

Fig. 42. Fragment of an enameled glass beaker or bowl, with heraldic blazon and Arabic inscription (photo courtesy Felicitas Weber)

HISBAN CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECT

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The 2016 excavation season at Tall Hisban took place over three weeks in May and June and focused on the western, northern and southern slopes of the tell. In addition to continued efforts at improving visitor access to the site and conservation of the standing ruins, the 2016 season was designed to address questions related to the history and development of the medieval Islamic settlement.

The well-preserved architectural remains of the farmhouses supporting the Mamluk-era castle, with their barrel vaults and beautifully plastered walls and floors, remain the most outstanding feature of the discoveries made in 2016. They are preserved in four fields, three of which were studied in detail this season, aided by photogrammetry and 3-D modelling.

Excavations on the southwest slope of the tell (Field O) have revealed a complex of four vaulted, single-roomed farmhouses, abutting one another and opening onto a shared, walled courtyard. One house was particularly well preserved, and a small storage space, partitioned in a corner and paved with octagonal flagstones of purple-hued flint, produced a quantity of imported glass and ceramics (Fig. 42). Extensive limestone detritus and flint debitage and worked flakes, the debris from stone working for house construction and apparent flint-knapping, were recovered from the courtyard. The structure's foundation trench was reached, confirming an Abbasid construction date. The house was reoccupied and rebuilt in the Mamluk period.

Above the reservoir (Field B), excavation continued of a single

Mamluk-era structure, which incorporated components of a Late Byzantine house. Excavations in 2013 and 2014 revealed a stone-outlined pit with three complete jars—two handle-less jars of Syrian underglazed ware of the 14th century and a small, handle-less handmade jar. Residue analysis of the contents of these jars in 2017 documented their use as storage for olive oil and goat cheese, suggesting that one room of this structure in the Mamluk period was a pantry (Walker et al. 2017).

A series of parallel vaulted buildings, built downslope, cover the north slope of the tell near the garrison wall (Field M). Excavation of one of these structures was completed, and its changing functions and history of construction and use were clarified, aided by integrated zooarchaeological, archaeobotanical, and phytolith analyses. Built in the Mamluk period, on ancient walls, this building, in its latest phase, was used as a kitchen, with tabuns built against one wall. A large vaulted, subterranean structure was also discovered below this chamber, connected to a vast cistern.

Excavation of a large, isolated farmhouse in Field P, southwest of the tell, continued this season (Fig. 43). The foundation trench was reached, providing evidence of construction in the Late Byzantine or Early Islamic period, with heavy restructuring in the Mamluk period, and sporadic reoccupation throughout the Ottoman era. The structure includes a walled courtyard, with multiple installations and animal pens subdividing the space in the 19th century.

The Hisban Cultural Association held two cultural events in the garden at the site's entrance during the excavation season, in celebration of Jordan's Independence Day and the Thawra. Members of the Association, Municipality, and local families attended.

REFERENCE:

Walker, B. J., R. Bates, S. Polla, A. Springer, and S. Weihe. 2017. "Residue Analysis as Evidence of Activity Areas and Phased Abandonment in a Medieval Jordanian Village." *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 4(3): 217–248.



Fig. 43. Farmhouse and courtyard in Field P (photo courtesy Nicoló Pini)