

KAFR KANNA (JEBEL KHUWWEIKHA): IRON II, LATE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN REMAINS

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INTRODUCTION

A salvage excavation was carried out in November 2006 prior to construction on the lower western slope of Jebel Khuwweikha ('the weak' or 'perforated' hill), a soft, chalky limestone hill rising to the east of the village nucleus of Kafr Kanna in the Lower Galilee (map ref. NIG 232700/739025, OIG 182700/239025; hilltop elevation 350 m asl; Fig. 1:a)¹. The site, at an altitude of c. 300 m asl, afforded some protection, although not qualifying as a naturally fortified spot. The moderate slopes were amenable to olive and fruit cultivation, as well as for goat and sheep grazing, whilst fertile agricultural lands were accessible c. 1 km to the north, in the Tur'an/Bet Rimon Valley. This valley was traversed by the ancient east–west road connecting 'Akko and Tiberias. The nearest fresh water source, a spring (known as "Kanna spring"), is found south of the village nucleus, about 900 m southeast of, and 80 m lower than, the site (at c. 220 m asl), rendering water carrying a tedious chore. The present-day Jebel Khuwweikha senior inhabitants recall the women's daily trek to the spring to bring water. The local nari and chalky limestone were well suited for quarrying building stones and cutting out rock-hewn agricultural installations and caves.

Several surveys and salvage excavations have been carried out over the past twenty years in the village of Kafr Kanna, which sprawls over several hills (Fig. 1:b). Archaeological elements identified on the Jebel Khuwweikha slopes include rock-hewn winepresses and other agricultural installations, stone cairns, circular outlines of towers or watch booths, as well as burial caves and cist graves. Most of these elements were dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods (Gal 1998:24*, Sites 5–7). An excavation carried out about 100 m northwest of the present excavation exposed Roman-period remains, comprising a stone-paved courtyard with a small winepress and a plastered cistern for the storage of run-off rain water, as well as evidence of a nari limestone quarry that predated the paved courtyard (Alexandre 2013). Four burial caves, also dating to the Roman period, were excavated on the southern slope of Jebel Khuwweikha (Najjar 1997). The most significant archaeological feature on Jebel Khuwweikha, located near the top of the hill, c. 170 m east of the excavation described below, is an extensive Early Roman hiding complex, comprising a series of interconnected rock-hewn chambers and water cisterns.² To the west of Jebel Khuwweikha, within the ancient nucleus village of Kafr Kanna, several archaeological

elements, including Roman-period burial caves, have been uncovered (Abu Uqsa 2002).³ Extensive settlement remains dating to the Chalcolithic, Early, Intermediate and Middle Bronze periods have been uncovered around the Kafr Kanna spring (Permit Nos. A-4695, A-4977, A-4672, A-5346, A-5566; Covello-Paran 2013; Howard Smithline, pers. comm.).⁴ Similarly extensive settlement remains exposed on the low Karm er-Ras hill at the western limits of Kafr Kanna, c. 2.5 km west of the present excavation, reveal the location of the Iron Age II, Hellenistic and Roman settlements (Alexandre 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e; forthcoming).

THE EXCAVATION

A two-square excavation (Sqs 1, 2; c. 58 sq m) was initiated in a privately owned building plot subsequent to the exposure of stone walls in mechanically dug trial trenches. The bedrock was reached in both squares at a depth varying from 0.8 to 1.2 m below the mechanically removed topsoil layer (0.3 m deep). The excavation revealed limited architectural remains belonging to three strata (Fig. 2): Stratum III, dated to the Iron Age IIA; Stratum II, from the Late Hellenistic period; and Stratum I, dated to the Early and Middle Roman periods. In addition, Late Roman and Early Byzantine sherds were found in the accumulated fill above the Stratum I building. The architectural remains and ceramic finds are herein described from the earliest to the latest.

Stratum III: The Iron Age IIA (Plan 1)

The earliest building at the site consisted of segments of five walls (W107, W110, W111, W118 and W127) built on the uneven limestone bedrock. The walls (0.5–0.6 m wide), constructed of two faces of medium-sized, roughly worked stones, were poorly preserved to the height of two courses (c. 0.5 m; Fig. 3). Wall 107, only partially exposed as it lay mostly beyond the excavation limits, included several larger stones. Walls 107, 110, 111 and 127 (Sq 1) delineated a room (c. 3 × 5 m) with a thin, packed-earth floor (L109) that leveled out the uneven bedrock surface. The fifth wall (W118; Sq 2; Fig. 4, left), which lay three meters south of W127, may have delimited a second room or a courtyard with a bedrock floor (L116). Floor 116 was covered by a thin accumulation (L105), in which two loaf-shaped upper grinding stones were found (Fig. 10:3, 4). A thin layer of packed earth that leveled out the uneven bedrock in the area west of W110 (L112 over L123) and a similar packed-earth layer that leveled out the bedrock in the area north of W111 (L115 over L119) were probably the floors of additional rooms in this building, whose walls lay beyond the excavated area. A large number of Iron Age IIA potsherds, predominantly of cooking pots and storage jars (Fig. 7:2, 3, 5–9), were found on these packed-earth and bedrock floors (L109, L105/116, L112/123 and L115/L119).

These architectural remains, albeit partial, and the associated domestic pottery suggest that they belonged to a private dwelling that was occupied during the Iron Age IIA, in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE. It was abandoned before the eighth century BCE, after which the site stood deserted for about seven centuries.

Stratum II: The Late Hellenistic Period (Plan 2)

New settlers, arriving during the Late Hellenistic period, reoccupied the abandoned Iron Age building, whose walls were still standing (W107, W110, W111, W118 and W127). This is attested to by the numerous potsherds of the Late Hellenistic period, mostly of cooking pots and storage jars, that were found in an accumulated fill overlying Bedrock Floor 115 (Fig. 8:8, 10–13, 19–23) and on the newly laid superimposed floors within the Iron Age II building (L104, L121, L124 and L125; Fig. 8: 1–4, 6, 9, 14–17). The floors, extant only as patches of a thin layer of packed-earth, were laid over a fill (0.25–0.40 m thick) that had accumulated while the building was abandoned.

A row of stone slabs (W111A), possibly a bench, and a semicircular installation constructed of small stones (L104A), were now built against W111 on Floor 124 (see Fig. 3). A fragment of an Olynthian upper millstone (not illustrated) was found within Installation 104A, suggesting that this installation was used for grain milling. Some ash found within a layer of packed earth covering Floor 121 probably reflects a localized fire.

The Hellenistic-period settlers extended the Iron Age II building by adding on at least one rectangular room south of W118 (L122; Sq 2; internal measurements: c. 2 × 4 m; see Fig. 4). Room 122 was built directly on the gently southward-sloping bedrock. Two of the room's three adjoining walls (W106 and W117) abutted W118. The wall delimiting the room on the south (W128) lay beyond the excavated area, but the outline of its top course was traced. Wall 117 comprised a single extant course of large, carefully dressed soft limestone blocks that overlay a couple of courses of small stones. Wall 106 included of a row of upstanding dressed limestone blocks that may have comprised an arch that supported the ceiling of a basement room, or, alternatively, may have been in secondary use in W106 (Figs. 4, 5). A similar architectural feature of a limestone-block arch over a basement dating to the Late Hellenistic or Early Roman period was observed in Area C at the neighboring settlement at Karm er-Ras (Alexandre 2008b).

A rock-cut rectangular installation (L113; 1.6 m long, at least 1.4 m wide, 1 m deep; Fig. 5) was carefully hewn in Room 122. The installation was not plastered and its function remains unclear. A basalt pestle (Fig. 11:1) and a few Late Hellenistic sherds were found within it. A carefully smoothed white plaster floor (L126; Fig. 6), which continued up the western face of W117, may have been part of another installation. It is impossible to reach a more specific conclusion about the nature of these installations due to the small area exposed by the excavation.

Stratum I: The Early to Middle Roman Periods (Plan 3)

The Late Hellenistic house continued to be in use into the Early Roman period, albeit with some changes. In Stratum I, a new floor (L103) was laid over the walls and floors of the Strata III and II room (Sq 1). Floor 103 was made of crushed chalk and incorporated some rows of small stones as well as the upper stones of the earlier walls. A small *tabun* (L102A) was built against the top of W111. Several Early and Middle Roman sherds were found on Floor 103, suggesting that this area was converted into an open courtyard in the Early Roman period.

Room 122 and the two installations (L113, L126; Sq 2) probably continued in use in Stratum I, as evident from the Early Roman pottery found in the fills that accumulated over Installation 126 and Floor 122 (Fig. 9:3–5, 7, 8) and the two coins dated to the first and the early third centuries CE found on Floor 122 (Syon, below, Nos. 1, 2). However, at some stage, Installation 113 was filled in with earth, and Floor 122 was overlaid with a crushed-chalk floor (L108; 5 cm thick; Plan 1: Section 1–1). Possibly at this phase, a packed-earth floor with chalk patches (L120) was laid over Installation 126 and the room west of W117.

This stratum contained a small quantity of Early Roman pottery and even fewer Middle Roman sherds (Fig. 9). They were found mostly in the accumulation over Floor 122 and on Floors 108 and 120, with a few sherds on Floor 103 and scattered in other loci. A small lump of glass waster was found on Floor 108, and a coin dated to the early third century CE (Syon, below, No. 3) were found in a fill immediately overlying Floor 108 (L114).⁵ The Middle Roman-period pottery and coins support a third-century CE date for the abandonment of the building.

The Late Roman and Early Byzantine Periods

Very few sherds of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods were found in the upper accumulated fill layers (L101 and L102). They hint to some activity at the site during the fourth century CE. These fills, not directly associated with the building remains, were mostly near the topsoil. A late-fourth century CE coin was found in the accumulated fill above Floor 121 (see Syon, below, No. 4).

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY

The ceramic finds amount to 183 diagnostic sherds: 57 from the Iron Age II (31%), 80 from the Late Hellenistic period (44%), 33 from the Early and Middle Roman periods (18%) and 13 from the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods (7%).

The Iron Age II (Fig. 7)

The Iron Age II pottery consists mainly of cooking pots and storage jars, complemented by a few bowls and jugs. The repertoire of forms and wares is entirely homogeneous and characteristic of the Iron Age IIA in the north of Israel; no Iron Age IIB sherds were found. This small, characteristically Iron Age IIA assemblage should be dated to either the tenth or early ninth century BCE.

Parallels to these vessels are presented here from the sites of Horbat Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000) and Tel Bet She'an (Mazar 2006); full descriptions of the vessels can be found in these publications. A similar Iron Age IIA repertoire was found in the neighboring Iron II site of Karm er-Ras (Alexandre, forthcoming).

Bowls (Fig. 7:1).— A single carinated bowl, made of soft, chalky ware, had a simple tapered rim and a dark red flaking slip. The atypical ware of this bowl recalls the soft ware of a single, possibly similar, red-slipped and burnished bowl found at Horbat Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:36, Fig. III.74:12, Type B II Variation).

Cooking Pots (Fig. 7:2–4).— The cooking pots were large, heavy and open, with triangular rims exhibiting some variety, from pinched to simple sloping. The cores were characteristically grey with many calcareous grits. Similar pots were found at Horbat Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:40–42, Type CP I) and at Beth She'an (Mazar 2006:341–342, Types CP54 and CP55).

Krater (Fig. 7:5).— The single krater fragment had a profiled rim and an orangey hand-burnished slip.

Jug (Fig. 7:6).— A jug rim with a simple pinched lip is characteristic of Iron Age IIA jugs in the north of Israel (Gal and Alexandre 2000:55, Type J Ia).

Jars (Fig. 7:7–9).— Storage jars with a characteristic high neck and a simple rim (Fig. 7:7) were a common form in the north of the country (e.g., at Horbat Rosh Zayit; Gal and Alexandre 2000:50–51, Type SJ III). Several sherds of ridged-neck jars made of a rather metallic ware with many pronounced grits were the clearly distinguishable ridged-neck 'hippo jars' (Fig. 7:8, 9). Jars of this type were found at Horbat Rosh Zayit (Gal and Alexandre 2000:44–48, Type SJ Ia) and at Beth She'an (Mazar 2006:347, Type SJ52a).

Lamp (Fig. 7:10).— The lamp fragment conforms to the standard pinched lamps.

Disc (Fig. 7:11).— A worn disc-shaped sherd made of Iron Age II ware with a drilled hole may have been used as a loomweight.

The Late Hellenistic Period (Fig. 8)

The Late Hellenistic repertoire consists mostly of cooking pots (25%) and storage jars (63%), with only a few small bowls and jugs; no imported vessels were found. In the Galilee, similar bowls, cooking pots and storage jars have been found at Yodefāt (Aviam 2004), at Capernaum (Loffreda 2008) and at Gamla (Berlin 2006), as well as at the recently excavated sites of Karm er-Ras (Alexandre, forthcoming) and at Horbat Lubiyeḥ (Alexandre, Oren-Paskal and Tsioni, forthcoming). Significantly, parallels to the cooking-pot and storage-jar forms are to be found at Late Hellenistic Hasmonean sites in the more distant Judea, such as in the Jericho palace (Bar-Nathan 2002) and in the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem (Geva 2003). By contrast, the repertoire clearly differs from the coastal and 'northern' Hellenistic assemblages published from Dor (Guz-Zilberstein 1995) and from Tell Anafa (Berlin 1997), where there is a far greater variety of forms and types, including many imported wares. The pottery evidence thus points to close affiliations between Judea and the Galilee in the Late Hellenistic period.

This observation carries important ramifications for the settlement history of the site and of the Lower Galilee as a whole (see below, Summary and Conclusions).

Bowls (Fig. 8:1–4).— Three small bowls with thin walls, a gentle high carination and an incurving rim profile were made of plain local clay with no external finish (Fig. 8:1–3). Similar bowls were found in the Late Hellenistic stratum at Yodefath (Aviam 2004:107–108, Fig. 53:3, 5) and were common in the Hasmonean Palace Complex at Jericho (Bar-Nathan 2002:85–86, Pl. 14:199–228, Type J-BL3A3). There was a single sherd of a small shallow plate with an out-flaring profile (Fig. 8:4), a bowl form also found at Yodefath (Aviam 2004:108, Fig. 53:6–14), at Gamla (Berlin 2006:25–28) and in the Hasmonean palace at Jericho (Bar-Nathan 2002:91–97, Pl. 16:252–270, Type J-PL1A3). The original inspiration for both the incurved-rimmed and the outward-flaring-rimmed bowls was probably in the Early Hellenistic black-slipped imported Aegean bowls, but by the second century BCE the plain-ware bowls had become an integral part of the local repertoire.

Cooking Pots (Fig. 8:5–11).— The cooking pots were of red or dark red cooking ware and had ribbed globular bodies. The pots had splaying, or out-flaring necks, giving the vessel a bow-shaped profile where the shoulder or upper body joins the neck (Fig. 8:5–10). Whilst most of the pots had necks that tapered into a pointed, slightly everted lip (Fig. 8:5–7), there were some variations: one pot had thicker walls and a flattened rim extending outwards (Fig. 8:8); another had a thin, carefully folded-down rim (Fig. 8:9); and a third had an incurving rim (Fig. 8:10). The handle profiles also exhibit some variation, from rounded, thicker forms (Fig. 8:8) to ones with a central ridge (Fig. 8:5, 6), and others which were strap shaped (Fig. 8:7). Globular cooking pots with splaying necks and similar neck and rim variations were common at Hellenistic Yodefath (Aviam 2004:108–109, Fig. 55) and in the Late Hellenistic phase at Capernaum (Loffreda 2008:181, Type PENT 5). These vessels were the most popular cooking-pot form in the Late Hellenistic assemblages from Areas B and D at Gamla, where they had a splayed and slightly convex neck (Berlin 2006:32–40, Figs. 2.10, 2.11). While they are uncommon at Dor and at Tel Anafa, these cooking pots do have parallels in Late Hellenistic, second-century BCE sites in Judea. One such site is the Hasmonean palace at Jericho (Bar-Nathan 2002:68–72, Pl. 11:123–130, Types J-CP1 and J-CP2), where these vessels have been specifically termed ‘Hasmonean Cooking Pots’. Another site is the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, Areas W and X-2 (Geva 2003:133–134, Type CP 5a), where these cooking pots were designated “the hallmark of the Early Hasmonean assemblage.” On the basis of this similarity, Berlin has suggested that “the splayed/convex rim cooking pot at Gamla probably reflects the movement of Judean Jews northwards in the first century BCE” (Berlin 2006:32). The presence of these cooking pots at Kafr Kanna in the central Galilee further corroborates this interpretation, with the distinct probability that this pot form may have appeared in the Galilee at some time within the latter half of the second century BCE, prior to its introduction into the Golan.

A single sherd of an open cooking pot or casserole had a shorter flaring neck with an incurving rim (Fig. 8:11) and was made of a slightly more orangey clay than the other cooking pots. This may have been a casserole form predating the casseroles that were produced at Kefar Hananya in the Early Roman period.

Jars (Fig. 8:12–23).— A couple of small sherds of heavy jar rims may have come from large pithoi, possibly of the type known as Galilean Coarse Ware (GCW; Fig. 8:12, 13). However, since only the rims, which were wheel-finished, were retained, it was impossible to ascertain whether the handmade bodies were made of the characteristic coarse ware. The GCW was common in the Upper Galilee during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, and has been found at Hellenistic Yodefath and occasionally further south in the Lower Galilee (Frankel et al. 2001:61–62).

All the other storage jars were bag-shaped jars, occurring in two different wares: a thicker buff ware (Fig. 8:14–18) and a thinner orangey-brown or pinkish-brown ware (Fig. 8:19–22). The first group, the Late Hellenistic buff storage jars with thickened rims, was the latest appearance of the buff-ware jar tradition that had been predominant in the Galilee since the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic periods. The buff jars were still characterized by thickened, turned-out and -over rims, which were sometimes more rounded, other times more squared, band-shaped or tapered. However, the rims of the Late Hellenistic forms became noticeably thinner and more refined than the forms of the earlier periods. In addition, the more tapered, lens-shaped rims were characteristic only of the Late Hellenistic period (the second century BCE). The buff-ware jar was the standard jar in the Hellenistic period at several sites, including Dor (Guz-Zilberstein 1995:312, Figs. 6.35, 6.37, Type JR 1), but here the tapered rim was uncommon and appeared on a completely neckless jar (Guz-Zilberstein 1995: Fig. 6.37:1, 2). The buff jar with the tapered rim was found at Capernaum (Loffreda 2008:119–120, Type ANF 3) and at Gamla, although at the latter this form was made of both the buff and the brown wares (Berlin 2006:48, Figs. 2.22, 2.23).

The second group of storage jars is made of thinner, orangey-brown or pinkish-brown ware that was probably fired at a higher temperature (Fig. 8:19–22). Compared to the buff jars, these had thinner, more out-flaring necks, and their slightly thickened rims exhibited a variety of more refined profiles, either squared, lens-shaped or tapering. Similar jars were found at Gamla (Berlin 2006:48, Fig. 2.24). The brownish storage jars also bare a clear similarity to the storage jars found in the Hasmonean palace at Jericho (Bar-Nathan 2002:27, Pl. 3:12–17, Type J-SJ3) and in the Hasmonean stratum in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem (Geva 2003:123–124, Types SJ3 and SJ4). These jars are the earliest forms of Type T1.3 jars defined by Díez Fernández (1983:135).

On the basis of the pottery from other sites in the central Lower Galilee, such as Karm er-Ras (Alexandre, forthcoming), it has become clear that, whilst the buff-ware jars represent the end of an earlier tradition that first appeared in the Late Persian period and continued into the Early and Late Hellenistic periods, the brownish ware jars represent the beginning of a tradition that started in the Late Hellenistic period and continued into the Early Roman period.

A single fragment of a handled jug (Fig. 8:23) is made of buff-colored ware, but slightly more biscuit textured than that of the buff storage jars. Its form is similar to a jug from Yodefat (Aviam 2004: Fig. 57:3).

The Roman Period (Fig. 9)

The illustrated Roman-period vessels are representative of the well-known, local Galilean repertoires, ubiquitous at all Roman-period sites in the central Galilee and the Golan.

Cooking Pots (Fig. 9:1, 2).— These closed cooking pots belong to Kefar Hananya Forms KH 4A and KH 4B, respectively, which are dated to the late first century BCE and the first century CE (Adan-Bayewitz 1993:124–128, and see therein descriptions and parallels).

Jars (Fig. 9:3, 4).— One storage jar rim (Fig. 9:3) is the common T1.3 type, as classified by Díez Fernández (1983:135), dating from the first century BCE down to around 70 CE. The other (Fig. 9:4) belongs to the storage jar type with a ridge at the base of the neck and an everted lip forming a slight gutter, which was classified by Díez Fernández (1983:137) as T1.5, and dated to the mid-first and second centuries CE. It appears that these two jar types were in use contemporaneously during the mid-first century CE. However, it is probable that the production of the earlier jar ceased after the Great Revolt, when it was replaced by the later jar type. This rather more refined dating has become possible due to evidence from the as-yet unpublished excavations at Karm er-Ras (Alexandre, forthcoming).

Cooking Bowls and a Krater (Fig. 9:5–8).— Three open bowls made of cooking ware belong to Kefar Hananya forms: KH 1D (Fig. 9:5) and KH 1E (Fig. 9:6, 7; Adan-Bayewitz 1993:100–109). The axe-shaped rim in Fig. 9:8 belongs to a krater, probably of Shikhin ware, which has been found in several Galilean sites dated to the Middle and Late Roman period, such as in the 363 CE destruction layer at Zippori (Balouka 2004:43, Pl. 4:10). These bowls and krater were in use only from the Middle Roman period onward, and thus reflect some occupation at the site during the third and fourth centuries CE.

GROUNDSTONE ARTIFACTS

Several groundstone artifacts were found (Fig. 10). An intact basalt pestle found in Installation 113 had some signs of polish on both working surfaces (Fig. 10:1). A small, polished dense sandstone artifact with a plano-convex section from a Stratum I floor (L102) may have served as a sharpening stone (Fig. 10:2). Two large loaf-shaped basalt stones (Fig. 10:3, 4) from the Stratum III floor in Room 105 are typical upper grinding stones of the Iron Age II (e.g., at Horbat Rosh Zayit; Gal and Alexandre 2000:124), which continued to be in use during the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.

A fragment of a basalt mortar was found on the bedrock in L119, and a small fragment of an Olynthian upper or hopper milling stone was found in the Hellenistic-period Installation 104A (neither illustrated). The earliest Olynthian hopper-rubber millstones were probably introduced into the Levant from the Aegean world with the conquest of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century BCE (Alexandre 2006:176–177). This millstone type was subsequently produced from local basalt and must have superseded the simple loaf-shaped grinding stones that were used in the Levant over the course of the Hellenistic period.

GLASS FINDS

The few and small glass fragments uncovered in the excavation could be dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods. A small lump of waster glass was found on the Stratum I floor in Room 108 (not illustrated).

THE COINS

DANNY SYON

Five coins were found in the excavation. One is unidentifiable (L104), but is almost certainly a city coin from the Roman period (second–third centuries CE). Coin No. 1 is in a very poor state of preservation, and its tentative late dating is based solely on the date of the other coins. Coin No. 2 was minted in Medaba, from which only two other coins are listed in the IAA archives. Coins from this rather short-lived mint are quite rare, and are seldom found west of the Jordan River.

Catalogue

1. Reg. No. 1037, L122, IAA 106421.

Autonomous Tyre, first century CE(?).

Obv. Head of Melqart.

Rev. [---] Eagle (traces).

§ tetradrachm, ↑, 13.74 g, 18–30 mm.

2. Reg. No. 1038, L122, IAA 106422.

Septimius Severus, Medaba, c. 210 CE.

Obv. AVT KAI CA[Bust of emperor r.

Rev. Η[ΛΙΟ]C ΑΓ-ΙΟ[Helios in quadriga. In exergue: ΜΗΔΑ

Æ, ., 11.66 g, 29 mm.

Spijkerman 1978: Medaba Nos. 1–5.

3. Reg. No. 1020, L114, IAA 106423.

Elagabalus (218–222 CE), Akko-Ptolemais.

Obv.]-ANTON[Bust of emperor r.

Rev. COL - [PTOL] Figure holding sceptre and torch(?) in a 'portable shrine'.

Æ, ↓, 8.09 g, 26 mm.

Cf. Kadman 1961: No. 196 (Alexander Severus).

4. Reg. No. 1035, L121, IAA 106424.

Late Roman, late fourth century CE.

Obv. [---] Head r.

Rev. [---] Victory l, holding wreath.

Æ, ↓, 0.96 g, 16 mm.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The two-square excavation exposed remains of a building that was constructed and occupied during the Iron Age IIA, abandoned, and reoccupied with changes in the Late Hellenistic and Early and Middle Roman periods. The small-scale excavation precluded the exposure of a coherent plan of the building during any of these periods, thus permitting only a limited understanding of the occupation history of the site. The earliest settlement at the site was a house, built during the Iron Age IIA; evidence of activity in the house points only to some kind of food processing. The pottery finds indicate that the house was inhabited during the tenth–ninth centuries BCE, and was abandoned before the end of the ninth century BCE. The site remained unsettled for about seven centuries.

In the late-second or early first century BCE, new settlers moved into the still-standing Iron Age IIA house. They laid down new floors and built additional rooms with installations. A stone quarry uncovered 100 m to the northwest (Alexandre 2013) may have been the source for the building stones of the new walls. The Late Hellenistic pottery exhibited clear similarities to and affinities with the Hasmonean pottery of Judea, an indication that these new settlers were probably Jews who migrated from Judea to the central Lower Galilee. This suggests that the settled area must have been small, possibly a hamlet with only a couple of farmhouses. Indeed, the various archaeological investigations on Jebel Khuwweikha show that the hill was never the site of a regular settlement, but was rather exploited mainly for stone quarrying and as a cemetery with many burial caves. The closest Late Hellenistic–Early Roman-period villages were 'En Kivshan, about 2 km to the east, and Karm er-Ras about 1.5 km to the west (Gal 1998:23*–25*).

The small farmstead at the site continued to be occupied by the Jewish settlers during the Early Roman period. It is reasonable to propose that the settlers had some connection with the nearby Jebel Khuwweikha subterranean hiding complex that was probably hewn in preparation for the Great Revolt in 66/67 CE. However, this multi-chambered complex may well have been used by the inhabitants of the nearby large Jewish villages.

The house was occupied to some extent during the Middle Roman period, and there was some presence in it during the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods. A paved courtyard, a winepress and a cistern that were uncovered 100 m to the northwest may have been part of a neighboring farmhouse during these periods (Alexandre 2013). It seems that the site was abandoned by the end of fourth century CE.

NOTES

¹ The salvage excavation (Permit No. A-4934), undertaken by the Israel Antiquities Authority and financed by the owner of the lot, Mr. Zraiki Bashir, was directed by Yardenna Alexandre, with the assistance of Vadim Essman and Viacheslav Pirsky (surveying), Yosef Laban (administration), Leea Porath (pottery restoration), Hagit Tahan (pottery drawings and figures), Yaakob Shmidov (drafting), Lena Kuperschmidt and Raisa Vinitzky (metal laboratory), Nurit Feig (animal bone identification), Yael Gurin-Rosen (glass) and Danny Syon (numismatics). Thanks are due to all.

² The subterranean hiding complex, discovered in the course of construction work, was excavated in 1991 by Dror Barshad (Permit No. A-1794). I thank him for sharing this information with me.

³ The caves were discovered during IAA archaeological supervision of infrastructure construction and building activities in the village. Several caves were subsequently by-passed rather than excavated.

⁴ Howard Smithline, pers. comm.

⁵ Fill 114 was exposed overlying Floor 108 in the southern half of the room after Floor 108 in the northern half of the room had already been excavated.

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Fig. 1. Location map: (a) location of Kafr Kanna in the Lower Galilee; (b) location of archaeological remains in Kafr Kanna.

Fig. 2. General view of the excavation, looking south.

Fig. 3. Sq 1: Stratum III and II walls, looking south.

Fig. 4. Sq 2: W118 and Stratum II walls, looking east.

Fig. 5. Sq 2: Wall 106 (arch?) over Installation 113, looking east.

Fig. 6. Sq 2: Plastered Installation 126, looking south.

Fig. 7. Iron Age IIA pottery.

Fig. 8. Late Hellenistic pottery.

Fig. 9. Early Roman (1–4) and Middle–Late Roman (5–8) pottery.

Fig. 10. Groundstone artifacts.

Plan 1. Strata III and II, plans and sections.

Plan 2. Stratum I (for sections, see Plan 1).