest room. Depositions in this room were brick detri-

1. This area was excavated by Robin Brown and 'Isam el-Hadi, with assistance from Rosa Frey. The Aqaba excavations are sponsored by the University of Chicago with funding by the Oriental Institute, the National Geographic Society and USAID. The author would like to express his gratitude for the assistance of Dr. 'Adnan Hadi-di, Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, and Mr. Suleiman Farajat of the Department of Antiquities, Dr. Dureid Maḥasneh, Mr. Muḥammad Balqar, and en-

gineer Muḥammad 'Azab of the Aqaba Region Authority. Finally we would thank Dr. David McCreery and the staff at ACOR.

2. Some of the brick detritus might belong to roof vaulting, though there is no certain evidence. An estimated height from the G10b-13 fall is 4.5m to the latest floor; another 3.5-4m may be suggested to the original floor, based on the probes in H11a-17 and G11a-28.

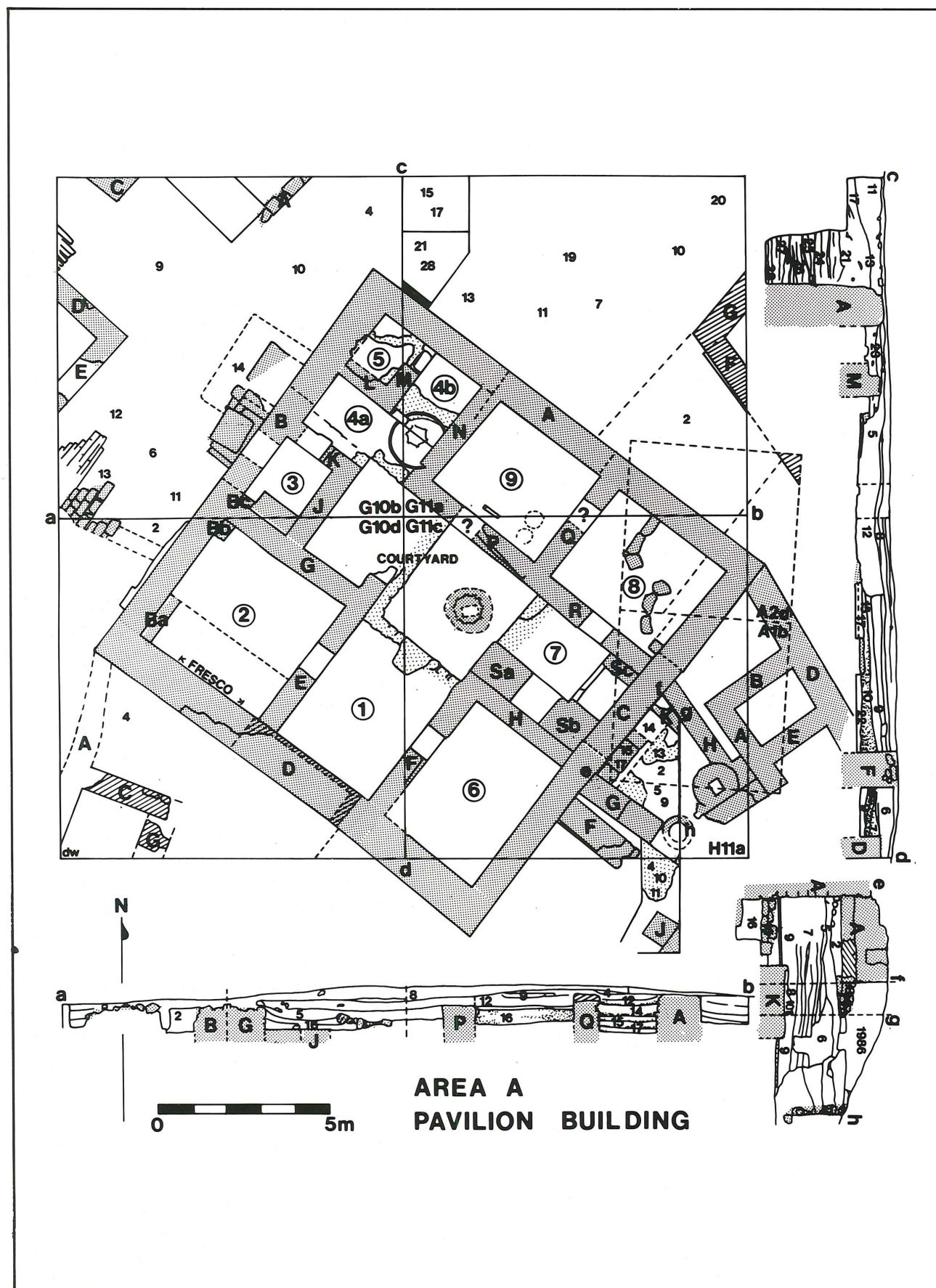


Fig. 1. Plan of Area A, The Pavilion Building.

tus, G10d-6 (34cm), G10d-7 (20cm), and G10d-8 (20cm). "This layer... contained a spectacular number of artifacts and an outrageous amount of pottery. It is also marked by intense conflagration, which is reflected in ashy deposits and orange burnt soil throughout the locus."³ Scattered fragments of a steatite lamp with 18 spouts and incised decoration were found on this floor (Fig. 2b). The brickly debris and ash rested on fine brown sand (G10d-11; 56 cm), which continued down in the narrow trench beside the fresco as G10d-13 and 14 (56cm).

The fresco was found on the southwest wall (Fig. 2), painted on white plaster, which was in turn applied to the stones and mud mortar of the wall. The primary colors used were red and black, with some suggestion of yellow.⁴ The upper portion of the wall had small patches of floral motifs; similar decorated fragments had fallen into the soil below the floor, G10d-14 (Fig. 2a). Some damaged areas had been repaired with plain plaster. Most of the preserved area was a diaper pattern with circles in red, a broad red band, and black diagonal lines and a pattern of lines and dots, also in black. A somewhat similar fresco, though with different designs, has been found at Rabadhah in Saudi Arabia from about the same date (Al-Rashid 1986, Pl. 44, 222). The surface of the fresco was marred with graffiti, carved with a blunt tool; these were all Arabic in Kufic script.

Room 3 was a small chamber which may be reconstructed as a vestibule with a *mas̄taba* or bench against the southwest wall. No indication of the exterior door was preserved and its location is assumed from the stone stairway. The stairway seems to be a double set of three steps

adjacent to the exterior wall; the central landing is formed by a large limestone block, now shifted slightly out of place. The presumed door opening onto the courtyard, marked by a jamb stone in wall K, provides for a "bent-axis" approach and does not permit a direct line of view into the courtyard from the street. Beneath surface layers (G10b-5; 52cm) and brick detritus (G10d-5; 64cm, which also covered room 4a) was soft brown soil (G10d-16; 50cm) containing small fragments of painted plaster. Thus the vestibule might also have had frescoed wall decoration.

Rooms 4a, 4b form an "L"-shaped area off the courtyard. Room 4a appears to have been a short corridor opening onto the courtyard; on the other hand, 4b seems to have been an anteroom leading to the bath (room 5). The entire area may have been roofed. A fragment of plaster flooring was preserved here. Beneath this and almost in the juncture of areas 4a and 4b was a cess pit with a wide plaster lip. Area 4a had soft brown soil with some ash (G10d-18; 16cm) above more ash and orange-brown burned soil, (G10d-20; 38cm). Area 4b was excavated as a pit of soft sand with a few ash lenses (G11a-5; 55cm) and was arbitrarily stopped at the level of the floor.

Room 5 is a small room in the north corner of the building, provisionally identified as the bath. The door in Wall M disallows a direct view from the yard. While this area had an ash pit on the surface (G11a-3), the soil within the room was soft clean sand (G10d-23; 61cm). This deposition, as well as considerable erosion of walls and the plaster floor suggests slumping and cavity formation, probably the result of less than perfectly maintained plumbing.

3. Robin Brown, "Final summary of the area A," p. 7, an example of the acute observation and interesting prose of this report.

4. The red pigment oxidized to black upon exposure to air; further deterioration could not be halted. The entire wall was drawn at full scale by Carol Meyer, whose regular position as an artist for the

Epigraphic Survey involves recording Luxor Temple in Egypt. A large, representative sample of the fresco was removed and consolidated to almost original condition by the conservator, Cathy Valentour. Though more fresco is preserved lower on this and other walls, no further clearance will be attempted until effective preservation techniques have been determined.

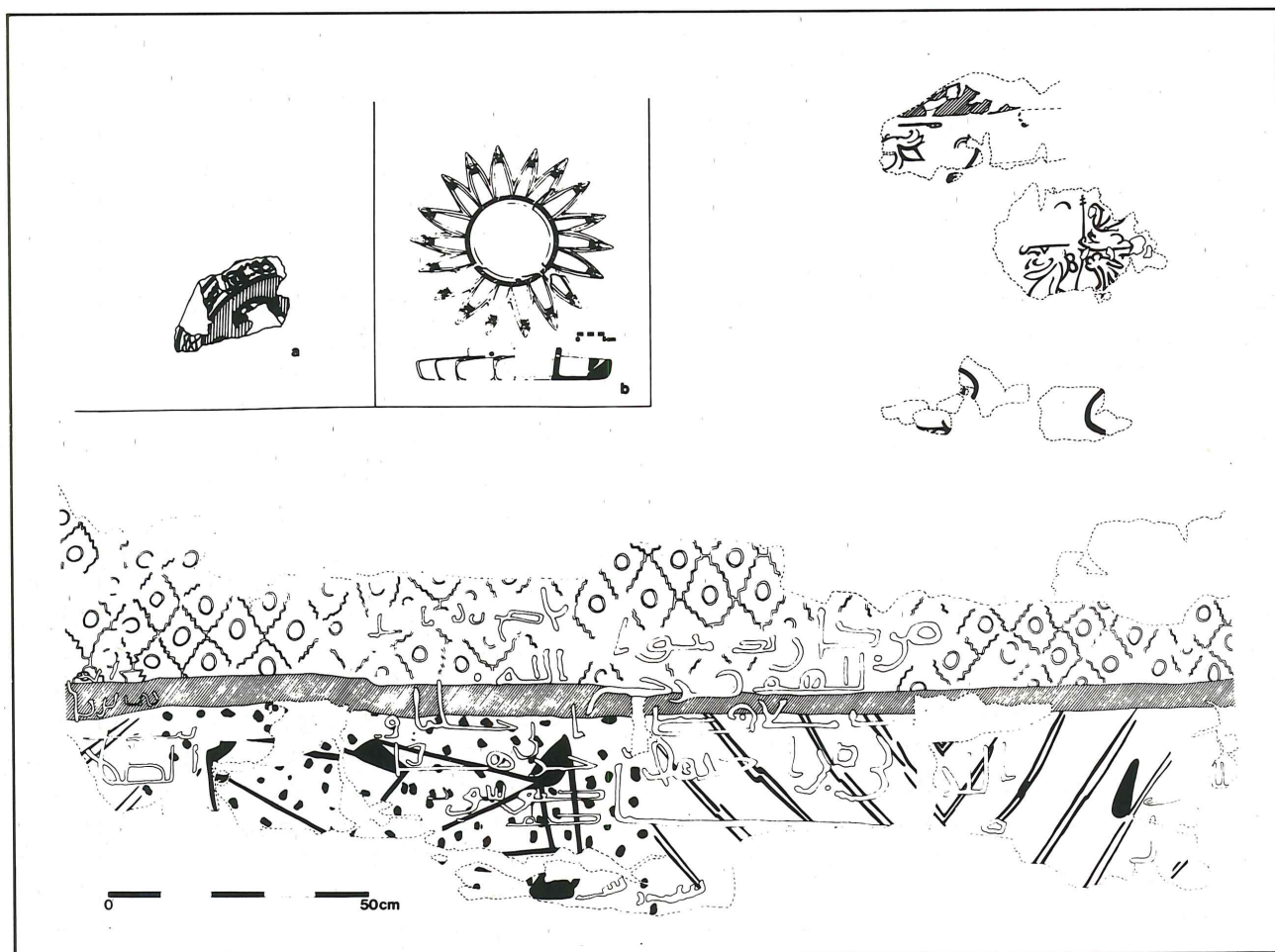


Fig. 2. Drawing of the Fresco, with Insets: a. Fragment from G10d-14, and b. Steatite Lamp.

Room 6 forms the south corner of the building, being symmetrical with room 2 on the opposite side of the *iwan*, though not quite as large. Within this room sand with ash layers (G11c-7; 16cm) was followed by sandy brown soil (G11c-9; 22cm); the latter produced a billion dirham of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim (996-1020 A.D.) Though one coin is hardly sufficient evidence, the date of this artifact coincides with that of the ceramics (see below) for a post-*quem* date of the early 11th century (the late Fatimid period) for destruction of the building.⁵

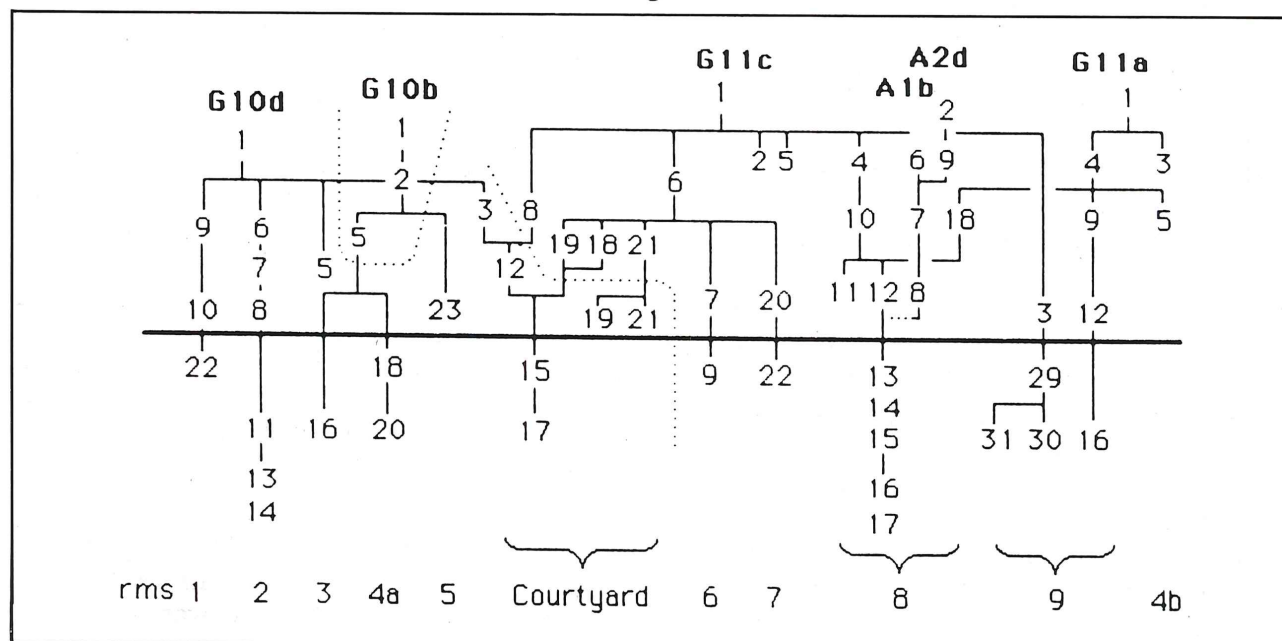
Room 7 is an extension of the courtyard leading to the door for room 8. Three solid pilasters seem to have formed the foundation for a stairway, beginning at the

yard (Sa), rising to landing (Sb), and on up to the roof (Sc). The stairs were probably supported on arches between the pilasters, while the intervening spaces formed stone paved and curbed basins. Whether the stairs led to upper rooms or only the roof is difficult to determine. The area was excavated as a pit between pilasters Sb and Sc (G11c-2; 61cm) and a second ashy pit between pilasters Sa and Sb (G11c-5; 13cm). The remainder of the area was an ashy layer (G11c-20; 20cm) on sandy soil (G11c-22; 36cm).

Room 8 forms the eastern corner of the building; several hearths and numerous smashed pots on the floor, among several interior dividing walls, suggest a kitchen area. The upper sandy soil (G11c-4) was

5. This is the only coin from non-surface layers identified at present. This coin measures 0.92g, 16mm; the author is indebted to Michael Bates

for the reading of this and other coins from the excavations.

Table 1: Locus Matrix of the Pavilion Building.

partially excavated in 1986 as A1b-6, A2d-2, 9. Beneath this was brick and stone debris (G11a-18, G11c-10, 11, 12; together 45cm and also excavated in 1986 as A1b-7). Layers of ash upon the floor were G11c-13 (=1986, A1b-8), 14, 15, 16, 17 (together 82cm). These deposits contained concentrations of sherds and other artifacts, second only to that in room 2.

Room 9 produced no certain evidence of doorways. The possible door in wall P would reflect the role as a principle room on the north side opposite the *iwān*. An alternative door might be suggested in wall Q, based on the ash and possible ovens in the floor, domestic features identified in room 8. Beneath the brick debris (G11a-4, 9; 28cm) was a sand and ash layer (G11a-12; 23cm), a floor as clearly indicated by a smashed pot and fallen column. Beneath the floor was a sandy brown soil (G11a-16; 44cm), while the ash layers in the southern corner (G11a-29, 30, 31; 43cm) may be associable with the ovens.

The courtyard was a rectangular area

divided into two parts by a stone curb and wall stub (at the corner of walls E/G). The western part, nearer the vestibule and entrance, had brick detritus (G10d-12, 15; 30cm) on sand (G10d-17; 7cm). The more central part, defined by a stone curb on all sides, had a well in the approximate center. Here the brickly detritus with an ash layer was G11c-18, 19 (43cm), and the well was cleared as G11c-21 (=G10d-19,21; 77cm). The stratigraphic details of the excavation of the courtyard and rooms may be summarized in Table 1.

Ceramics

The artifacts found in the destruction debris and on the latest floor represent the last period of occupation in area A and elsewhere on the site. This brief report will discuss only the ceramic assemblage from the interior of the Pavilion Building whose elements, luxurious or every-day, imported or local, reflect the complexity and importance of the site of Aqaba.⁶

6. The ceramics depicted on figures 3-8 are the best examples from loci within the Pavilion building; though arranged in a typological manner, this assemblage should not be taken for a definitive typology for this phase of the site. Likewise, the association in loci excavated may be taken as

representative of the ceramic inventory during and after the last occupation; residuals from earlier periods may be represented, though most should have been eliminated. Most of these artifacts were drawn and inked by Mary Lassen.

Two jars illustrate this importance (Fig. 3a, b). These jars have a distinctive blue-green glaze and barbotine (incised and appliqué) decoration. Sherds of this ware are found on sites throughout the Indian Ocean littoral, from Indonesia to east Africa; likewise they occur on most Saudi sites of early Islamic date (al-Rashid 1980; Hamed 1988) but very rarely in the Levant and Egypt. This so-called Arab-Sasanian ware was probably produced in Basra in the 9th and 10th centuries; its wide distribution may result from use as a container for date honey (*dibs*).

More common storage jars have heavy rims and loop handles (Fig. 4j,k) and appear to be typical of Jordan in the Fatimid period (Northedge 1984, 46). Likewise smaller jars and juglets have parallels on the Amman Citadel in the Abbasid and Fatimid period (*ibid.*). Also typical of this corpus are folded over rims, occasionally glazed (Fig. 4f), and comb incised decoration. These characteristics carry over to bowl forms, as depicted on Fig. 6 (for plain and green glazed varieties of the same form, see Fig. 6e,f). The ware of such forms, orange-buff, frequently with a cream surface, is the most common sherd category, usually about 60% of total counts.

Hand-made wares become very common during the last period, contributing up to 15% of counts in bricky debris (and over 40% in room 8, the putative kitchen). The simple forms of bowls, cups, and small jars (Fig. 5c, d, h-i) seems to be modular and can nest in sets (prompting the nickname, Tupperware). Many were made with little or no vegetal temper and have been repaired; often impressions of reed matting are found on the base, though other pieces, such as the large basin (Fig. 5j), are better finished. A number of pieces, particularly small bowls (Fig. 5a, b), have irregular decorations in red paint; this may reflect the beginnings of the tradition of painted geometric decoration, a recognized characteristic of the following Ayyubid-Mamluk

period.

Glazed bowls may be divided into a number of stylistic types: monochrome, splashed decorated (Fig. 7d, m, n, u), Fayyumi (Fig. 7i, j), and sgraffiato wares (Fig. 7q, r). Though many of these sherds may be residuals from the 9th century, they represent Samarran (Iraqi), Egyptian, and perhaps Syrian imports mixed with less well-known Palestinian products. One must bear in mind that glazed wares account for less than 10% of sherds by count (and glazed sherds tend to be smaller). The usefulness of glazed sherds as diagnostic imports cannot be denied, as demonstrated in the case of one slip-painted sherd (Fig. 7b). Such slip painted ware is found at Nishapur in northeastern Iran, where this pottery was apparently made in the 9th and 10th centuries (Wilkinson 1974, Group 5, 158-78, pl. 7). Just as at Aqaba, finds in southern Iran associate this ware with typical Samarra and Chinese wares (Stein 1937, Pl. 21, 321, 328). This sherd may be regarded as a curiosity, an accidental part of an assemblage of wares, traded with other merchandise of the Abbasid period onto a ship passing from an Iranian port.

While some ceramics may have been imported as containers (as the blue-green jars, Fig. 3), others are more likely to have appeared as a luxury or at least valuable commodity. This is best illustrated in the lustre decorated glazed wares from Iraq and in the celadons and porcelains from China. The lustre wares may be characterized as polychrome (Fig. 8e, g) and monochrome types (Fig. 8a-d, f, h), following Philon's analysis of the Benaki collection from Egypt. It seems likely that most of these pieces were produced in Iraq in the late 9th or early 10th century (Philon 1980, 76; though some may be Egyptian manufactures, Schnyder 1963).

The Chinese ceramics found in this building may be divided into four groups, Yue, Qingbai, and Coarse green wares and White wares.⁷ The Yue pieces are fine

7. These comments are abstracted from a detailed report on the Chinese ceramics by Dr. Ho

Chuimei.

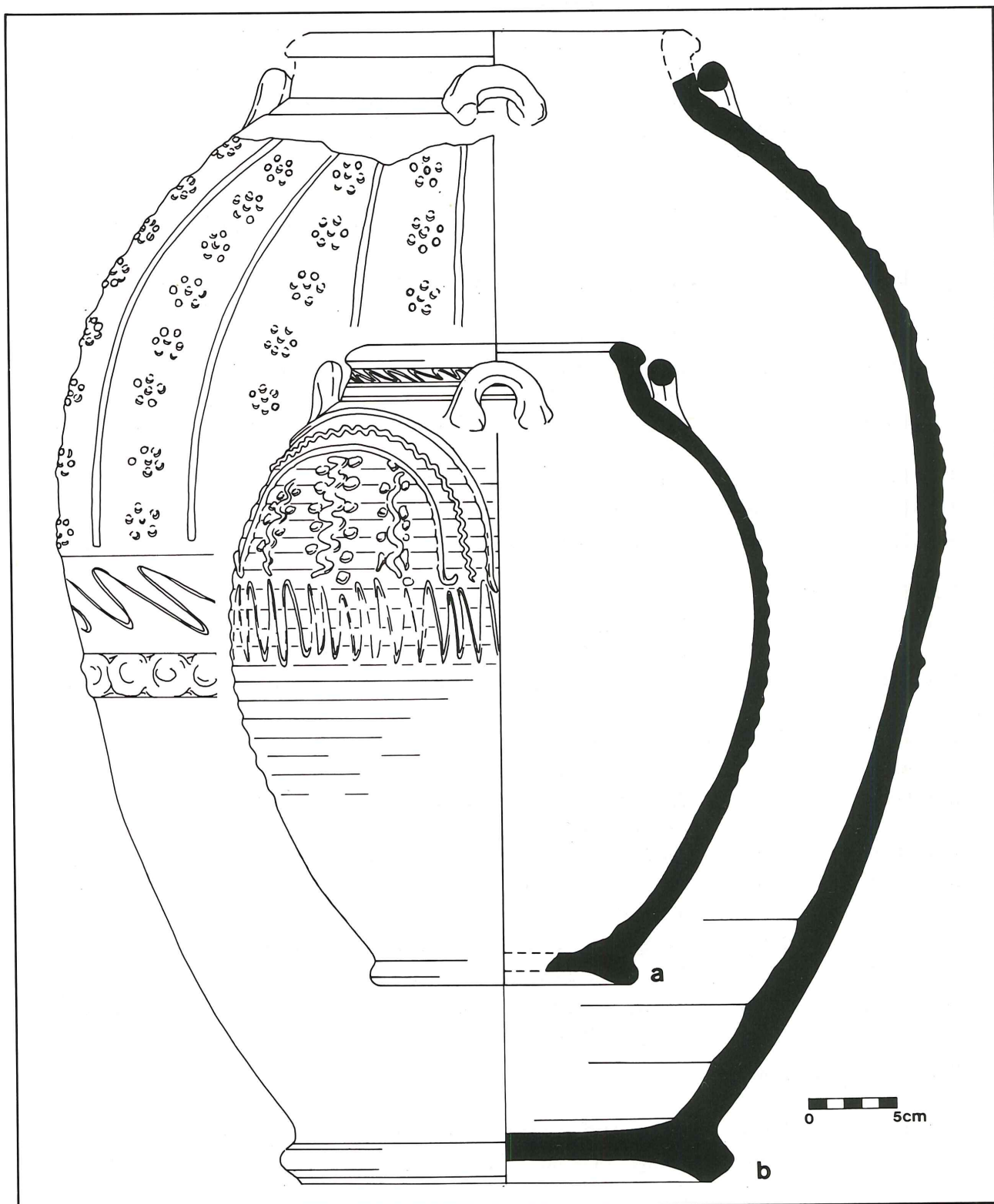


Fig. 3. Glazed Jars.

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|---|-------------------------|---------------------|--|
| a | A1b-8 | 86-105 | Cream-yellow, dark blue-green glaze on exterior, blue-green and white on interior, appliqué and incised, moderate medium sand. |
| b | G10d-1, 6, 7;
G11c-1 | 87-403,
404, 405 | Cream-yellow, dark blue-green glaze on exterior, blue-green and white on interior, appliqué and incised, moderate medium sand. |

Fig. 4: Jars and Juglets.

a	G11a-29	87-37	Red, cream slip on exterior, moderate medium sand.
b	G11c-15	87-38	Buff, cream-buff surfaces, incised, moderate medium sand.
c	G11c-15	87-1474	Cream, warped, common medium sand.
d	G11c-17	87-194	Orange-red, moderate medium sand.
e	G11a-9	87-291	Red, black slip (paint?) on exterior, abundant medium sand.
f	G11c-7	87-186	Red, green glaze on interior and exterior, common medium and coarse sand.
g	G10d-8	87-409	Red, grey-cream surface on exterior, comb incised, common coarse grit.
h	G10d-14	87-423	Red, cream-buff surface on exterior, incised, common medium sand.
i	G11a-9	87-291	Brown-orange, greenish white glaze on exterior (and trace on interior), incised, moderate medium sand.
j	G11c-2	87-181	Red-orange, grey core, brown surfaces, common medium and coarse sand.
k	G10d-8	87-410	Red, grey core, common coarse grit.
l	G11c-2	87-181	Light orange-tan, cream surface on exterior, abundant medium sand.
m	G11c-17	87-194	Buff-tan, cream surfaces, moderate medium sand (and chaff?).

Fig. 5: Tupperware.

a	G11c-19	87-197	Cream-buff, light orange core, red-brown paint on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand (and chaff?), diameter unknown.
b	G10d-10	87-416	Light orange, light red paint on exterior and rim, moderate medium sand.
c	G11c-7	87-186	Orange, wet smoothed, moderate medium sand and mica.
d	G10d-8	87-1563	Buff-tan-orange, wet smoothed, moderate medium sand.
e	G11c-10	87-172	Tan-orange, tan-cream surfaces, black paint, incised, moderate medium sand.
f	G11c-9	87-188	Grey, orange surfaces, overfired, abundant medium sand and chaff.
g	G11c-7	87-186	Buff-orange, cream surfaces, repair holes, moderate medium sand and common chaff.
h	G10d-8	87-1484	Orange-tan, repair holes, moderate medium sand.
i	G11a-30	87-27	Dark grey, common medium sand.
j	G11c-7	87-1567	Orange-tan, cream-orange surfaces, incised and notched rim, common medium sand.

Fig. 6: Unglazed Bowls.

a	G10d-17	87-426	Orange-buff, cream surfaces, incised, moderate medium sand.
b	G11c-15	87-191	Orange, pink core, light orange surfaces, incised, moderate medium sand.
c	G11c-19	87-197	Buff-orange-tan, moderate medium sand and chaff.
d	G11c-7	87-45	Red, cream surface on exterior, overfired?, very common moderate sand.
e	G11c-15	87-191	Orange-brown, moderate medium sand and mica, diameter unknown.
f	G11c-17	87-195	Buff-orange, cream surface on exterior, dark green glaze on interior and rim, moderate medium sand and mica, diameter 46 cm.
g	G11c-17	87-194	Buff-orange, cream surfaces (slip?), moderate medium sand and chaff.

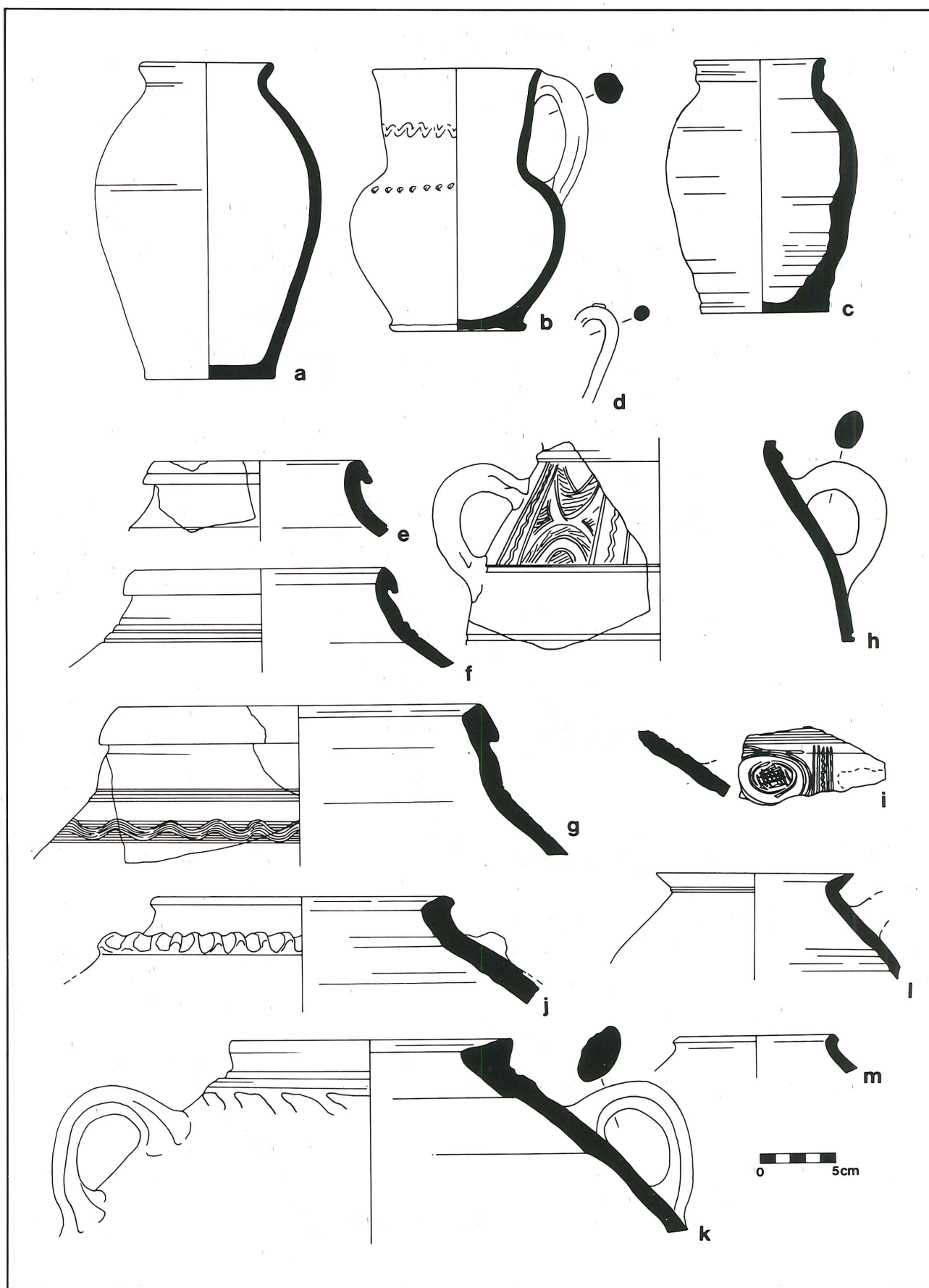


Fig. 4. Jars and Juglets.

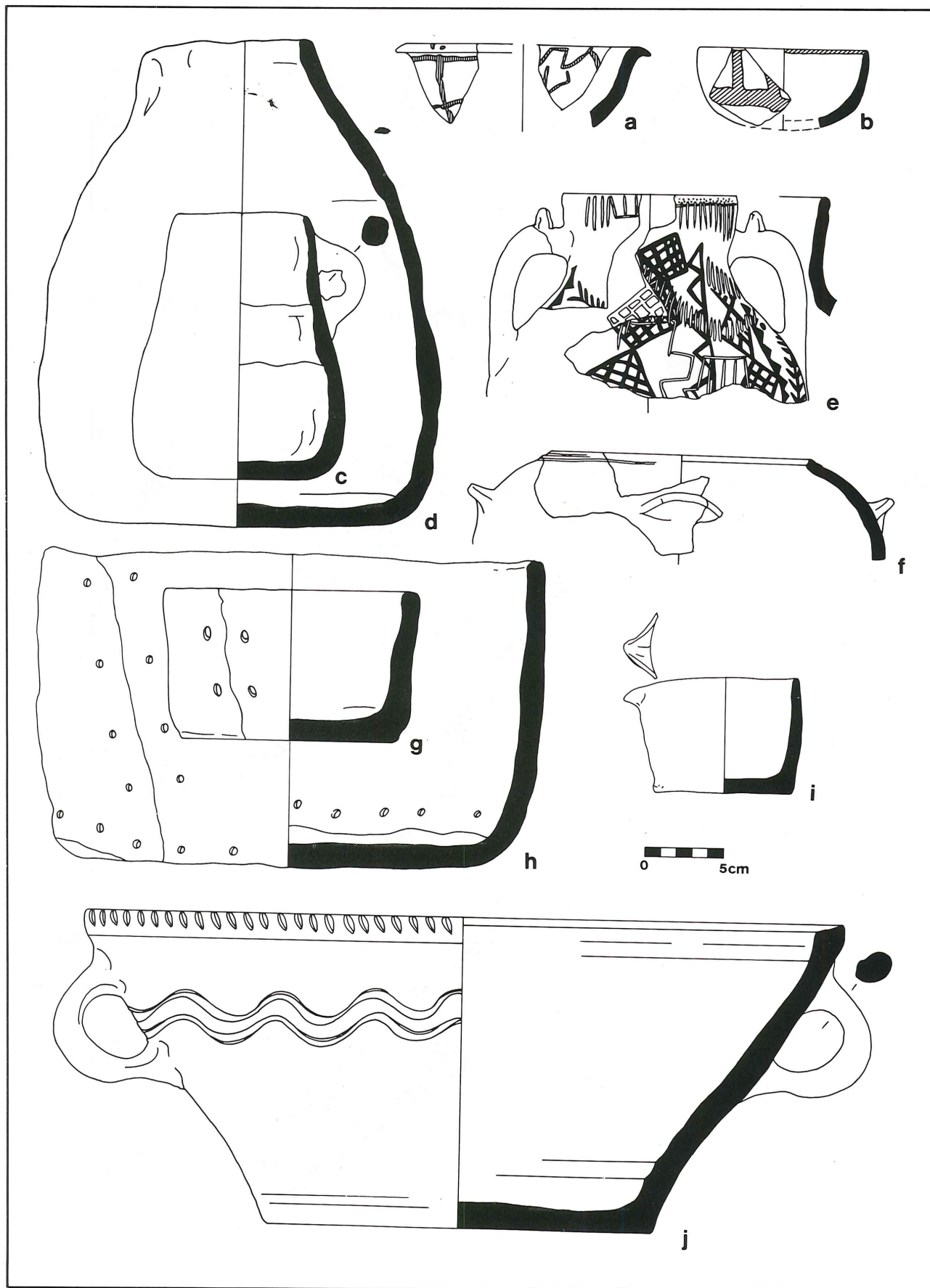


Fig. 5. Tupperware.

h	G11c-15	87-191	Orange-red, light orange-cream surface on exterior, incised, common medium sand.
i	G11c-7	87-44	Dark red, cream surface on exterior, overfired, abundant medium white sand.
j	G11c-16	87-192	Red-brown, incised, common medium sand, diameter unknown.
k	G10b-1	87-58	Red-orange, buff-orange surfaces, comb incised, moderate medium sand, diameter 43 cm.
l	G10d-14	87-423	Cream, greenish cream core, comb incised, common coarse grit and chaff, diameter ca. 50 cm.
m	G11c-19	87-1466	Red, red-cream surfaces, common medium sand.
n	G11a-9	87-291	Red, greenish cream surfaces, common medium sand.

Fig. 7: Glazed Bowls.

a	G10d-10	87-415	Cream, light turquoise glaze on interior and exterior, petal notches on rim, moderate medium sand.
b	A2d-9	86-246	Orange, white slip on interior and rim, black paint, clear glaze, moderate medium sand.
c	G10d-12	87-420	Cream, white glaze on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand.
d	G10d-14	87-423	Cream, white glaze and dark green on interior and exterior,
	G11c-16	87-192	moderate medium sand.
e	A2d-2	86-212	Cream, turquoise green glaze on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand, diameter unknown.
f	G11c-13	87-1555	Cream, white, green, yellow, brown glaze on interior, moderate medium sand.
g	G10d-20	87-427	Cream, green, brown, clear glaze on exterior, clear on interior, moderate medium sand.
h	G10d-20	87-427	Cream, greenish white glaze on interior, exterior and base, incised and chip-carved, moderate medium sand.
i	G10d-11	87-418	Orange-red, yellow, dark yellow, white, brown glaze on interior, white on exterior, moderate medium sand.
j	G10b-4	87-55	Same as above (i).
k	G11c-7	87-186	Buff-light orange, greenish yellow glaze on interior, exterior and base, moderate medium sand.
l	G10b-5	87-51	Red-orange, greenish white on interior, exterior and base, moderate medium sand.
m	G10d-15	87-424	Orange-buff, white, dark green glaze on interior, moderate medium sand, diameter unknown.
n	G10d-22	87-428	Orange-buff, white slip?, clear, yellow glaze on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand.
o	G10b-5	87-51	Red-orange, white slip? light greenish white glaze on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand.
p	G11a-29	87-298	Red-orange, yellowish clear glaze on interior and exterior, brown paint on exterior, moderate medium sand.
q	G10d-20	87-427	Orange, cream surfaces (slip?), clear, green, yellow, brown glaze on interior and exterior, sgraffiato, moderate medium sand.
r	G10b-1	87-62	Red-orange, white slip, clear, green, yellow glaze on interior, exterior
	G11c-17	87-194	and base, sgraffiato, moderate medium sand.

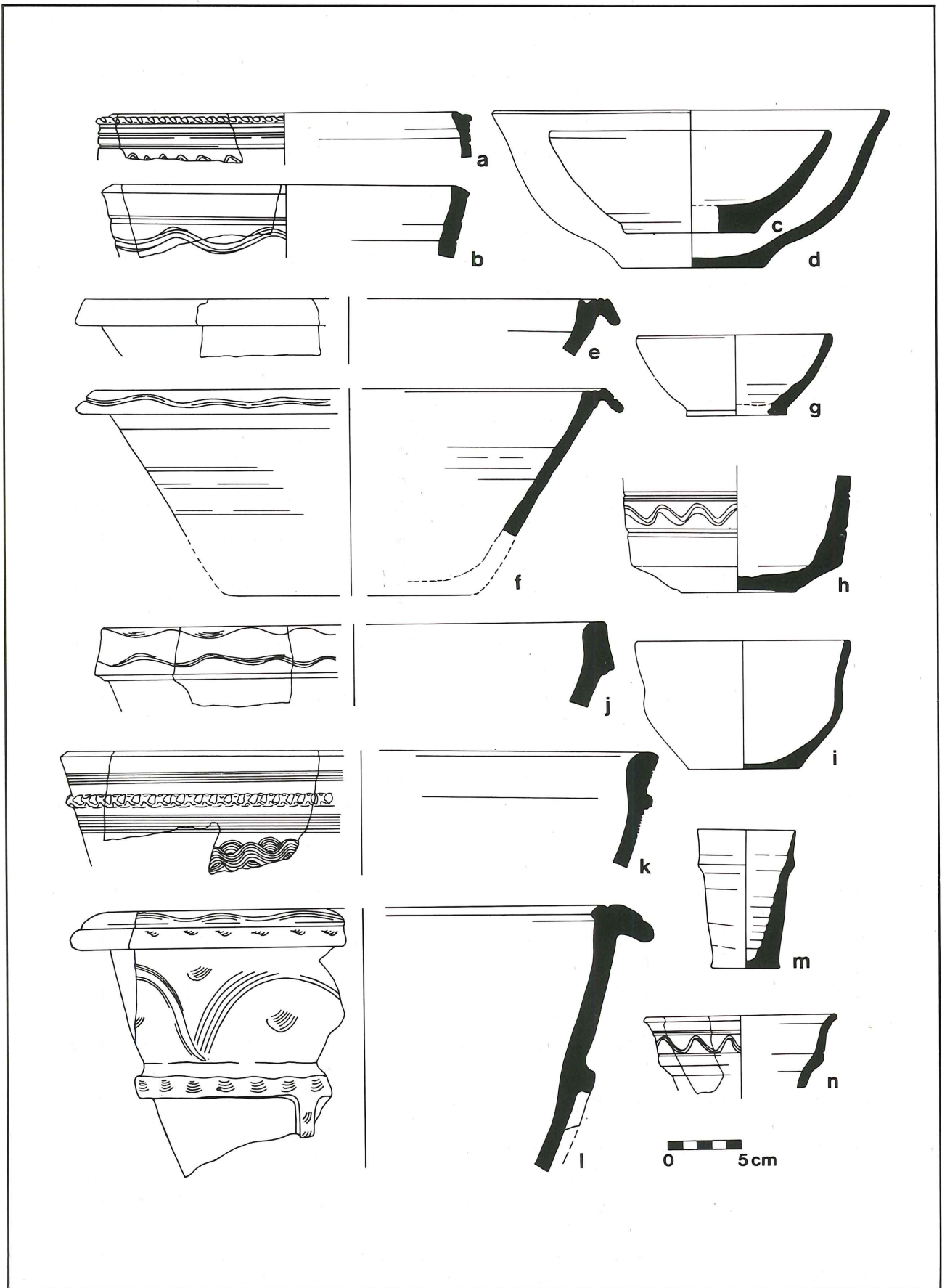


Fig. 6. Unglazed Bowls.

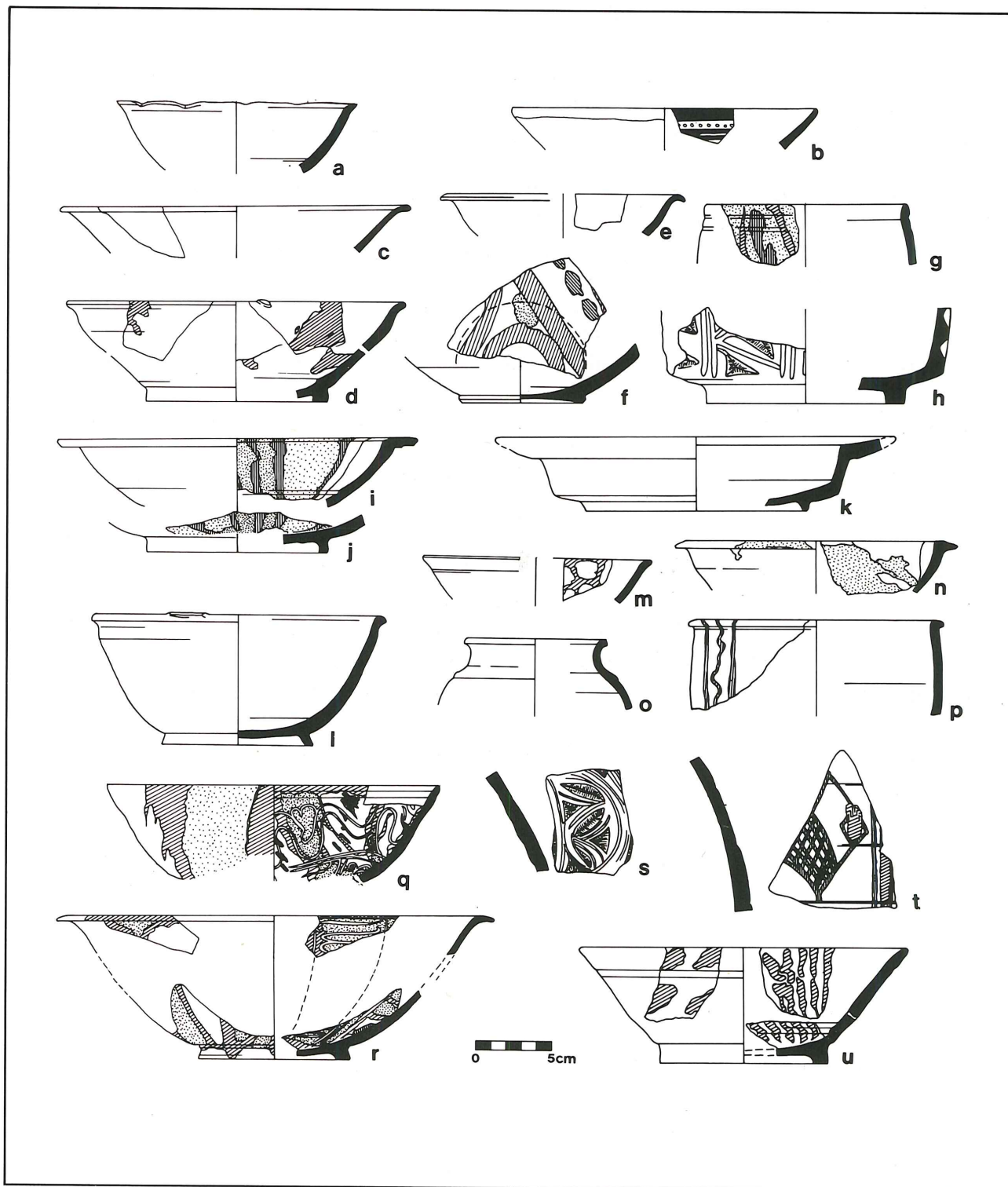


Fig. 7. Glazed Bowls.

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|---|---------|--------|---|
| s | G10d-15 | 87-424 | Dark red, dark green on exterior, greenish clear on interior, incised and chip-carved, common medium sand. |
| t | G10d-13 | 87-422 | Red, cream surface on exterior, clear glaze on interior, greenish clear and green glaze, brown paint on exterior, common medium sand. |
| u | G10d-14 | 87-423 | Red-orange, white and green glaze on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand. |

Fig. 8: Lustre and Far Eastern Wares.

a	A1b-6	86-116	Cream, white, yellow lustre on interior, white on exterior, moderate medium sand.
b	G11c-6	87-183	Cream, white, green lustre on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand.
	G11c-1	87-179	
c	G11c-1	87-177	Cream, white, yellow lustre on interior, white, red lustre on exterior, moderate medium sand.
d	G11d-22	87-204	Cream, white, green lustre on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand, diameter unknown.
e	G11c-10	87-174	Cream, white, yellow, brown, green lustre on interior and exterior, moderate medium sand.
f	A1b-8	86-105	Cream, white, yellow lustre on exterior, white on interior, moderate medium sand.
g	G10b-1	87-58	Cream, white, brown, green lustre on interior, white on exterior, moderate medium sand.
h	G10d-9	87-411	Cream, white, yellow lustre on exterior, white on interior, moderate medium sand.
i	G11c-1	87-1585	Grey, light green glaze on interior, exterior and base, stoneware.
j	G11c-1	87-1689	White, bluish clear glaze, red stain on base, porcelain.
k	G11c-7	87-1683	White, clear glaze, porcelain.
l	G11c-10	87-1691	White, greenish clear glaze, incised, porcelain.
m	G11c-7	87-1683	White, clear glaze, incised, porcelain.
m	G10d-7,8	87-1573	Light grey, light green glaze on interior and exterior, incised, stoneware.
o	G10d-8	87-1617	Grey-tan, mottled green glaze on interior and exterior, four handles, stoneware.

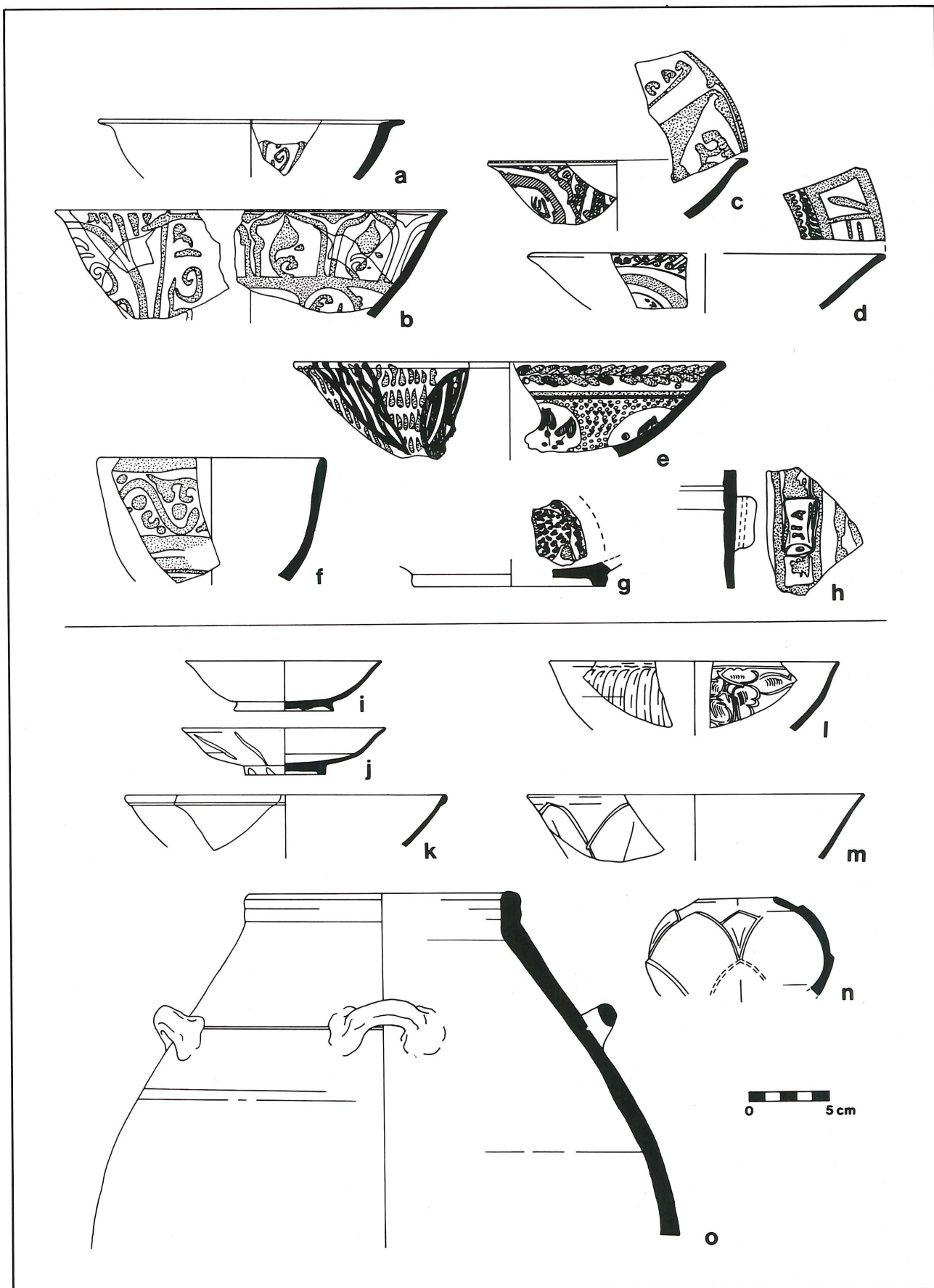


Fig. 8. Lustre and Far Eastern Wares

green glazed stoneware (Fig. 8 i,n) datable to the 10th century and found mainly in room 2. Other stoneware includes Coarse-green ware also found on the floor of room 2 (Fig. 8,o) and the western part of the courtyard and datable to the latter half of the 10th century. The most common sherds were the fine Qingbai porcelains, probably from kilns in Jingdezhen (Fig. 8k-m). The ware may be divided into two chronological phases: Examples of the earlier 10th-11th century (Fig. 8k, m) were found in ashy debris on the floor, and the later comb-decorated type (Fig. 8,l) was found higher in the brickly debris. Other porcelains (White wares) include one 10th century sherd on the floor of room 7 and more modern wares from surface contexts (Fig. 8j). The total absence of distinctive, widely traded 12th century Chinese ceramics confirms the conclusion, supported by all other artifact categories, that Ayla was abandoned in the early 12th century, probably coincidental with the Crusader attack in 1116 A.D.

Conclusions

From the structure and artifactual content, the Pavilion Building may be considered the residence of a notable family of Ayla in the Fatimid period. The double stairs suggest a tradition from more congested urban settings. The anteroom (3) and bent axis reflect a concern for privacy often associated with houses in an Islamic tradition. The relatively small courtyard and stairway (7) form an axis, to the north of which is the corner bath and domestic or store rooms (8,9). The focus is the south unit of *iwan* and flanking rooms (1, 2, 6). The possibility of upper rooms cannot be forgotten though present evidence does not allow reconstruction.

Residences of this type may be seen in the formal porticoed structures on the Amman citadel (Blgs 5 and 6; Northedge 1980, Fig. 5); other houses on the citadel might be somewhat later than the Umayyad and may even be Fatimid in date (Harding 1951, Fig. 1). The two rooms flanking the *iwan* may be considered a

form of *bayt*, as often described in Islamic architecture, though identification as Syrian or Egyptian (Fusṭaṭ) is difficult, perhaps due to the small size of the building. This house form is known in ethnographic literature as a *liwan* structure (Khammash 1986, 35-36).

The artifacts indicate destruction through burning, though relative lack of objects *in situ* does not suggest sudden violence. Indeed, there seem to be secondary depositions before and during the disintegration of the mud brick upper walls (and vaulting?). This deposition ended near the beginning of the 12th century. The occupation on the floor antecedent to ash deposition is more difficult to determine but should fall within the 10th century and probably the latter half. This occupation belongs to the Middle Islamic I period, coincident mainly with the Fatimid period in southern Jordan.

Characteristics of the material culture of this period which may be outlined from these ceramics broadly suggest the historical circumstances in Aqaba and southern Palestine and Jordan. Numerous residuals from late Abbasid times and Far Eastern elements testify to the prosperity derived from an interregional maritime trade. Basic elements of the Fatimid culture of the Palestine region, reflecting Egyptian and Syrian norms, have yet to be precisely identified and described. With the increase of hand-made wares, alongside more sophisticated manufactures, one might see a growing class division, perhaps of rich and poor. More broadly, we have the last stages of the early Islamic culture (that of the High Caliphate, the Abbasid) and the transition into the middle Islamic culture, which reached its focus with the Mamluks of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Epilogue: The Pavilion below

The configuration of the building discussed above does not reflect its original form, except perhaps in overall dimensions. The indications which lead to the provisional name are fragmentary and further excavations may soon clarify the

nature of the original structure.⁸ Examination of the exterior face of wall C revealed an area of brick infilling around wall H and two voussoirs above wall K (see 1986-87 report, Fig. 3); thus an arched gate, 3.5m wide, originally dominated this southeast wall. The deep probe, H11a, traced the jamb of this gate down over 3m to a fine plaster floor. Materials below this floor were all Umayyad (H11a-15, 16). The *iwan* (1) and fresco room (2) revealed voussoirs of a second arch, also 3.5m wide, in the southwest wall. Further, the low wall stubs (Ba, Bb, and Bc) indicate that the northwest wall, B, was originally wider and that the edge of Bc would suggest another gate symmetrical with that in wall C. There is

no indication of a gate in wall A and the narrow section exposed in the deep probe (G11a-28) indicates at least two rebuilds in the total preserved height of 3.5m. These architectural fragments suggest that the earliest form of this building may have been a sort of pavilion, almost a tetrapylon, in the center of the city. While there is too little evidence for a palace, some association with an Umayyad governor's residence is not unlikely.

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8. Much of this analysis is the result of the work of James Knudstad, who not only planned this and other trenches but applied his extensive experi-

ence in Near Eastern archaeology to deciphering the architectural complexities in the excavations.

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