

Jerusalem, 'Zedekiah's Cave'

Yehiel Zelinger

31/12/2013

Final Report

During May–June 2011, a salvage excavation was conducted in 'Zedekiah's Cave' (Permit No. A-6166; map ref. 22198–21/63210–20), prior to construction. The excavation, undertaken on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority and underwritten by the East Jerusalem Development Company, was directed by Y. Zelinger, with the assistance of N. Nehana (administration), V. Essman and Y. Shmidov (surveying and drafting), A. Peretz (field photography), S. Al-'Amlah (metal detection), C. Amit (studio photography), H. Rosenstein (metallurgical laboratory) and D.T. Ariel and A. Berman (numismatics).

'Zedekiah's Cave' is an enormous quarry spread over an area of c. nine dunams, which served as a source of building stones throughout many periods. Its entrance is located in the bedrock base that was used as a foundation for the Old City wall from the Ottoman period, and it extends beneath most of the Muslim quarter. The cave was surveyed in excavations conducted in 2000, 2002 and 2003 and trial squares were opened for the purpose of dating its periods of use (*HA-ESI* 119 (http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=658&mag_id=112)). In 2011, an excavation was conducted in Areas K and Q (*HA-ESI* 124 (http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=2064&mag_id=119)).

Area J was excavated in the current season and fill consisting mainly of quarrying debris was found. Area P, located on the upper level, was scanned using a metal detector and Area Q, on the bottom level of the cave that is not open to visitors, was excavated where the worn bedrock had collapsed naturally, next to a rock-hewn and built entrance (Fig. 1).

Area J was on a low level, west of the entrance to the cave. A square (3×3 m) was opened in the location of the toilet's waste water collecting basin (Fig. 2). Two stone items were found in the upper layer of fill:

1. A ceremonial hammer head (mallet) made of soft limestone and worked on a lathe (max. diam. 5.3 cm, height 6.2 cm; Fig. 3). The words 'King Solomon' are engraved above a circle containing the broken symbols of a compass and square, and the word 'Jerusalem' is engraved on its base. A hole on the side for a wooden handle was drilled until the center of the hammer head.

2. A fragment of a rectangular stone tablet with a frame (8.3×9.0 cm, thickness 1 cm; Fig. 4). Two acacia (mimosa) branches that are of symbolic importance to the Order of Freemasons are carved on the tablet. They are on either side of part of a square and a compass inside a circle. In the middle of the square and compass is the letter 'G', alluding to the word Geometrician (geometry), which is one of the liberal arts and not as customary assumed an abbreviation of the word God. The letters MSNS are engraved below the circle; these are part of the abbreviation of the sovereign lodge of Freemasons of Egypt. Below the branches are three letters in English: ALE, which are part of the name of the city of 'Jerusalem'.

The two items belong to the souvenir industry of the Order of Freemasons, which were manufactured in the cave in the 1920s and 30s. The stones were taken from the cave because of the connection that the members of the order ascribed to the quarrying of the Temple's stones by King Solomon. Several similar mallets are known from Masonic centers in Australia, New Zealand, Tel Aviv and Haifa (information communicated in correspondence with members of the Order of Freemasons). The area of the square (2.0×2.5 m, 1.8 m below the surface) was reduced after the removal of the surface level, which contained soil mixed with stone fragments (max. depth 1 m). The bottom part of the fill contained mainly debris from dressed building stones that were removed from the quarry and potsherds. The finds recovered from this layer included two cooking pots from the Roman period (Fig. 5:1, 2), as well as three glazed bowls (Fig. 5:3–5), the neck of a jar (Fig. 5:6) and a mold-made lamp (Fig. 5:7), all from the Mamluk period. Ten coins were found, of which five were identified:

| No. | IAA No. | Minting Authority | Dates | Mint | Locus/Area |
|-----|---------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 141650 | Alexander Jannaeus | 104–76 BCE | Jerusalem | 1100/11004 |
| 2 | 141648 | Herod | 37–4 BCE | Jerusalem | 1100/11002 |
| 3 | 141647 | Archelaus | 4 BCE –6 CE | Jerusalem | 1100/11001 |
| 4 | 141649 | <i>Maurice</i> <i>Tiberius</i> | 587/8 –590/1 CE | Constantinople | Surface /11049 |
| 5 | 141651 | Byzanto- Arabic | 636–697 CE | | Surface /11050 |

Area P. After the surface level was revealed by means of mechanical equipment, a survey was conducted with a metal detector and forty-one coins were collected, of which twenty-nine were identified. The coins have no clear archaeological context, but their presence indicates the periods when the cave was used.

| No. | IAA No. | Minting Authority | Dates | Mint | Locus/Area |
|------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 141646 | Hasmonean | 134–37 BCE | Jerusalem | Surface /11026 |
| 2 | 141659 | | 6 BCE–129 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11035 |
| 3 | 141653 | Tiberius | 29/30 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11029 |
| 4 | 141652 | <i>Autonomous</i> | 105/10 –166/7 CE | Tyre | Surface /11028 |
| 5 | 141654 | | 351–361 CE | | Surface /11027 |
| 6 | 141655 | Byzanto- Arabic | 636–697 CE | | Surface /11030 |
| 7 | 141666 | Abbasid | 832–834 CE | Al-Quds | Surface /11058 |
| 8 | 141680 | Abbasid | Ninth century CE | | Surface /11074 |
| 9 | 141657 | Dukes of Normandy | 935–1145 CE | Normandy | Surface /11033 |
| 10 | 141676 | Mahmud Ben Zanji | 1147–1174 CE | | Surface /11070 |
| 11 | 141681 | Al-Mansur Qalawun | 1279–1290 CE | | Surface /11076 |
| 12 | 141663 | Henry II | 1284–1324 CE | Cyprus | Surface /11055 |

| | | | | | |
|----|--------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 13 | 141665 | Henry II | 1284–1324 CE | Cyprus | Surface /11057 |
| 14 | 141674 | Al-Nasir Muhammad | 1329/1330 CE | Damascus | Surface /11068 |
| 15 | 141661 | Al-Mansur Abu Bakr | 1341 CE | Damascus | Surface /11042 |
| 16 | 141662 | Al-Mansur Abu Bakr | 1341 CE | Damascus | Surface /11043 |
| 17 | 141660 | Al-Nasir Hassan | 1348 CE | Damascus | Surface /11041 |
| 18 | 141667 | Al-Nasir Hassan | 1355 CE | Damascus | Surface /11059 |
| 19 | 141656 | Al-Ashraf Sha'ban II | 1363–1377 CE | Damascus | Surface /11032 |
| 20 | 141675 | Al-Mansur ‘Alaa Al- Din ‘Ali | 1377–1381 CE | <i>Tarabulus, Syria</i> | Surface /11069 |
| 21 | 141664 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11056 |
| 22 | 141658 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11034 |
| 23 | 141668 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11060 |
| 24 | 141669 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11061 |
| 25 | 141673 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11067 |
| 26 | 141679 | Mamluk | Fourteenth century CE | | Surface /11073 |
| 27 | 141677 | Al- Daher Abu Sa‘id Khushkadam | 1461–1467 CE | Halab | Surface /11077 |

| | | | | | |
|----|--------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 28 | 141671 | Al-Nasir Muhammad | 1496–1498 CE | Damascus | Surface /11064 |
| 29 | 141670 | Mamluk | Fifteenth century CE | | Surface /11062 |

Area Q. Cavities that have yet to be documented are located beneath the level of the cave that is open to the public. A rock-cut opening was surveyed and documented in the western side of one of these halls. Its upper part consisted of a hewn arch (1.2×2.2 m) and its lower part was hewn and built (width c. 3, height 2.1 m; Figs. 6, 7). Two trial squares were excavated on both sides of the opening and doorjambs that were adjoined to walls built of roughly hewn quarrying stone debris were exposed (northern wall—W252—length 2.2 m, width 1.2 m; southern wall—W253—length 1.7 m, width 1.4 m). The upper sockets of the door hinges (northern socket diam. 0.16 m, depth 0.12 m; southern socket diam. 0.13 m, depth 0.1 m) were chiseled in neatly dressed corners (northern 0.45×0.57 m, southern 0.3×0.3 m) that served as a doorframe. In front of the northern doorjamb was the bottom base of the door hinge (0.4×0.5 m), where the bottom socket was hewn (0.10×0.12 m) in line with the upper corner of the door. This was one of the only places in the cave where construction could be discerned, as well as the closing off of a cavity rather than just rock-cutting. No ceramic artifacts were found when the collapse from the front of the opening was removed.

A survey with a metal detector was conducted along the surface of the large hall that was accessed by the rock-cut opening and twenty-seven coins were found, of which two are modern and one is illegible. Coin No. 9 is the only one in the entire collection that is made of silver.

| No. | IAA No. | Minting Authority | Dates | Mint | Locus/Area |
|-----|---------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1 | 141689 | Hasmonean | 134–37 BCE | Jerusalem | Surface /11021 |
| 2 | 141692 | Alexander Jannaeus | 80/79–76 BCE | Jerusalem | Surface /11025 |
| 3 | 141691 | Augustus | 5/6–10/11 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11023 |
| 4 | 141688 | Nero | 58/59 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11019 |

| | | | | | |
|----|--------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 5 | 141687 | Great Revolt | 68/69 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11018 |
| 6 | 141690 | Leo I | 457–474 CE | | Surface /11022 |
| 7 | 141686 | | Second half of fifth century CE | | Surface /11017 |
| 8 | 141683 | Abbasid | Ninth century CE | | Surface /11014 |
| 9 | 141693 | Amory I | 1163–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11081 |
| 10 | 141682 | Al-Malak Al-‘Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11012 |
| 11 | 141684 | Al-Malak Al-‘Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11015 |
| 12 | 141685 | Al-Malak Al-‘Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11016 |
| 13 | 141694 | Al-Malak Al-‘Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11082 |
| 14 | 141695 | Al-Malak Al-‘Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11083 |

| | | | | | |
|----|--------|--|--------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 15 | 141698 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11088 |
| 16 | 141699 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11089 |
| 17 | 141700 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11090 |
| 18 | 141701 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11091 |
| 19 | 141702 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11092 |
| 20 | 141703 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11093 |
| 21 | 141704 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11094 |
| 22 | 141705 | Al-Malak Al-'Adil Nur al-Din Mahmud | 1146–1174 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11095 |

| | | | | | |
|----|--------|--|---------|-----------|-------------------|
| 23 | 141696 | Al-Malak Al-Nasir Salah Ad-Din Yusuf Ibn Ayyub | 1190 CE | Jerusalem | Surface /11084 |
| 24 | 141697 | Zanji | | | Surface /11085 |

The excavation in the new areas and the metallic survey conducted in them facilitated collecting additional information about the periods when the cave was in use. The documentation, photography, drafting and metallic survey of the lower level of the cave are especially important, as it has not yet been studied.

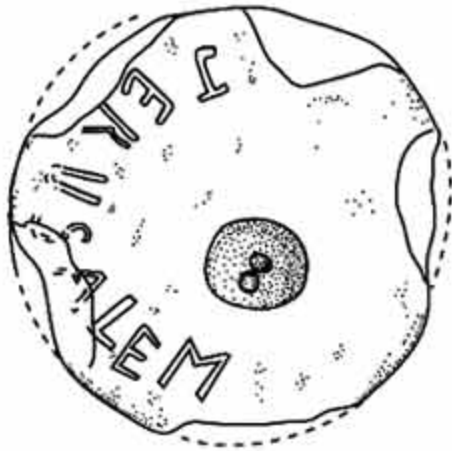
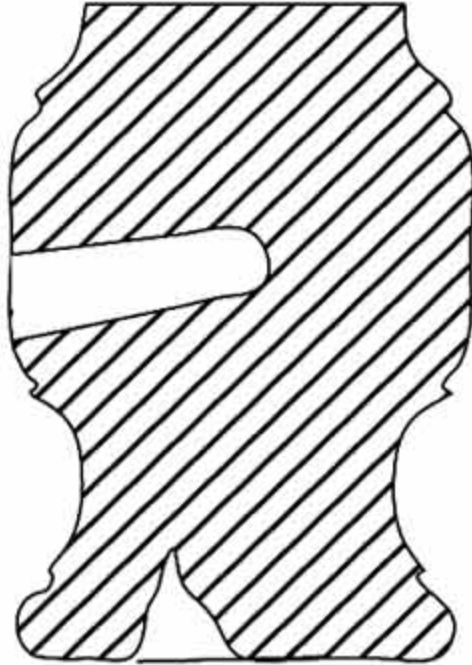
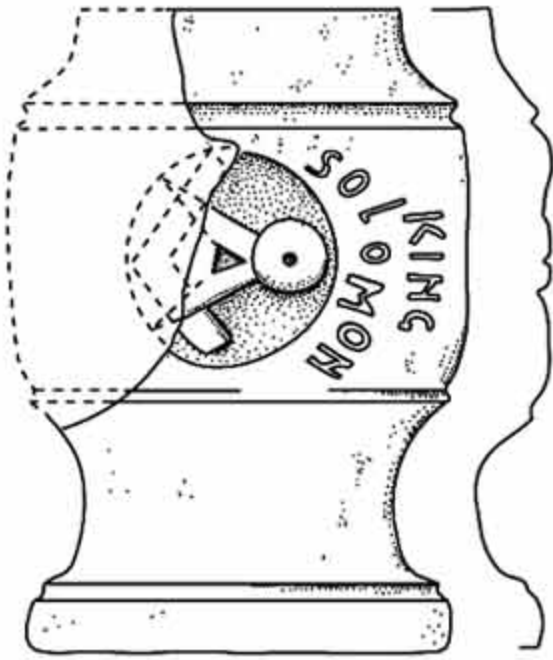
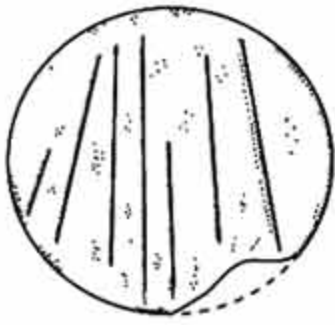
1. 'Zedekiah's Cave' and the excavation areas, plan. (Images//6166-1.jpg)
2. Area J, general view to the north. (Images//6166-2.jpg)
3. Ceremonial hammer head made of stone. (Images//6166-3.jpg)
4. Decorated stone tablet. (Images//6166-4.jpg)
5. Pottery. (Images//6166-5.jpg)
6. Area Q, looking west. (Images//6166-6.jpg)
7. Area Q, plan and section. (Images//6166-7.jpg)



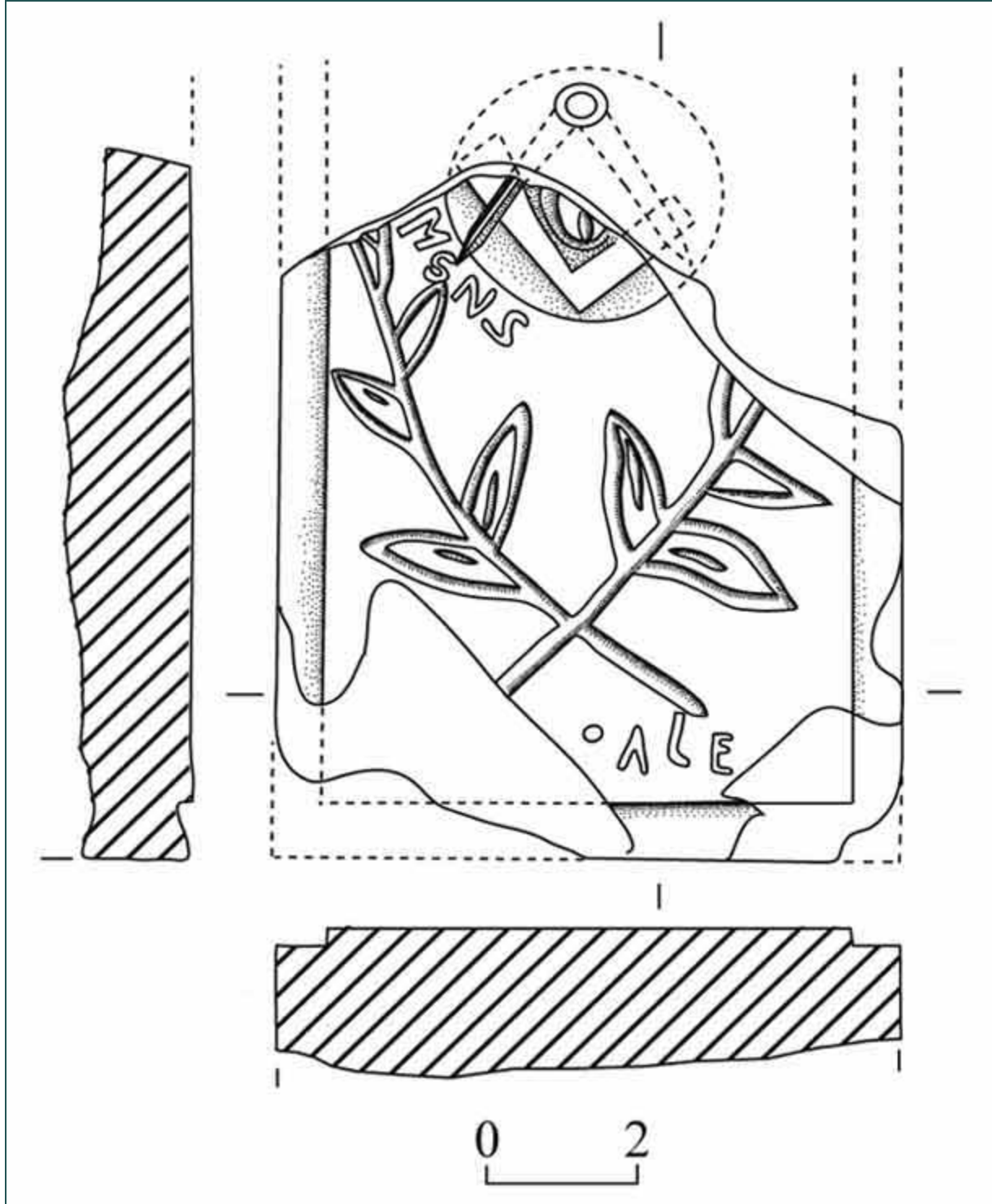
1. 'Zedekiah's Cave' and the excavation areas, plan.
(Images//6166-1.jpg)



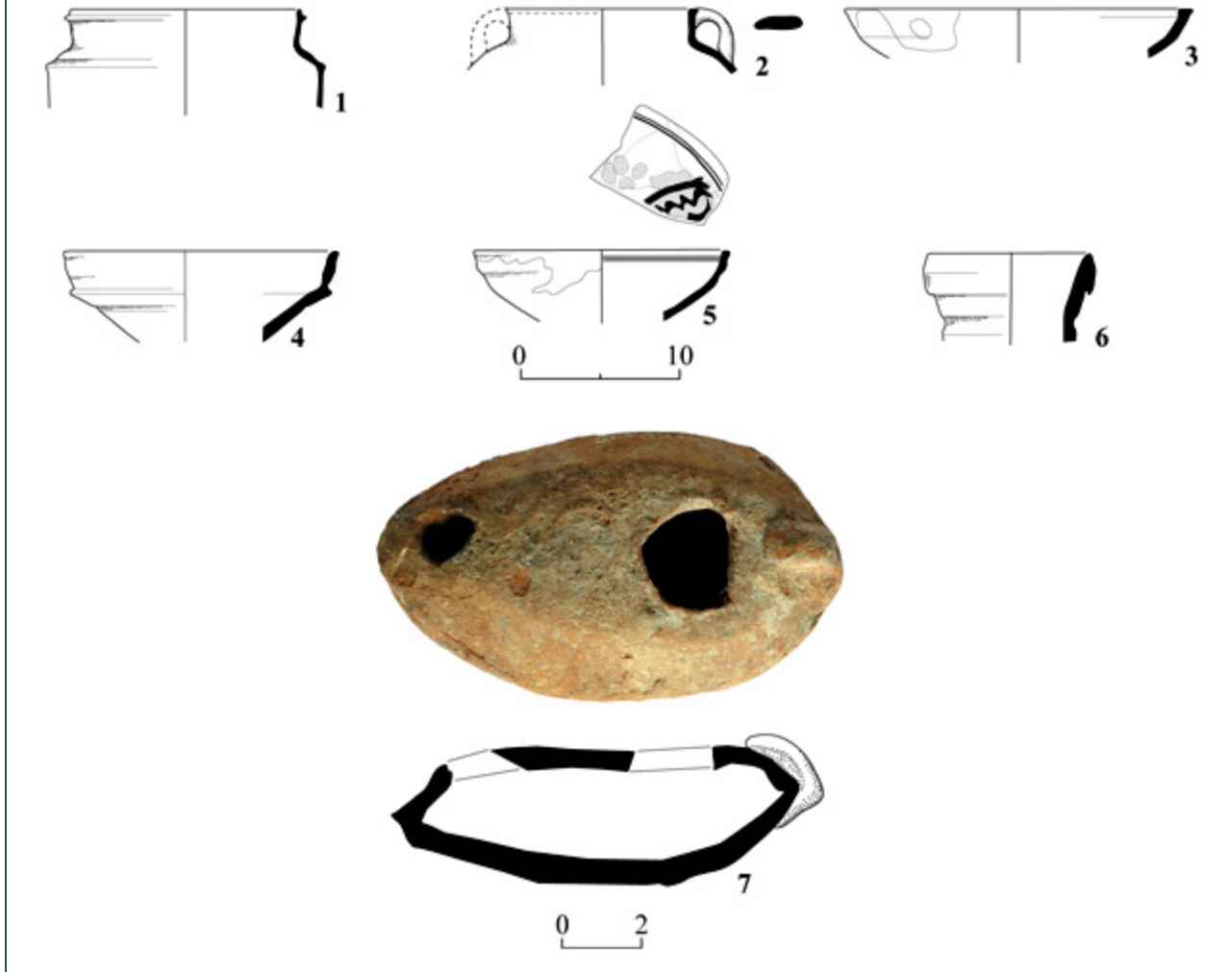
2. Area J, general view to the north.
(Images//6166-2.jpg)



3. Ceremonial hammer head made of stone.
(Images//6166-3.jpg)



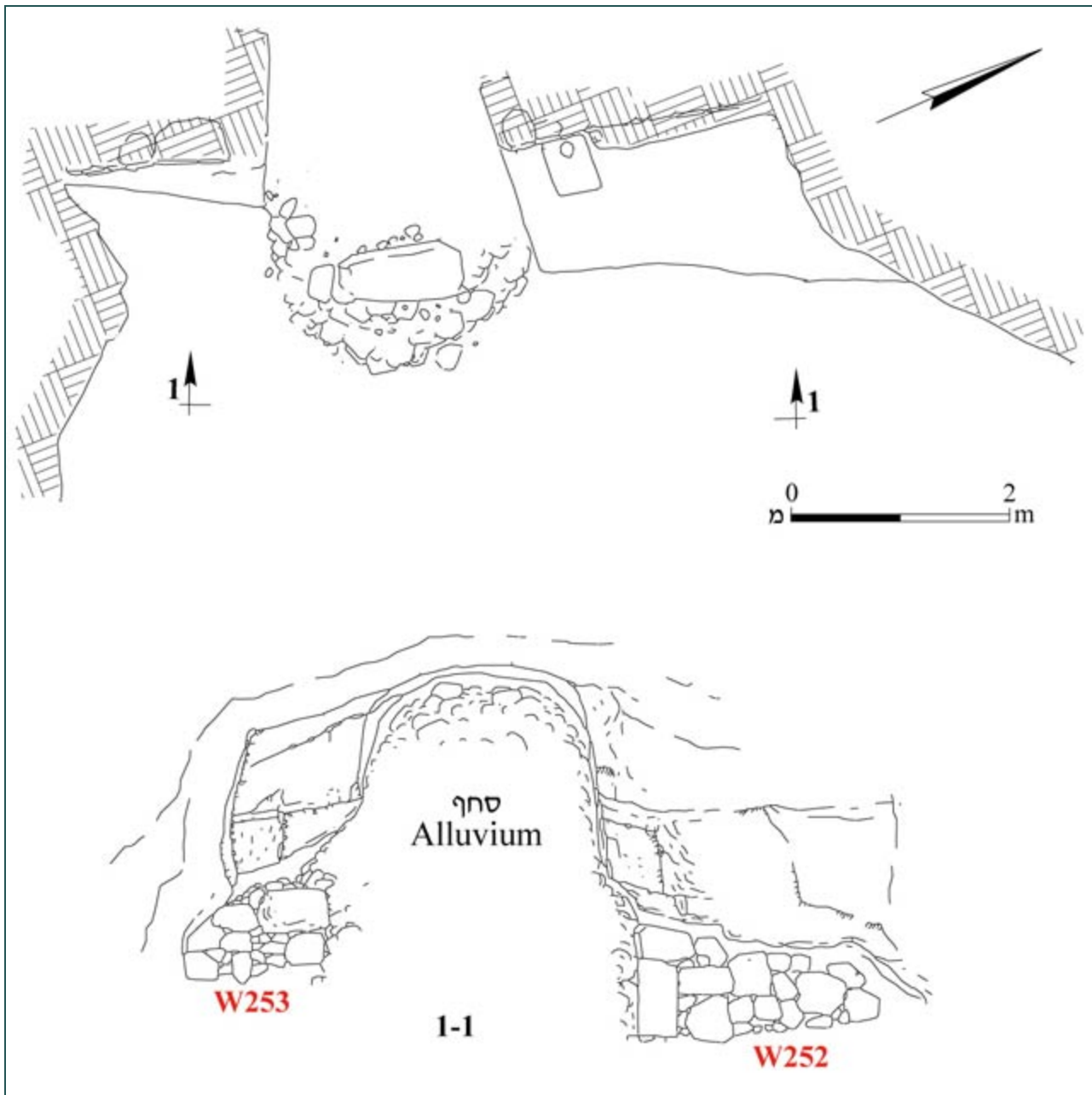
4. Decorated stone tablet.
(Images//6166-4.jpg)



5. Pottery.
(Images//6166-5.jpg)



6. Area Q, looking west.
(Images//6166-6.jpg)



7. Area Q, plan and section.
(Images//6166-7.jpg)