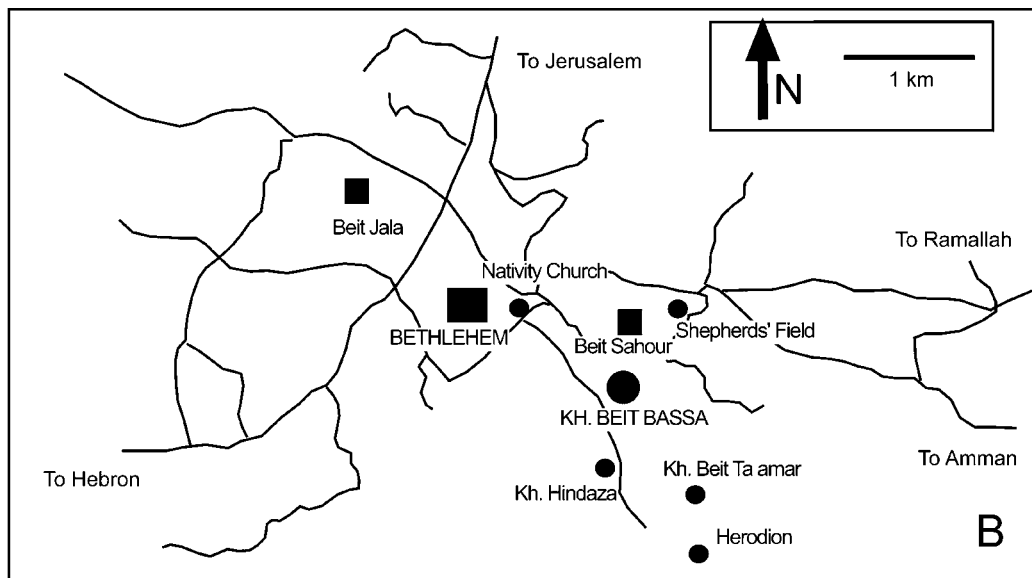
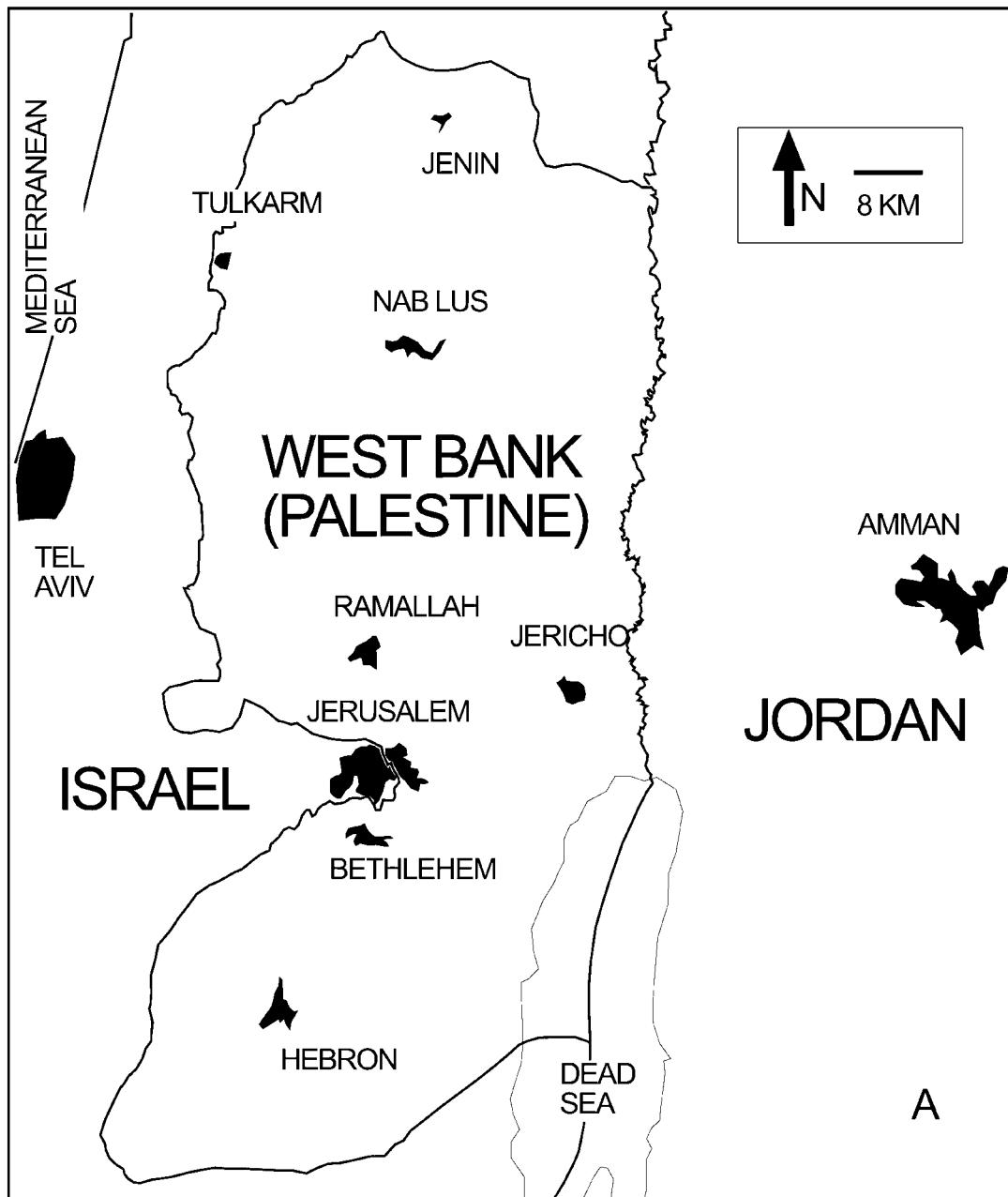


# medieval ceramics **Papers**



**Figure 1**

**A** Location of Bethlehem in the West Bank (Palestine), with indication of the main towns in the area.

**B** Location of Khirbet Beit Bassa and of important sites in the area of Bethlehem.

# The pottery of Khirbet Beit Bassa

Ibrahim Abu Aemar and Jose C Carvajal \*

## Summary

*This paper introduces the pottery documented during the 2009 campaign at Khirbet Beit Bassa, in the municipality of Beit Sahour, Bethlehem (Palestine). The ceramics include abundant tablewares and storage jars, and a small number of other wares.*

*The assemblage dates approximately to between the 1st and 10th centuries CE, although detailed chronological study indicates that occupation of the site was concentrated between the 3rd and 4th centuries CE and the 6th and the 10th centuries CE.*

## Introduction

This paper presents an introduction to the pottery from the Palestinian archaeological site of Khirbet Beit Bassa, in the municipality of Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, (Figure 1). Although different archaeological activities have been conducted on this site, the pottery analysed here is that retrieved during the 2009 campaign. This analysis will show that Beit Bassa was occupied during both the Late Roman period (roughly 3rd to 6th centuries) and the transition between the Byzantine and the Islamic cultures (7th to 8th centuries). The article will also discuss the economic activities developed on the site through the analysis of the functions of the pottery under study. The ceramics will be presented alongside the archaeological evidence from the site, relating our findings and contextualising our results with those from other historical and archaeological studies in the general area of *Bilad al-Sham*, the historical Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

## The site of Khirbet Beit Bassa

Khirbet Beit Bassa is located in the southern part of the city of Bethlehem, in the municipality of Beit Sahour. The *khirbah* (Arabic 'ruins', here spelled as *khirbet*) is on a small hill, within an area of considerable archaeological importance as seen through a range of sites dated to different historical periods. These include Khirbet Hindaza to the southwest, Khirbet Beit Ta'mar and the Herodion to the southeast, the Shepherd's Field to the north and the Nativity Church to the southwest. In general, this area is one of the oldest inhabited sites around the city of Bethlehem.

The site was first mentioned in the *Survey of Western Palestine* by C. R. Conder and H. Kitchener, who identified a 'ruined Khan [caravanserai], cisterns and tombs' (1883, 87). The *khirbet* (mentioned above) was the subject of a 1994 salvage excavation under the administration of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Baroch and Shorukh 1998). Baroch and

Shorukh (1998) located and described a burial place containing a sarcophagus with architectural carvings, which they dated to the Roman period. Unfortunately, this discovery has yet to be confirmed by subsequent investigations. The Israeli archaeologists identified Khirbet Beit Bassa as the site of Beit Bassi, mentioned in the First Book of the Maccabees (9, 60–73), but this is a highly questionable attribution and is not supported by the archaeological evidence. In 2008, following the creation of the Palestinian Authority, the construction of a road in the lower slope of the hill revealed fragments of pottery and tesserae. The salvage excavation found a wine press of the Late Roman-Byzantine period. The wine press was restored and is now on public display (Figure 2).

The High Institute of Archaeology of the University of Al-Quds (Palestine) took an interest in Khirbet Beit Bassa and, under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of the Palestinian Authority, five campaigns of excavation (2009, 2010, 2013, 2014 and 2015) have been conducted by one of the authors



**Figure 2**  
The wine press located in Area B of the excavation.

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(Ibrahim Abu Aemar), with the combined aim of gathering data about the site and of training students in archaeological techniques. The current investigations comprise the first research excavations at the site that are both independent of a salvage agenda and completely under Palestinian supervision.

## The 2009 excavation

This article presents the analysis of the pottery retrieved in 2009, as current permit restrictions do not allow the study of later campaigns. Two areas of the *khirbet* were investigated at this time: Area A, located in the northwest part of the hill and Area B, to the southwest (Figure 3).

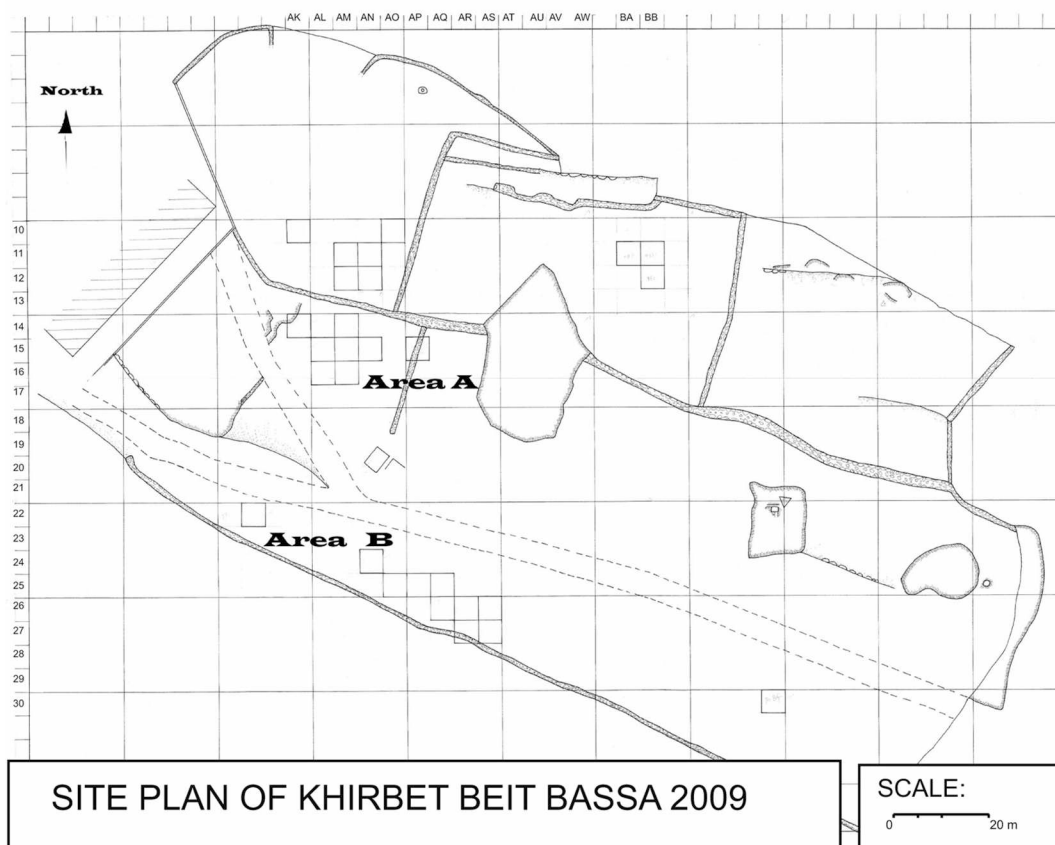
### Area A

The excavation in this area identified two main layers of soil: the first one was a simple topsoil layer and the second one was an archaeological level that could be found at about half a metre below the surface. The main structure identified was that of a wall with a single stone row conserved. The wall ran from east to west in both squares, with a total length of about 6 m.

In Square 16AM a threshold paved with regular stones was found crossing the wall, giving access to an internal area located to the north of the wall. The rests of the squares yielded pottery, but no structures. However, the amount of stones scattered all over the area suggests that more buildings could have existed and that these have not survived.

### Area B

The excavation in this area brought to light an east-west oriented wall. The structure, that conserved only one row of stones and was deeply affected by agricultural activities, marked the southern limit of the site. It was located in the archaeological layer situated under the topsoil, less than one metre deep, and was placed on top of the bedrock. The wall was slightly oriented to the south from Square 25AO and made an obtuse angle in Square 26AS and another one in Square 26AR, where the remains of a possible tower attached to the outer part of the structure was found. The width of the wall reached approximately 130 cm and its length was of around 12 m. It was built with stones of varied size and shape, except in the case of the possible tower, which was constructed with regularly-shaped stones. In the excavation of Square



**Figure 3**

Plan of the site. The location of the squares can be found by reading the numbers in the left column and the letters in the top row

26AS (to the east) a continuation of the wall was found with the same construction method and same stones. The archaeological levels of the wall were disturbed by later Islamic burials.

## The pottery

An analysis on the pottery retrieved during the 2009 excavation at Khirbet Beit Bassa has been performed. This analysis of the pottery was somewhat limited by the methods of excavation and by time constraints on the period of study. The sherds analysed are only diagnostic fragments, and therefore the analysis can only aspire to identify them through the study of their morphotypology.

### Identification and dating

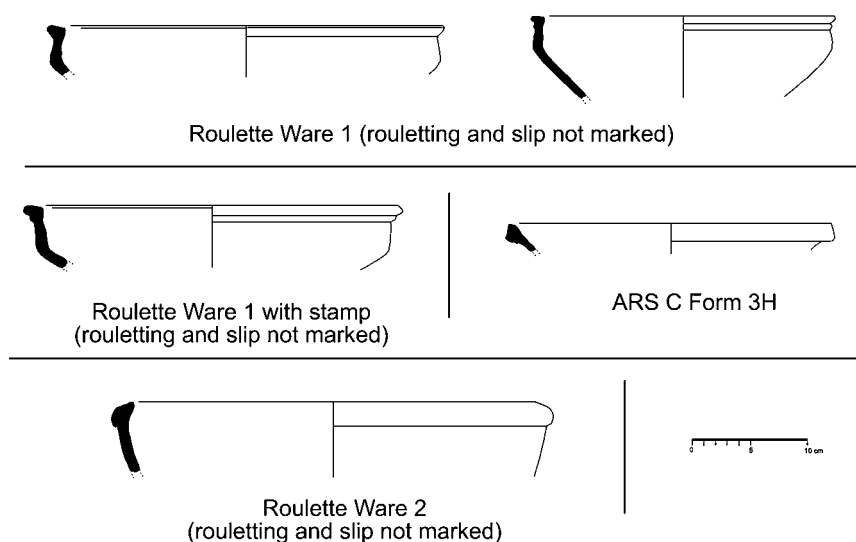
Almost all the sherds retrieved in the 2009 campaign in Beit Bassa belong to products made roughly between the 1st and the 10th centuries CE, in workshops within the regional network of distribution, and possibly in some cases local products from sites not yet identified. These products are generally well known in the area thanks to the *Jerusalem Ceramic Chronology* of J Magness (1993). Other vessels, either from the same chronological framework and different areas of the Mediterranean, or from later periods will be identified (when possible) with other references.

### Tablewares (Figures 4 and 5)

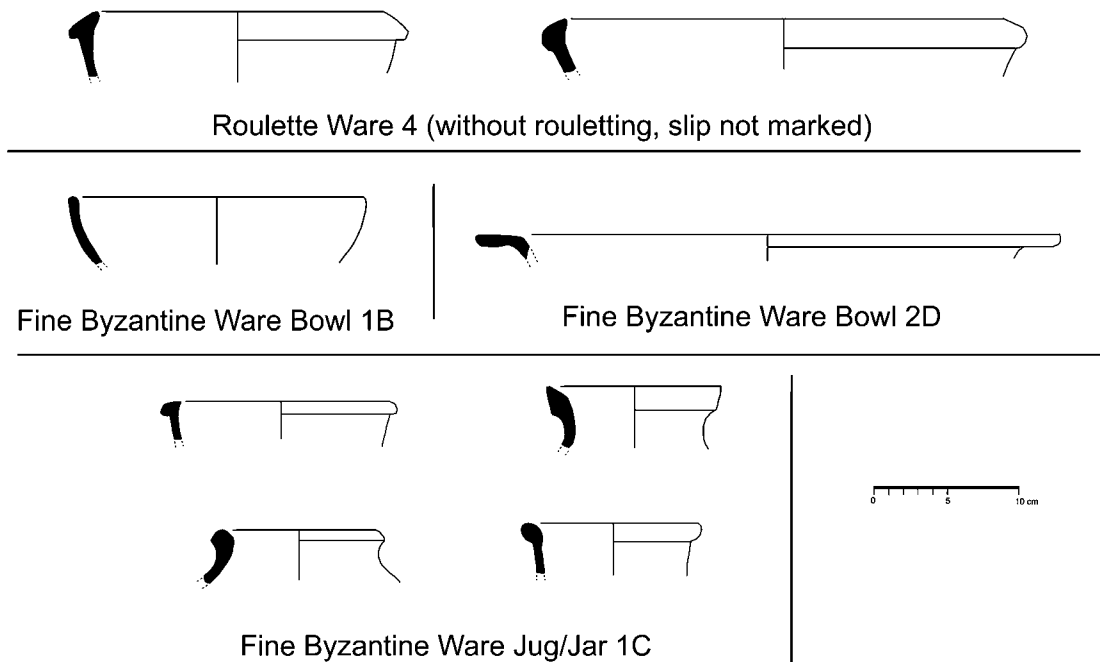
This category of vessels contains three types of products. The first one is the *Roulette Wares*, a type of bowl of a

bright orange to red fabric with grey core. Bowls of the forms 1, 3 and 4 (Magness 1993, 153–156, 185–192) have been found in Area B, suggesting a chronology between the late 3rd and the first half of the 7th centuries. In Area A only one bowl of the form 4 has been identified (6th to first half of the 7th centuries). A surface find from this area has a stamp comparable with style Hayes A, specifically number 44B (Hayes 1972, 238–239). These stamps are usually linked to one type of Late Roman Fine Ware: the *African Red Slip ware (ARS)* dish forms 59 or 61, which are dated mainly between the second and third quarters of the 4th century, but in this case it is found on the outer surface of the deep *Roulette Ware 1* carinated bowl.

The second category of pottery identified is that of *Fine Byzantine Wares (FBW)*, a type of hard-fired, thin-walled pottery with grey, buff or light orange colours found in the form of bowls and small vessels like jugs, juglets, etc (Magness 1993, 166–171; 193–201, 236–241: the name was coined by Gichon 1974). This type of pottery is common in the southern part of the Syro-Palestinian region, around Jerusalem, during the 7th and the 9th centuries. Cytryn-Silverman (2010, 108) suggests a longer time-span for *FBW* than Magness (1993, 166–171 and Walmsley 2001, 310). Other parallels for *FBW* are recorded (Avissar 1996, 118; 2007, 192; Israel and Erickson-Gini 2013, 173–174; Calderon 2010, 192; Israel and Erickson-Gini 2013, 20). This type of pottery has been identified as far as the *macellum* of Jerash (Uscatescu 2001, 64), Khirbet edh-Dharih (Waliszewski 2001, 97–98) and Humeima (‘Amr and Schick 2001, 113), both in Southern Jordan. In both areas, *FBW* jugs of the form 1C, dated from the mid-6th to the early 8th century are found. Jugs of the forms 1B and jars or jugs of forms 2A and 2B, all with the same



**Figure 4**  
Tablewares



**Figure 5**  
Tablewares

chronologies, have been identified in Area B. As for the bowls, an abundant number of the form 2D has been identified in Area A, and forms 2B and 2C have been documented in Area B. All *FBW* bowls of shape 2 date from the mid-7th to 10th century. In addition, a number of *FBW* bases belonging to either jugs or bowls were documented. The identification of the Fine Byzantine Wares is not totally satisfactory, because some of the fabrics seem too light-coloured (beige-creamy) and sandy for the *FBW* described in Magness 2013. In particular there are recorded six fragments of 2D bowls of Area A and to one fragment of a 2A jug in Area B. A later date can therefore be proposed for these wares, even if the shapes are totally concordant with those proposed by Magness as *FBW*. The change from pottery made in a red or grey fabric to a pale fabric was detected by Whitcomb in his re-evaluation of the ceramic evidence in Khirbet al-Mafjar (1988) and dated the change to between the 8th and 9th centuries. Additional evidence found at Pella and other sites has confirmed the Abbasid dating of these wares (Magness 1997; Walmsley 2001; 2007, 54–56). This article assigns these wares to the same chronologies as the *FBW* of Magness, but taking the earlier limit start as the late 8th century. In this way, it can be suggested that copies of the correspondent shapes in *FBW* were made locally while the originals were still circulating.

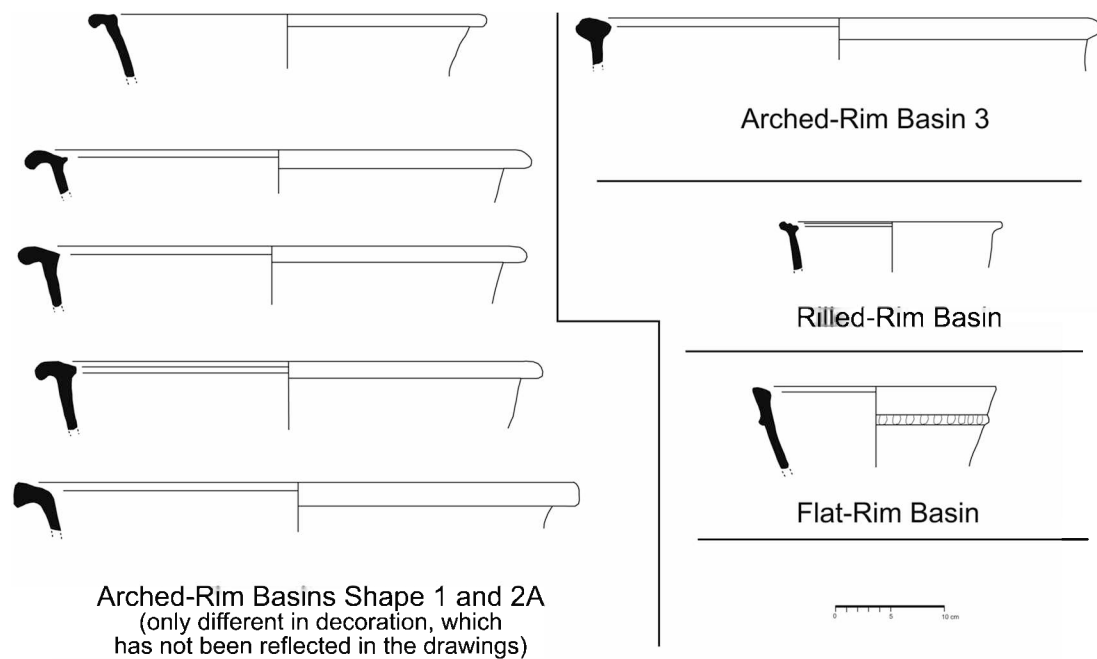
Finally, two fragments of *ARS C* and form Hayes 3 Type H, dated roughly in the sixth century, have been identified in Area A (Hayes 1972, 329–338: identified as Phocaeen Red Slip Ware in Hayes 1980, 525, note 2).

### Basins (Figure 6)

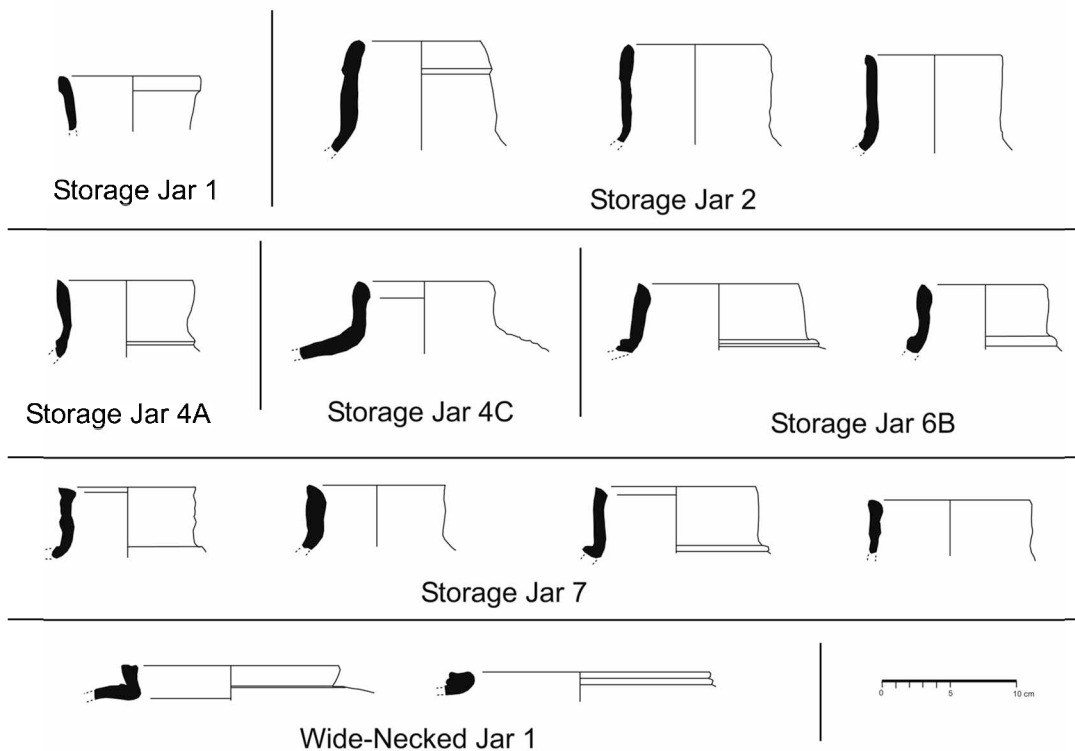
The basins located in the excavation of the Area A are very few. The *Arched-Rim* types, characterized by an everted, arch-shaped rim (Magness 1993, 157–160, 204–209) are the most frequent, specifically types 2A and 3, with a chronology dated to the 6th to early 8th century. Additionally, recorded in this area is the rim of a basin with the shape of a form 3, but made in a pale ware. Following the same reasoning explained above, then a date of late 8th century for this vessel is suggested. In Area B, the same types of basins are documented, but here they are much more abundant. Also recorded in this area were *Arched-Rim Basins* of type 1 and 2B, *Rilled-Rim Basins* (Magness 1993, 157–158, 203–204) and *Flat-Rim Basins* (Magness 1993, 210). While the form 2B has the same chronology as the types recorded above, the *Arched-Rim Basins* 1 and the *Rilled-Rim Basins* differ and have an earlier chronological frame: from the late 3rd to the 6th centuries. The *Flat-Rim Basins* are later products, made in light-green yellow ware, dating from the 8th and 9th centuries.

### Storage jars (Figure 7)

Two fragments of *Hole-mouth Jars* (Magness 1993, 231–235) have been documented, each one found in a different area. One form 1A, dated between the 2nd and the 5th centuries was found in Area B, and a fragment of a form 2 (6th to early 8th centuries) was retrieved from Area A. In the same area we can



**Figure 6**  
Basins

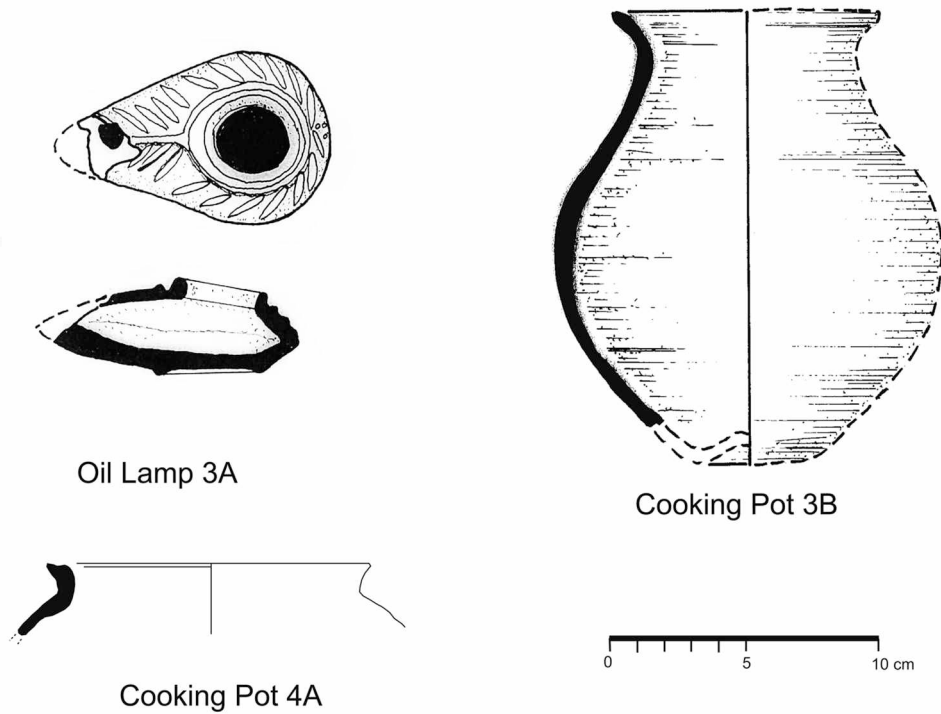


**Figure 7**  
Storage jars (equivalent to LR5/6 amphorae)

distinguish ‘*Bag Shaped*’ storage jars, a type of container made in a range of different fabrics and with a ribbed body (Magness 1993, 160–161, 221–231). The identified forms are 1, 4A, 4B, 4C, 6A and 7, all of which give an extended chronology between the 1st and the 10th centuries. In Area B the number of storage jars identified is even larger, and it includes, besides the above mentioned forms, forms 2, 3 and 6B. The chronology has the same extension.

**Amphorae**

Although very few sherds of amphorae have been identified, it is important to note that the type 4 storage jars of Magness’ classification encompass the *Late Roman 5* and *Late Roman 6* amphorae, both of which were produced and mainly distributed in Palestine (Magness 1993, 160, for the definition of LR5 and LR6, see Peacock and Williams 1986, 191–192; University



**Figure 8**  
Oil lamp and cooking pots

of Southampton: LR5, LR6). With minor differences in morphology with respect to Magness' *storage jars*, these amphorae have been dated from the 1st to the 8th centuries, which is precisely the range covered by forms 1 to 6 of Magness' classification. Besides these amphorae, two fragments of *Late Roman 1* (Peacock and Williams 1986, 187; University of Southampton 2005: LR1) have been documented in each one of the areas. Originally from Cilicia (although copies in a fabric that is thought to be from Cyprus are documented), LR1 was widely distributed all over the Mediterranean between the mid-3rd and the mid-7th centuries.

#### Other wares (Figure 8)

The rest of the wares documented on the site are much less important in terms of their number, although some items offer dating that is helpful for the purpose of this article. Only two fragments of *Cooking Pots* (Magness 1993, 216–221) have been documented. One item, located in Area A, is an almost complete example of dark brown brittle ware with white inclusions (probably quartz). The form is 3B, produced between the 6th and the 7th centuries. The other one, with a grey to brown fine, brittle fabric, was found in Area B and it is a form 4A, dated between the 5th and the early 8th centuries. In addition, a complete *Oil Lamp* (Magness 1993, 249–259) of the form 3A, made in an orange-brown fabric, was found in Area A, giving a chronology of mid-6th to early 8th century

(see similar examples from Khirbat el Ni'ana, near Rehovot, central Israel, in Sussman 2007, 65–67). Finally, a number of glazed wares have been located on the surface in both areas of the site. These fragments are not important for the chronology dealt with in this text, as they appear to be late Ottoman or even contemporaneous fragments that originated from sources offsite and nearby. No medieval Islamic glaze wares were documented during the 2009 season (but they were in later seasons).

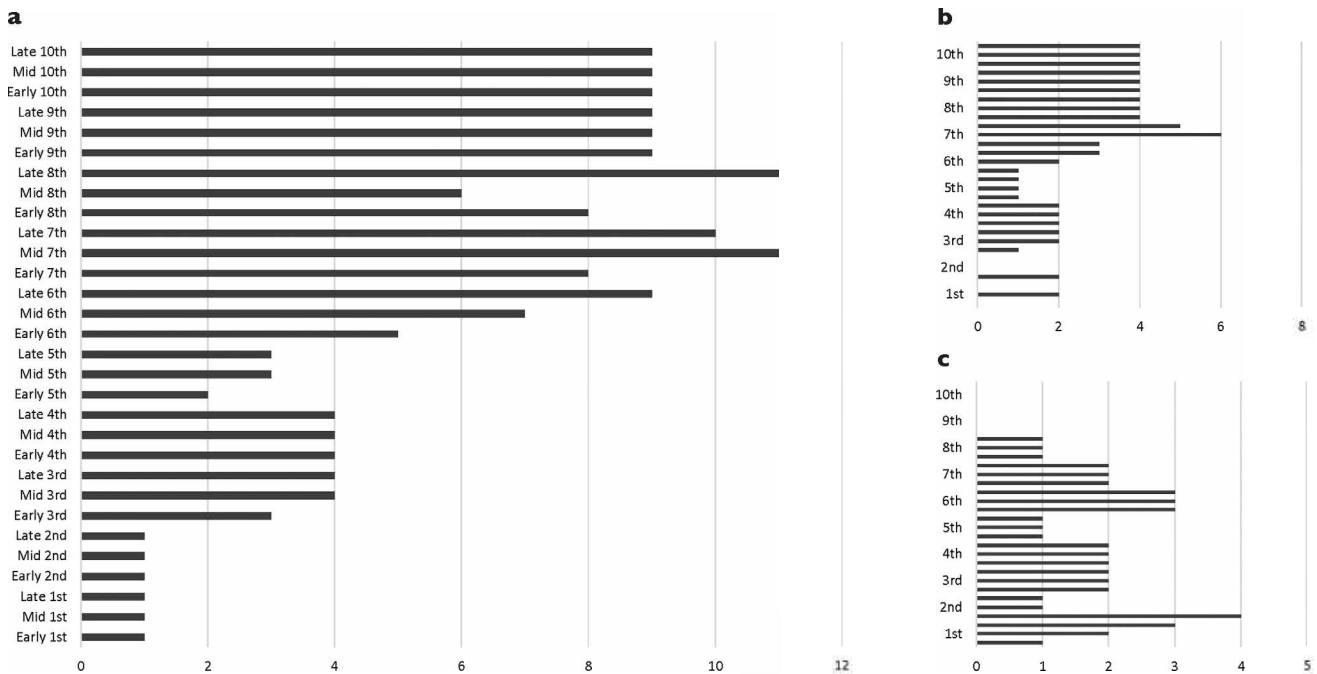
## Discussion

### Phases of Activity and economic use of the pottery in Khirbet Beit Bassa

#### Chronologies on the site

The archaeological site has been altered in many periods, and the stratigraphy of the excavation is confusing to say the least. In these conditions, any dating has to be considered subject to change in the hope that the continuing excavations will produce more valuable information. That said, however, the knowledge of the pottery in the region is good enough as to provide some reliable evidences. In order to put some order to the stratigraphy, the dating evidence of the pottery can be related to the different areas, squares and loci of the excavation. This is what will be developed in the following section.



**Figure 9**

Diagrams of distribution of pottery of Area A in dates (vessels from Loci I discounted)

**a** The whole area

**b** Square 15AL

**c** Square 17AM (smaller graphics have the same temporal scale as the largest one)

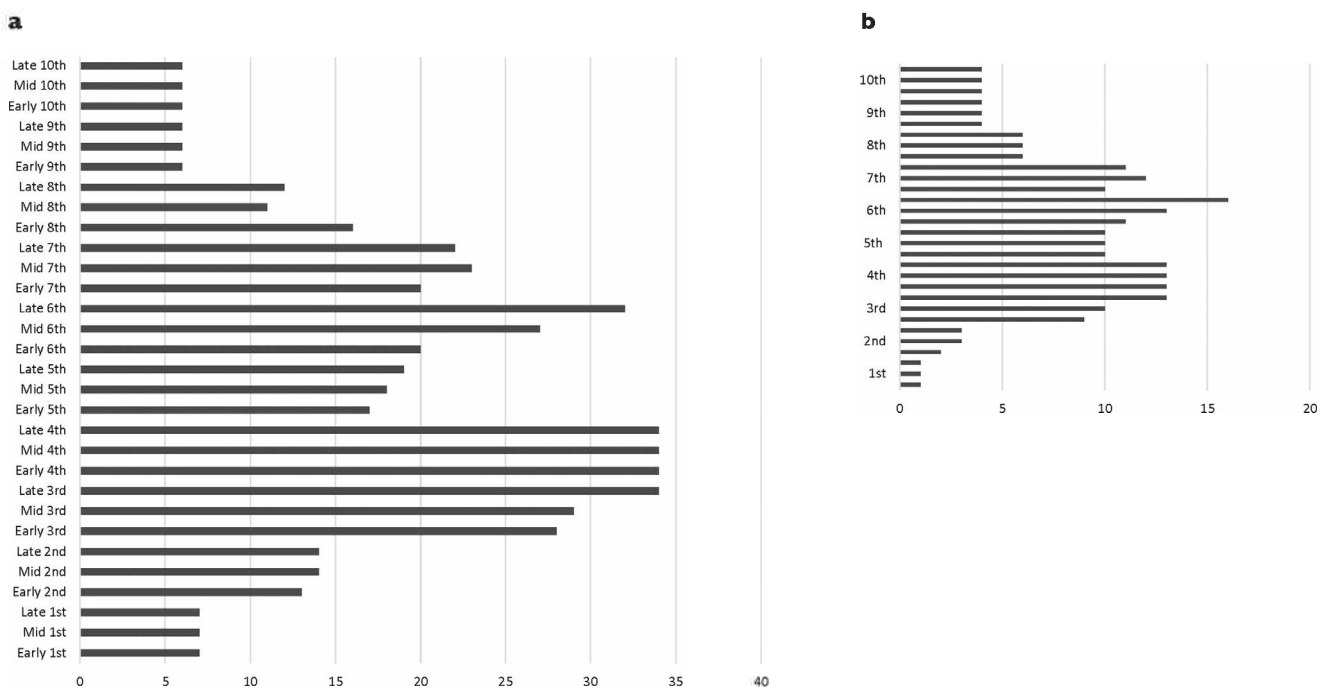
The production periods of the identified diagnostic sherds of the pottery are well known thanks to previous painstaking work done mainly by Magness in the region and by other authors in a more general context (see references above). In this study, the possible accepted periods of production for the different pottery types have been plotted in a single bar diagram, where each century is represented in three parts: early (roughly first quarter), mid- (two middle quarters) and late (last quarter). If the authors date a particular type to a century without any other indication, the whole century is plotted in Figures 9 and 10. This is of course not a precise method of dating, as, among many other problems, it does not allow for the provision of a reliable and concrete chronological information on archaeological contexts and structures. However, when all the sherds of an area or excavation square are plotted in the same diagram, peaks are obtained in particular dates. These dates have to be related to the periods of occupation for the site, although the precise interpretation of this evidence has to be carefully addressed with all the evidence available.

In the case of Area A, the results of this approach can be seen in Table 1 and in Figure 9. In the calculation of the graphics the sherds coming from all Loci 1 have been discounted, as these fragments come from deposits close to the surface and are highly disturbed. In Figure 9a it can be seen that there are three peaks. The

earliest one is low and wide, and covers approximately the period of the mid-3rd to the 4th century. As can be seen in comparison with Area B, in other areas of the site this is a period of intense occupation. It is possible that this peak represents the general situation of occupation on the site, which should be a little more intense in this period than in others. The other two peaks are of more interest. The first one is very steep at the beginning and at the end, and starts in the mid-6th century. After a small downturn in the early 7th century, the peak reaches its zenith in the mid-7th century and then falls away until the mid-8th century. Almost immediately the next peak follows, reaching a maximum in the late 8th century and then maintaining a regular profile until the end of our chronological time period, this could be interpreted as a steady decline in occupation. In order to check the distribution of the production periods in particular squares, the bar diagrams of squares 15AL and 17AM have been plotted in Figures 9b and 9c respectively. These squares have low numbers of fragments (6 and 5 fragments respectively), but they still have more than the rest of the squares. It is interesting to notice that the two squares provide profiles that roughly match with the general profile of the area (21 sherds in total). A suggested interpretation is that this is the trend of the profile of the individual squares to replicate the profile of the general area when they have a sufficient number

**Table 1**  
Identified pottery finds in Area A of Khirbet Beit Bassa

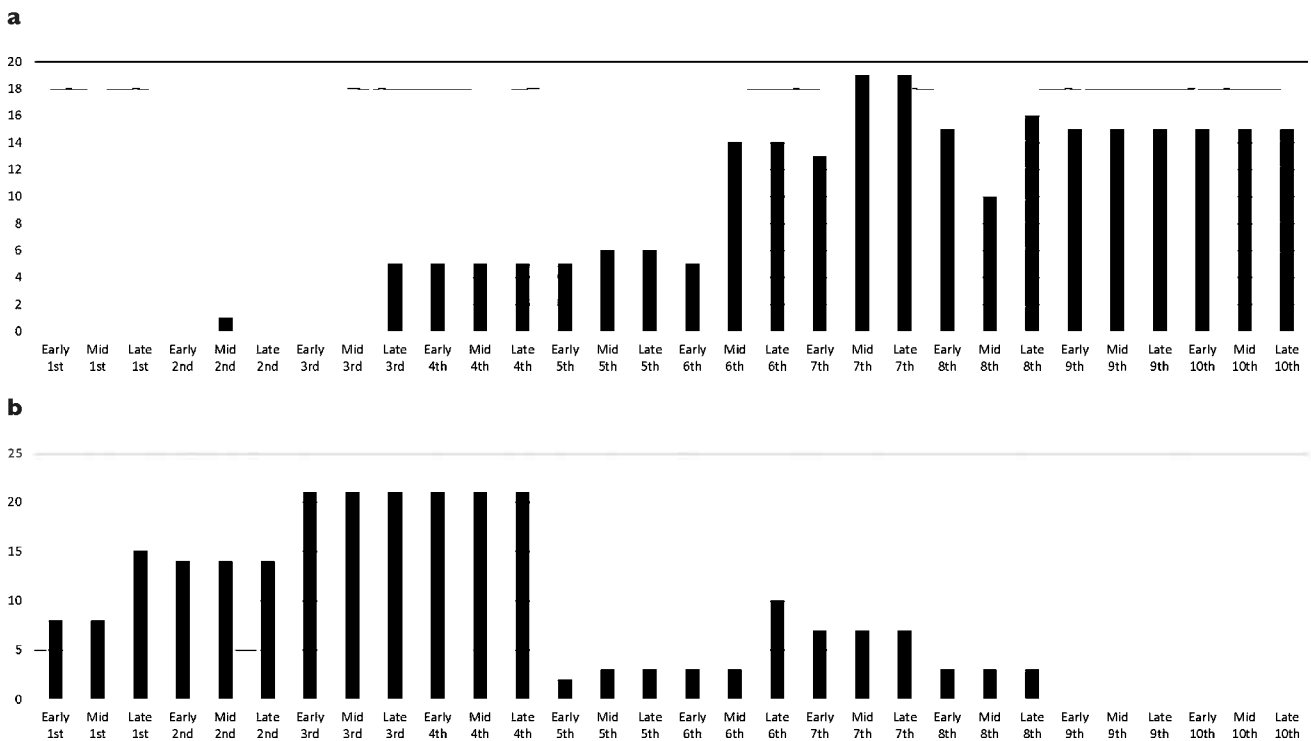
square	locus	form	number	date	function
I4AK	L1	storage jar 4A	1	3rd–4th century	storage
I4AK	L1	Arched-rim basin 3	1	6th–8th century	basin
I4AK	L1	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	1	late 8th – 10th century	tableware
I4AK	L2	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	2	late 8th – 10th century	tableware
I4AK	L2	storage jar 6A	1	late 6th – 8th century	storage
I4AM	L1	Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1C	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	tableware
I5AL	L1	Oil Lamp 3A	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	illumination
I5AL	L2	Late Roman I amphora	1	mid-3rd – mid-7th century	amphora
I5AL	L2	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	1	mid-7th–10th century	tableware
I5AL	L3	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	2	mid-7th–10th century	tableware
I5AL	L3	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl base	1	mid-6th–10th century	tableware
I5AL	L3	storage jar 4A	1	3rd–4th century	storage
I5AL	L3	storage jar 4C	1	late 6th–7th century	storage
I5AP	L1	Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1C	1	mid-6th–Early 8th century	tableware
I5 AP	L1	Cooking pot 3A	1	6th–7th century	cooking pot
I5AP	L2	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	1	late 8th–10th century	tableware
I5AP	L3	Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2D	2	late 8th–10th century	tableware
I6AM	L1	Phocaeen Red Slip (C) 3H	1	6th century	tableware
I6AM	L1	storage jar 7	1	late 7th–10th century	storage
I6AM	L1	Cream Ware basin	1	late 8th century	basin
I6AM	L3	Hole-mouth Jar 2	1	6th – early 8th century	storage
I6AM	L3	Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1C?	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	tableware
I6AM	L6	Phocaeen Red Slip (C) 3H	1	6th century	tableware
I7AM	L2	storage jar 1	1	1st–4th century	storage
I7AM	L2	storage jar 4B	1	5th–6th century	storage
I7AM	L2	storage jar 4A	1	3rd–4th century	storage
I7AM	L2	Roulette Ware 4	1	6th–7th century	tableware
I7AM	L2	Arched-Rim Basin 2A	1	6th–8th century	basin



**Figure 10**  
Diagrams of distribution of pottery of Area B in dates (vessels from Loci I not counted)

**a** The whole area

**b** Square 26AR (smaller graphics have the same temporal scale as the largest one)

**Figure 11**

Diagrams of distribution of pottery of the whole excavation by function and date.

**a** Tablewares.

**b** Storage jars and amphorae.

of sherds. In the lack of a more precise stratigraphic study, this can be interpreted as a confirmation of the chronology of the profile in different scales in the same area (which is something to be expected if the chronology is right).

The distribution of the pottery in Area B is shown in Table 2 and Figure 11. Once again, the sherds of the Loci 1 have been removed from the sample. The general profile of the area (Figure 10a) shows that the maximum peak of pottery in this period is between the early 3rd and the 4th centuries. After this peak there is a depression followed by an immediate steady increase that peaks out again between the mid- and late 6th century. A steady decrease follows, containing two small peaks in the mid- and late 7th century (after an early 7th century dip again) and in the late 8th century (after a mid-8th century drop). The rest of the chronological profile is a depression which again could be a sign of steady settlement decline. The first peak is very clear in this case, and shows a very important occupation of the site in this period. The 6th century peak is also to be taken into account as a period of site occupation. The comparison with Area A is interesting in the case of the decreasing

intensity of the marks between the 7th and 10th centuries. It is clear that this area was not as important as Area A in this period, but the pottery is still present, and, even if in decline, it offers a similar profile to the one in A, with depressions in the early 7th century and in the mid-8th centuries. This could be the reflection of the distribution of the different types of pottery in the period of occupation in the site, but it could also point to the limits of knowledge on the pottery of this period.

Figure 10b has plotted the distribution of pottery types for Square 26AR, which totals 24 sherds. It is evident that this profile is almost identical with that of the general area (66 fragments). As explained above, it is believed that this reinforces the robustness of the chronology that the profile suggests.

In general, the chronology of the site suggests three peaks of maximum occupation. The earliest one is dated to between the 3rd and the 4th centuries. The other two peaks occurred very close to one another, between the mid-6th and the early 8th century, and in the late 8th century, with what seems to be a steady decline from the 9th century onwards.

**table 2**

Identified pottery finds in Area B of Khirbet Beit Bassa

square	locus	form	number	date	function	
26AR	L1	Arched-Rim Basin 2B	1	6th–8th century	basin	
		Flat-Rim basin	1	8th–10th century	basin	
		storage jar 7	1	late 7th – 10th century	storage	
	L2	Arched-Rim Basin 3	1	6th–8th century	basin	
		Arched-Rim Basin 2A	1	6th–8th century	basin	
		Arched-Rim Basin 2B	1	6th–8th century	basin	
	L3	Roulette Ware 1	1	late 3rd – 5th century	tableware	
		Arched-Rim Basin 1	1	3rd–6th century	basin	
	L5	Hole-mouth Jar 1A	1	2nd–5th century	storage	
		Roulette Ware 1	1	late 3rd – 5th century	tableware	
		Roulette Ware 2	1	6th century	tableware	
		Roulette Ware 3	1	6th–7th century	tableware	
		Fine Byzantine Ware bowl base	1	mid-6th – 10th century	tableware	
		storage jar 4C	1	late 6th – 7th century	storage	
		storage jar 4A	1	3rd–4th century	storage	
		L7	Rilled-Rim Basin	1	3rd–6th century	basin
			L8	Rilled-Rim Basin	1	3rd–6th century
		L9		Arched-Rim Basin 1	1	3rd–6th century
	Late Roman 1 amphora		1	mid-3rd – mid 7th century	amphora	
	storage jar 1		1	1st–4th century	storage	
	26AS	L2	storage jar 4C	2	late 6th – 7th century	storage
			storage jar 3	1	2nd–4th century	storage
		Roulette Ware 1	1	late 3rd – 5th century	tableware	
		Roulette Ware 4	1	6th–7th century	tableware	
		Arched-Rim Basin 1	1	3rd–6th century	basin	
		Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2C	2	mid-7th – 10th century	tableware	
		Fine Byzantine Ware bowl base	1	mid-6th – 10th century	tableware	
	27AR	L4	Roulette Ware 1	1	late 3rd – 5th century	tableware
			Arched-Rim Basin 1	1	3rd–6th century	basin
	26AM	L9	storage jar 6B	1	late 6th – 8th century	storage
	26AN	L5	storage jar 4B	1	5th–6th century	storage
	25AP	L1	storage jar 4A	1	3rd–4th century	storage
			storage jar 2	1	3rd–4th century	storage
Roulette Ware 1		1	late 3rd – 5th century	tableware		
L2		Fine Byzantine Ware jug 2A	1	late 8th century	tableware	
		storage jar 1	1	1st–4th century	storage	
L3		storage jar 3	1	2nd–4th century	storage	
		Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1C	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	tableware	
		Fine Byzantine Ware jug 2B	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	tableware	
L7		storage jar 1	2	1st–4th century	storage	
		storage jar 2	1	3rd–4th century	storage	
25AO		L4	Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1C	1	mid-6th – early 8th century	tableware
	storage jar 1		1	1st–4th century	storage	
	storage jar 3		1	2nd–4th century	storage	
	L7	storage jar 6A	1	late 6th – 8th century	storage	
		Rilled-Rim Basin	2	3rd–6th century	basin	
		Fine Byzantine Ware bowl 2B	1	mid-7th – 10th century	tableware	
	L11	Fine Byzantine Ware base	1	mid-6th – 10th century	tableware	
		storage jar 2	1	3rd–4th century	storage	
		storage jar 3	2	2nd–4th century	storage	
		Arched-Rim Basin 1?	1	3rd–6th century	basin	
24AN	L2	storage jar 2	1	3rd–4th century	storage	
		storage jar 1	1	1st–4th century	storage	
	L3	storage jar 4B	1	5th–6th century	storage	
		Roulette Ware base	1	late 3rd – 7th century	tableware	
	L4	Fine Byzantine Ware jug 1B	1	mid 6th – early 8th century	tableware	
22AI	L1	storage jar 1	1	1st–4th century	storage	
		storage jar 4B	1	5th–6th century	storage	
	L2	Arched-Rim Basin 3	1	6th–8th century	basin	
		Cooking pot 4A	1	late 5th – early 8th century	cooking	
		storage jar 3?	1	2nd–4th century	storage	

### Pottery functions and phases in Khirbet Beit Bassa

For the analysis of the uses of pottery in the different periods at the site of Beit Bassa the two most abundant function groups have been used: tablewares and storage jars. In this case the sherds located in Loci 1 of the squares. The results are very clear and can be seen in Figure 11 for tablewares and storage jars. It is clear in Figure 11a that the use of tablewares was more important in the later peaks of occupation than in the earlier ones. This fact suggests that the site was mainly dedicated to production and was used less as a residence then. In fact, it is possible that before the 3rd century the site was only for production, and that there was no residence there. Figure 11b shows that the production activity was paramount in the 3rd- to 4th-centuries peak, but the use of storage jars is clear until the late 8th century. The disappearance of these vessels, however, cannot be taken as evidence of the end of production activities, since the abandonment of ceramic containers for liquids is a widely extended fact all over the Mediterranean in this period. On the opposite extreme, we cannot assume that all the storage jars sherds documented account for production in the site, as many of them could belong to vessels that served to move products into Beit Bassa. Wine production is only safely attested in the Byzantine period thanks to the finding of the wine press in Area B in 2008. Later production is not well evidenced yet. The ratio between the number of tablewares sherds and that of storage jars suggest that, in case that wine production was still an activity, it had relatively less importance with respect to the inhabitation of the site in the Early Islamic period. More evidence is needed to understand why other types of wares, especially cooking wares, have so little incidence in the archaeological record of Beit Bassa.

### Conclusions

The study of the pottery of the 2009 excavation has yielded some important elements of knowledge regarding the archaeological occupation of Beit Bassa.

The site seems to have been occupied around the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, mainly as a wine production place. Ongoing excavations are looking for evidence of the type of settlement of which we are talking about. In this period, the occupation of the site seems to have been less intense than in later periods, as the amount of tablewares that have survived is smaller.

After the first occupation, Beit Bassa underwent two peaks of occupation. The first one started in the mid-6th century CE and lasted until the early 8th century. The next one began immediately after, in the late 8th century, and seems to have declined steadily afterwards. The number of tableware sherds represents these peaks of occupation, which suggests that inhabitation of the site was more important in this period than in the

earlier one. There is no evidence to suggest that wine production continued or ceased, as the storage jar fragments could equally have been used for production or for importation of wine or other liquids.

It is important to bear in mind that this first study is not definitive and should be considered provisional. It is impossible to say if the depressions of the profiles in the diagrams correspond to intervals of abandonment of the site or simply to periods of reduced occupation. Equally, the assessment of the peaks of occupation requires a more detailed study of pottery and stratigraphy by future studies.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Transliteration from Arabic has been done according to the rules of the Library of the Congress of USA (checked on 30th June 2013: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/romanization/arabic.pdf>).

Placenames, however, have been spelled as they are usually in Palestine to avoid confusion. Thus, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Khirbet Beit Bassa would be spelled Bayt Laḥm, Bayt Saḥur and Khirbah Bayt Bassa respectively under the rules mentioned above.

### Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the work of Mr Ibrahim Iqtait, who selected and drew all the illustrations of pottery and excavation plans in this article (the pottery drawings were digitalised by Jose C Carvajal). The help of Dr Julio Román Punzón (University of Granada, Spain) and of Mr Mateu Riera (University of Barcelona, Spain) was invaluable in the identification of amphorae and tablewares of the Late Roman Period. Dr Fran Cole (UCL Qatar) advised on and improved the English of the texts. All mistakes remain the authors' responsibility.

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## Résumé

Cet article présente la poterie cataloguée lors de la campagne 2009 de fouilles à Khirbet Beit Bassa, dans la municipalité de Beit Sahour, Bethléem (Palestine). Parmi les céramiques, on a retrouvé de la vaisselle et des pots en abondance, ainsi qu'un petit nombre d'autres objets. Si l'assemblage est daté approximativement entre les 1<sup>er</sup> et 10<sup>e</sup> siècles de notre ère, une étude chronologique approfondie indique une occupation du site autour des 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> siècles, puis du 6<sup>e</sup> au 10<sup>e</sup> siècle.

## Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel stellt die Töpferware vor, die während der 2009 erfolgten Grabungen in Khirbet Beit Bassa in der Gemeinde Beit Sahour, Bethlehem (Palästina) dokumentiert wurde. Die Keramik umfasst unter anderem eine Fülle von Tischgeschirr und Vorratsgefäßen, sowie eine kleinere Anzahl anderer Ware. Die Sammlung wird ungefähr auf den Zeitraum zwischen dem 1. und 10. Jahrhundert n. Chr. datiert, wenn auch detaillierte chronologische Studien darauf hinweisen, dass die Besiedelung des Fundorts sich hauptsächlich auf den Zeitraum zwischen dem 3. und 4. Jh. und dem 6. und 10. Jh. n.Chr. konzentrierte.