

THE IDF HOUSE IN THE OLD CITY, JERUSALEM: AN INSCRIBED PIPE

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A beige-orange clay pipe bearing an inscription was unearthed in the excavation at the IDF House (Bet Zahal) in the Old City of Jerusalem (Fig. 1; Avner and Avissar 2017);¹ its record has been misplaced, and so its archaeological provenance cannot be determined. The inscription appears in three bands around the pipe's stem. It clearly included what seemed as a name—Ḥaj 'Alī Basha (Ḥaj 'Ali Pasha)—but the remainder of the legend is unintelligible. According to a pipe bearing a similar inscription, which was found in Ramla (Vincenz 2011: Fig. 2:21), the inscription should be corrected to “Ḥaj 'Alī Bishārāt”.

Who was Ḥaj 'Alī (Bishārāt)? Since the pipe makers' names were usually incised within small circular or oval cartouches, this does not seem to be the case. Furthermore, neither this name nor its Turkish equivalent, Ali Beşaret, appear in any of the available lists of pipe makers. Thus, it is suggested that the name was part of a blessing for the owner of the pipe. This hypothesis is reinforced by the meaning of *bashārāt* in both Turkish and Persian: “good news” or “glad tidings”, which were well-known blessings (Bakla 2007: 290). Thus, Ḥaj 'Alī would be the person receiving the blessing (*bashārāt*).

Several pipes bearing various inscriptions have been found in Israel. One was found in the Old City of Jerusalem, in an excavation at 7 Shone Halachot St. (Raphael 2015). It reads: *'shifah al-qulub, liqah al-mahbub*’ (“The joy of the heart is the meeting of the lover”). Another pipe with the same inscription was found in the Western Wall Plaza



Fig. 1. An inscription-bearing clay pipe.

excavations,² and two additional pipes come from the excavations at the Qishle in Jaffa (Vincenz, forthcoming: Fig. 6:28, 29). The latter bears an inscription that is an ironic Sufi poem, conveying the smoker's love for his pipe.

To conclude, inscribed pipes were rather common in Ottoman-period Palestine. The inscriptions found to date, including a poem and a blessing for the owner, were found on pipes dated from the middle to late eighteenth century CE. These inscriptions were impressed onto the clay pipes, like inscriptions found on other clay items, such as coffee cups, coffee pots and tea pots, with a small roller (*rulo*; Bakla 2007:289–290).

NOTES

¹ We would like to thank Rina Avner for her permission to publish the pipe. The pipe was photographed by Tal Rogovsky.

² This excavation was carried out by Amit Re'em (IAA Permit No. A-2819). The pipe came from Basket 3400. Dafnah Strauss edited the article.

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