

THE LITHIC ASSEMBLAGE FROM TEL SHIMRON WEST

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The lithic assemblage from Tel Shimron West contains 3462 artifacts that were found in all eleven excavated squares (Alexandre 2015: Fig. 1). Tools account for c. 11% (N = 344) of the assemblage. Only a group of seven Canaanian sickle-blades from Accumulation 119 in Sq 7 are fresh, while most of the assemblage shows heavy signs of abrasion, with small irregular fractures—mostly on the sides and edges of the artifact—breakage and patina. This complex pattern of abrasion made it hard to recognize deliberate retouch on the items.

The flint assemblage showed a high degree of heterogeneity. Many of the loci presented a mixture of tools and techniques that could be dated to several time periods, from the Pre Pottery Neolithic B period to the Iron Age. This is the case for Accumulation 119 (Sq 7), where the largest concentration of Canaanian sickle-blades was found, along with some celts and backed sickle-blades typical of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, on the one hand, and a large geometric sickle-blade, a type that came into use in the Middle Bronze Age, on the other.

The most common tool types in the assemblage are the *ad-hoc* group: the retouched and notched pieces, which together account for c. 40% of all tools. However, the possibility that at least some of these are the result of a post-depositional processes and not of deliberate retouch must be considered.

Neolithic and Chalcolithic Periods

Diagnostic tools from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods include sickle-blades, celts and one arrowhead. Sickle-blades (Fig. 1) constitute c. 9.6% (N = 35) of the total tool count. Most of them presented no special features (Fig. 1:1, 4), and cultural attribution was therefore difficult. Two should be dated to the Early Pottery Neolithic, and five showed features characteristic to the early–late Chalcolithic (Fig. 1:2, 3). Celts (Fig. 2) constitute c. 5.5% (N = 20) of the total tool count. Chisels, axes (Fig. 2:1) and adzes are all present; their size varies, as does their level of abrasion. Two adzes with a polished working edge (Fig. 2:2) were recognized. Celts are common throughout the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, and disappear completely by the Early Bronze Age. This extended period of use renders them an ineffectual dating tool. A single, broken arrowhead of the Jericho/Byblos type from Accumulation 141 (Sq 2; not drawn) should be dated to the PPNB.

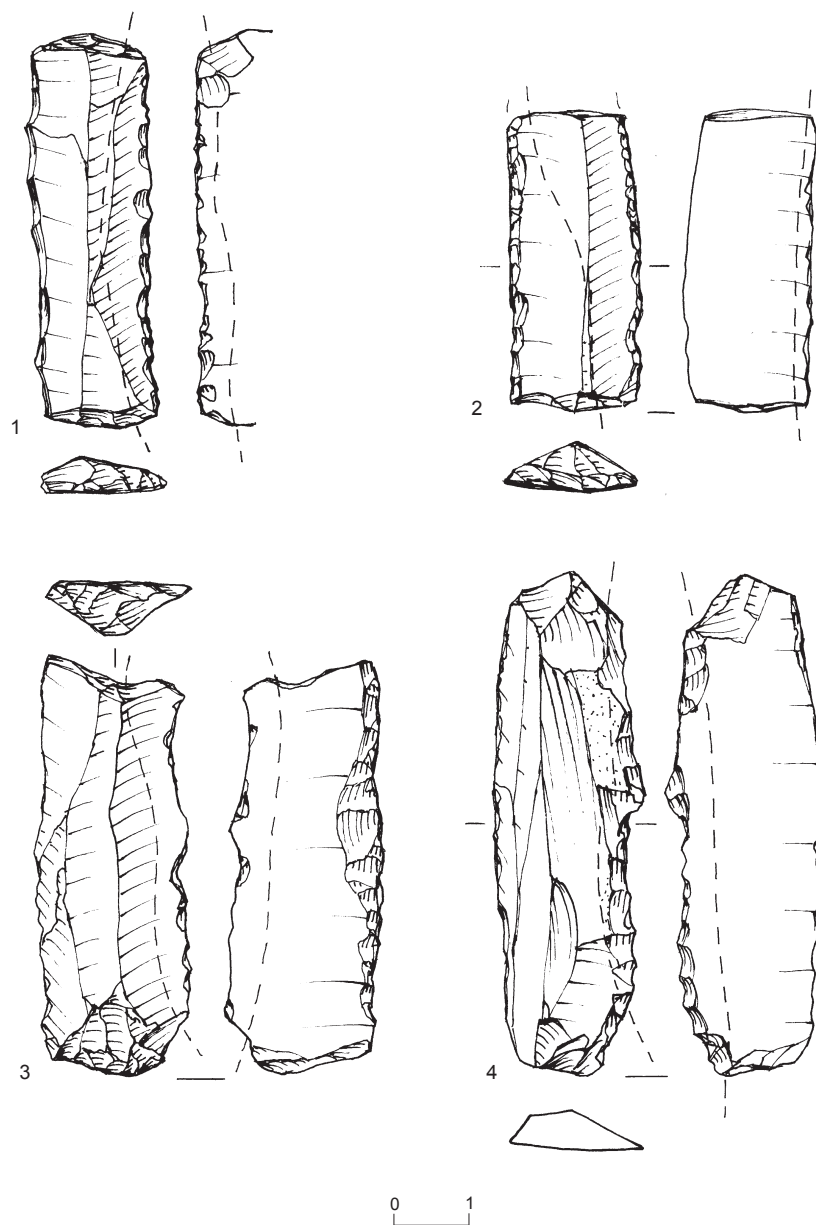


Fig. 1. Sickle blades: backed (1–3), plain (4).

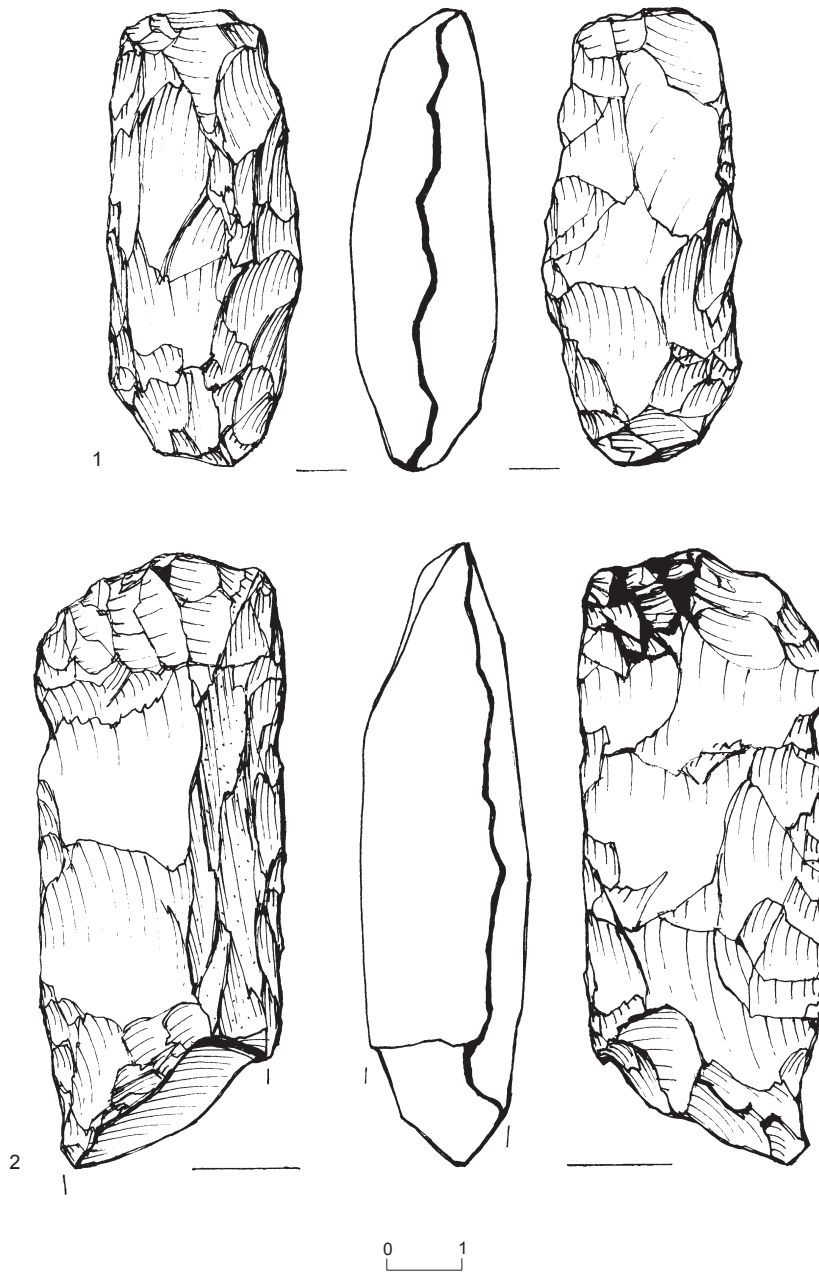


Fig. 2. Celts: Axe (1), adze with polish remains (2).

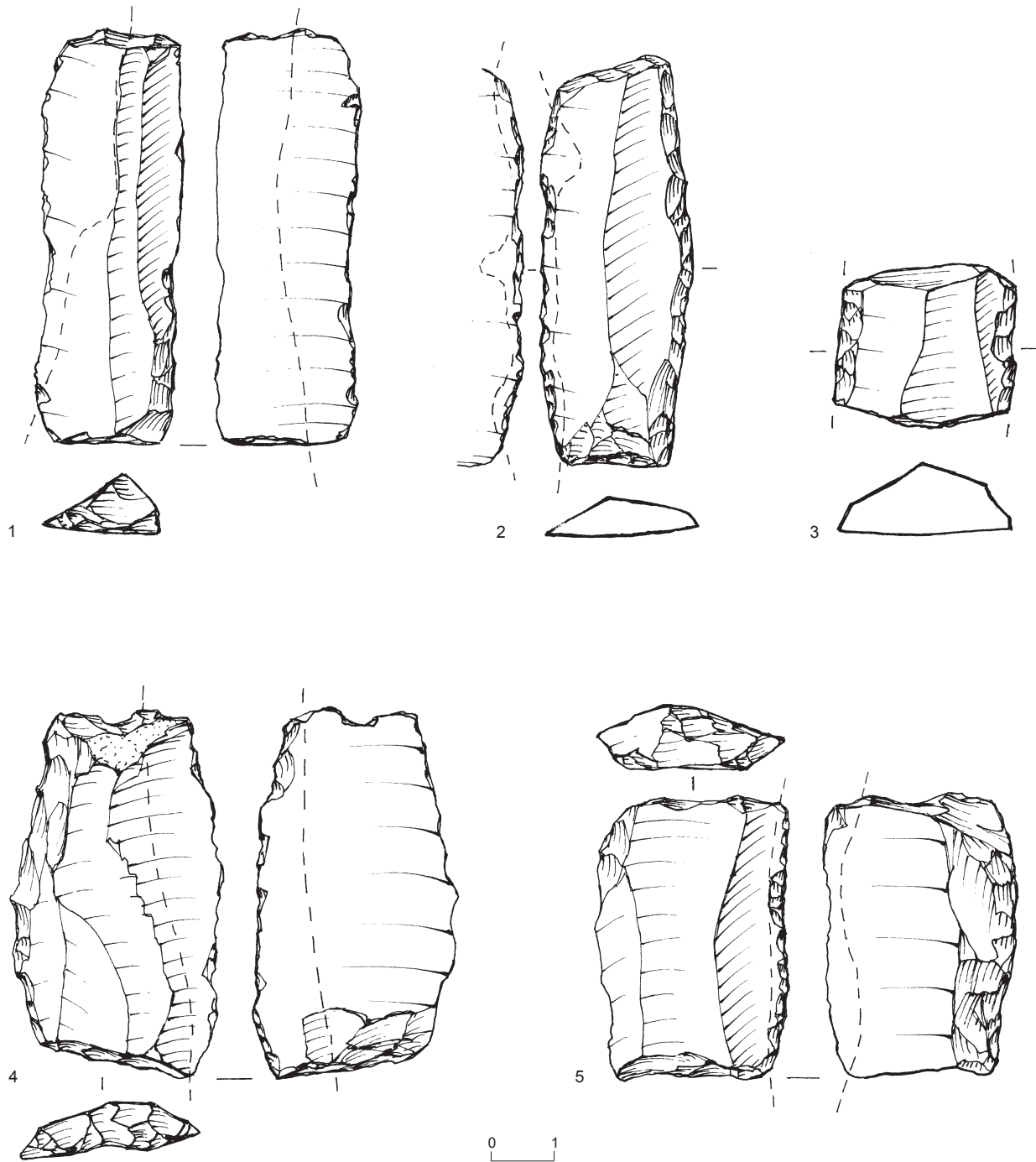


Fig. 3. Sickle-blade made on Canaanite blade blank (1, 2), Canaanite blade segment, backed and retouched (3), large geometric sickle blades (4, 5).

Early to Middle Bronze Age

The Canaanean-blades industry, clearly distinguishable and characteristic of the Early–Middle Bronze Age, is virtually absent here; only 13 sickle-blades (c. 3.6% of the tools count) and six blanks (0.2% of the debitage count; Fig. 3:1–3) could be attributed to this industry.

Middle Bronze Age to Early Iron Age

Five large geometric sickle blades were identified in different loci (L116, Sq 4; L127, Sq 6; and L106, 118, 119, Sqs 7–8; Fig. 3:4, 5). These items are common during the Middle Bronze – Early Iron Age.

SUMMARY

The Tel Shimron West lithic assemblage presents a heterogenic collection of artifacts representing three main periods: Celts, sickle-blades and one arrowhead point to the presence of a Neolithic–Chalcolithic assemblage nearby; Canaanean blades and sickle-blades reflect an Early–Middle Bronze Age occupation; large geometric sickle-blades represent a Middle Bronze – Iron Age occupation. Elements of the first category are by far the most abundant, constituting altogether c. 15% of the total tool count. The appearance of items belonging to all three categories in the same loci and their high degree of abrasion suggest that the assemblage is a not in situ.

REFERENCE

Alexandre Y. 2015. Tel Shimron West: A Proto-Historic and Bronze Age Rural Site. HA-ESI 127 (December 31) http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=24891&mag_id=122 (accessed December 31, 2015).