

The plain and coarse ware ceramics from the Islamic Levant

AD 640 to the 20th century

TONY GREY 2015

Coarse wares make up over 90% of a typical archaeological pottery assemblage

Pottery
recording at
Ghor es-Safi,
Jordan



Wheel-made pottery in Morocco

Methods of making pottery:

1. Wheel-made
2. Handmade shaped (sometimes assisted by a turntable or 'slow wheel.'
3. Handmade coil-built for large storage jars
4. Mould-made for lamps, jugs and flasks with relief decoration



Firing pots in a kiln

Loading a kiln (Vietnam 2003)



Firing taking place using wood or charcoal



The uses of plain/coarse ware pottery

1. Preparing food and drink (eg cooking, mixing, grinding) eg cooking pots
2. Serving food and drink eg jugs, bowls
3. Consuming food and drink eg bowls, plates, beakers, cups

Storage eg water, oil, grain

Transport (export, import) ie amphorae eg for oil, wine

Lamps and incense burners

Tobacco smoking pipes

Industrial eg sugar pots

A brief history of plain/coarse ware pottery in the Islamic Levant

1. The Early Islamic period

Pottery is conservative and continues Late Antique traditions (late Roman and early Byzantine). Cooking pots change little from early Byzantine types. They are wheel-made. The use of amphorae for imports and exports declines after the 7th century except for the Palestinian bag-shaped jar used for wine which continue into the 9th century before disappearing. Storage jars are both wheel-made and handmade and hard-fired. Jugs are both plain and relief-moulded in the Abbasid period.

2. The Middle Islamic period

By the 11th century crude, coarse, low-fired pottery has appeared alongside wheel-made pottery. Handmade cooking pots, jars, jugs and bowls became common. Simple geometric decoration in red paint appeared in southern and central Jordan. By the mid-12th century this decoration type on painted pottery was superseded by Handmade Geometrically Painted Ware which continued to be made and used until the 20th century. Wheel-made cooking pots in a thin reddish ware sometimes with glaze appeared but was replaced by handmade cooking pots by the 14th century.

3. The Late Islamic period

Glazed wares declined and were replaced by the crude handmade pottery for all uses. By the 19th century wheel-made pottery reappeared in distinctively Islamic shapes such as the black (and pale) Gaza Ware jugs, jars

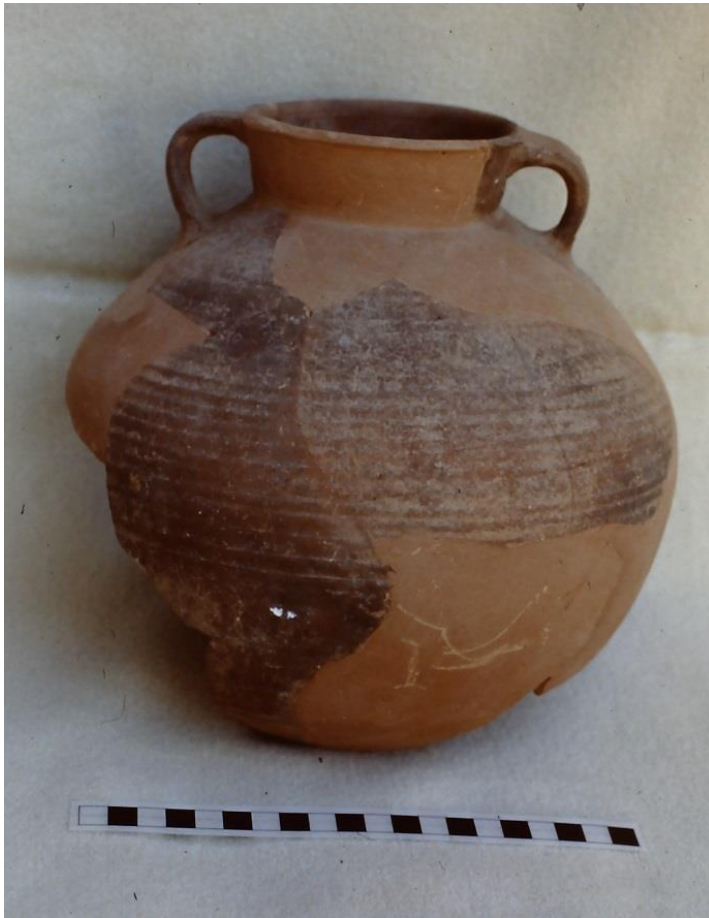
Cooking pots

Picture shows
cooking by
tannur/tabun
in
Turkmenistan



Globular cooking pots (Late Antique)

From Zir'in (Tel Jezreel)



Museum items

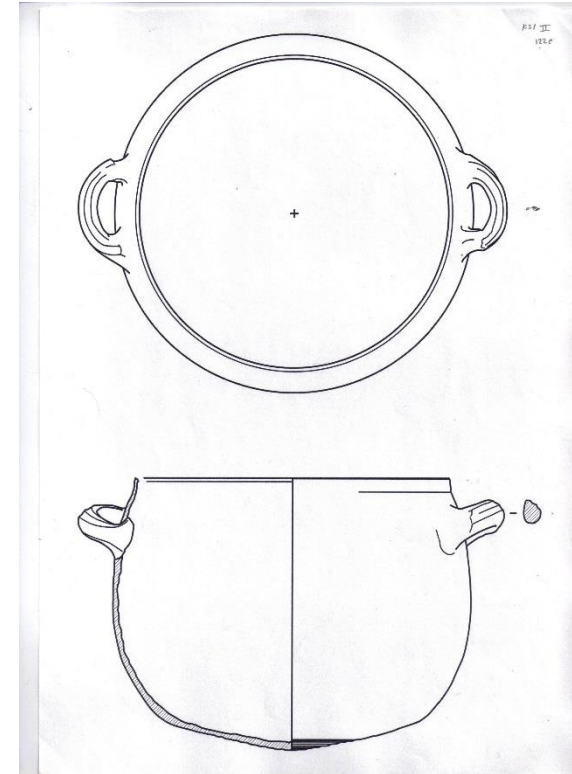


Wheel-made cooking pots

**Deep cooking pot (tureen) from Zir'in
(Late Antique)**



Cooking bowl (casserole) from Ghor es-Safi, Jordan (Abbasid period)



Wheel-made cooking pots

Casserole 'basket' handle (Ghor es-Safi) – Abbasid period



Fitted cooking pot lid (Late Antique) – Ghor es-Safi



Wheel-made cooking pot with glaze 12th-13th
century (from Ghor es-Safi)



Cooking Pots

Handmade
plain cooking
pot from
Gharandal
(10^h-13th
century)



Handmade plain cooking pot 10th-11th century (Gharandal, Jordan)



Handmade cooking pots 13th to 20th century

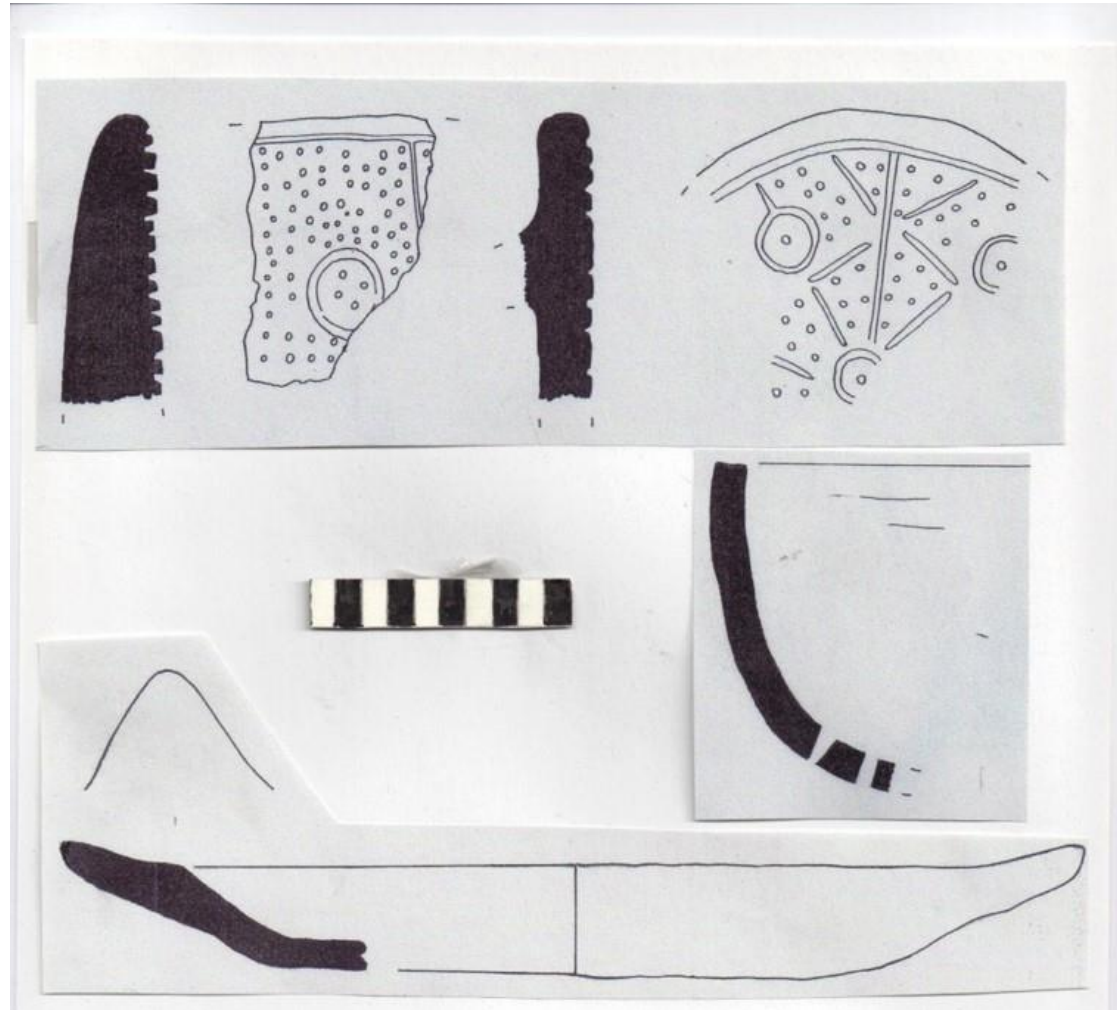
**Mamluk period globular cooking pot
from Gharandal, Jordan**



**Globular cooking pot from Zir'in (Tel
Jezreel)**



19th-20th century handmade cooking bowls and bread stamp from Zir'in (Tel Jezreel)



JUGS

**Wheel-made Late Antique jug from
Zir'in (Tel Jezreel)**



**Wheel-made plain cream ware jug
from Ghor es-Safi (Abbasid period)**



JUGS

Wheel-made plain cream ware jug with tall neck from Ghor es-Safi (Abbasid period)



Filter-neck jug in plain cream ware from Ghor es-Safi (Abbasid period)



JUGS

Double-loop handmade handle with thumbstop in cream ware from Ghor es-Safi (Abbasid period)



Jug spout in shape of an ibex in cream ware from Ghore es-Safi (Mamluk period)



JUGS

**Body of wheel-made cream ware jug
from Ghor es-Safi (Mamluk period)**



**Spout from cream ware jug from Ghor
es-Safi (Mamluk period)**



JUGS

**Plain handmade jug from Ghor es-Safi
(11th-12th century+)**



**Plain handmade jug from Ghor es-Safi
(11th-12th century+)**



JUGS

Early handmade painted jug from Ghor es-Safi (11th-13th century)



Plain and early handmade painted jugs from Ghor es-Safi (11th-13th century)



JUGS

Early handmade painted jug from Ghor es-Safi (11th-13th century)



Handmade Geometrically Painted Ware jugs (HMGPW) from Zir'in (Mamluk period)



JUGS

**Handmade jug with red slip from Zir'in
(?Mamluk period)**



**HMGPW jug from Zir'in (Mamluk
period)**



JUGS

HMGPW jugs/small jars from Bir Zeit University, Ramallah (19th-20th century)



HMGPW jugs from Bir Zeit University, Ramallah (19th-20th century)



JUGS

Gaza Ware jug fired reduced from Zir'in (19th-20th century)



Gaza Ware jugs from Bir Zeit University, Ramallah fired oxidised (19th-20th century)



BOWLS and BASINS

**Bowl with wavy combing
(Umayyad/Abbasid) from Ghor es-Safi**

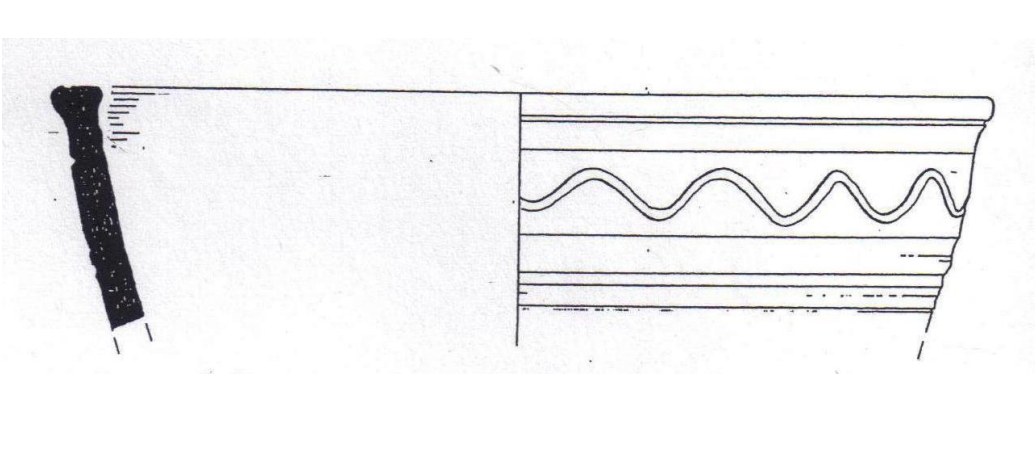


**Bowl rim in cream ware
(Umayyad/Abbasid) from Ghor es-Safi**

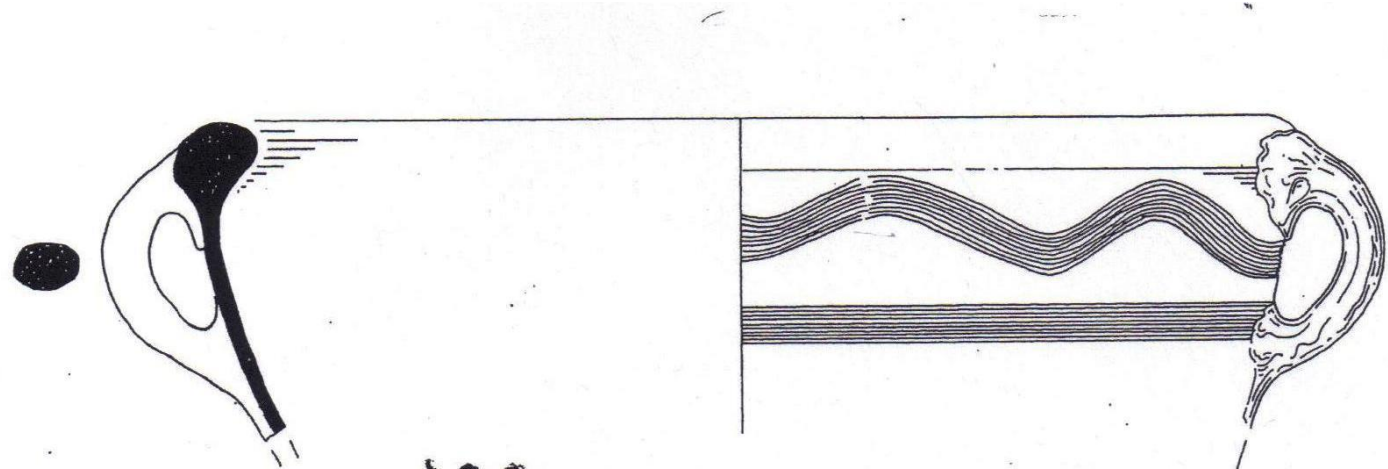


BOWLS and BASINS

**Combed bowl (Umayyad/Abbasid)
ffrom Ghor es-Safi**

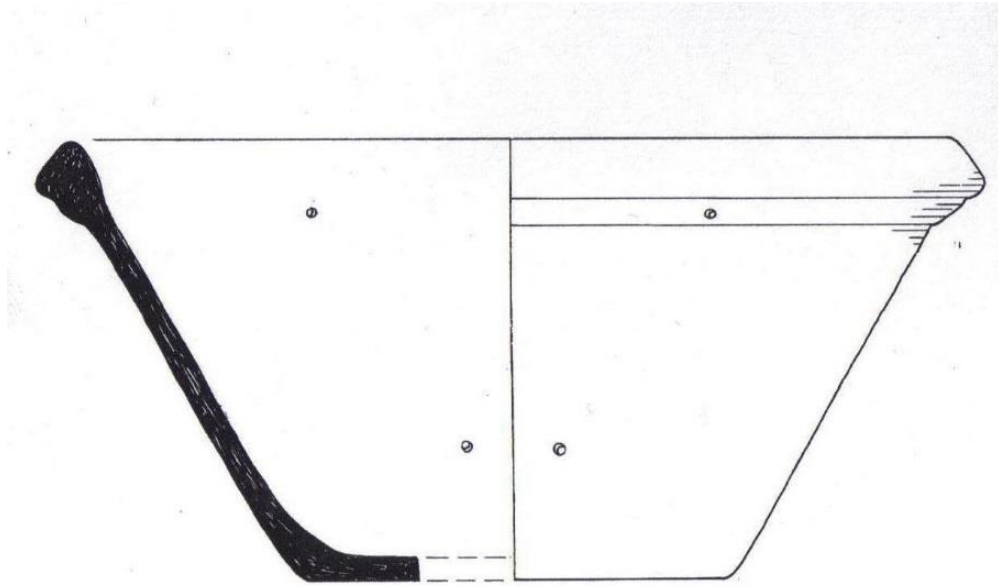


**Combed bowl (Umayyad/Abbasid)
from Ghor es-Safi**



BOWLS and BASINS

Basin (Abbasid period) from Ghor es-Safi



Plain handmade shallow bowl from Ghor es-Safi (10th-12th century)



BOWLS and BASINS

**Early handmade painted bowl from
Ghor es-Safi (11th-13th century)**



**Early handmade painted bowl from
Ghor es-Safi (11th-13th century)**



BOWLS and BASINS

Plain
wheelmade
bowl from
Zir'in
(Mamluk
period)



AMPHORAE, STORAGE JARS and SMALL JARS

**Palestinian bag-shaped jar from Zir'in
(Late Antique period)**



Palestinian bag jars (Museum items)



Palestinian bag-shaped jars

These jars derive from Greek, Roman and early Byzantine antecedents. They are associated with the wine making industry and were used to export wine across the Mediterranean as well as regionally and locally within the Levant

They continued into the 9th century. Those from a 'northern tradition' were often fired reduced with a dark grey to black surface often decorated with white slip-painted lines. 'Southern' jars were fired oxidised or white from white firing clay.

Although associated with Gaza wine making was done at several sites across the Levant. For example, Esdraela/Zir'in had around eight wine presses and the jars for the wine were made at Beisan.

Amphorae, storage jars and small jars

Bag jar from Ghor es-Safi (9th century)



Amphorae, storage jars and small jars

**Water jar (?) from Ghor es-Safi
(Abbasid)**



Finger decoration under rim of jar



Amphorae, storage jars and small jars

Interior of coil-built jar with thumb pressure marks and thumbnail marks

Staple to mend across a break



Water jars in contemporary use (Grand Mosque, Kairouan, Tunisia, 2010)



Amphorae, storage jars and small jars

Early handmade painted jar from Ghor es-Safi (11th-12th century)



HMGPW jar from Ghor es-Safi with thumbstop. The paint has worn off (Mamluk period)



Amphorae, storage jars and small jars

Black Gaza Ware
jar from Zir'in
(19th-20th
century)



Industrial vessels: sugar pots

Sugar mill at Tawahin es-Sukhar (Ghor es-Safi) (Ayyubid-Mamluk period)



Sugar mill at Tawahin es-Sukhar



The story of sugar pots

Sugar made by crushing sugar canes is known from the Levant from the 11th to 16th centuries. Sugar mills were located on/near the Mediterranean coast, along the Jordan Valley and elsewhere. The canes were crushed by mill wheels using water power. The juice was boiled and allowed to cool in purpose built sugar cone pots. The upper pot was placed in the mouth of the lower molasses collecting jar. The upper pot was often broken to extract the solid sugar cone. Tawahin es-Sukar at Ghor es-Safi in the Jordan Valley operated from the 12th to 14th centuries+ Sugar pots were made at kilns on site.

Industrail vessels:sugar pots

Sugar cone pot from Tawahin es-Sukhar



Sugar cone pot *in situ*



Industrial vessels: sugar pots

Restored sugar cone
pot weighing 10kg
from Tawahin es-
Sukhar



Industrial vessels: sugar pots

**Molasses collecting jar *in situ* at
Tawahin es-Sukhar**



**Collecting jar from TES: 13th-15th
century**



Clay lamps

Roman lamps from Esdraela (Tel Jezreel)



Early Byzantine lamps from Upper Zohar, Israel



Mould-made clay lamps

Abbasid period lamp from Ghor es-Safi



Abbasid period lamp from Ghor es-Safi



Mould-made clay lamps

**Underside of Abbasid period lamp
from Ghor es-Safi**



Mamluk period lamp from Ghor es-Safi



Clay pipe bowls

Ottoman/Turkish tobacco pipe
(*chibouq*)



Smoking tobacco pipes, Jerusalem,
mid-19th century



Ceramic tobacco pipe bowls

So-called Ottoman or Turkish pipes (18th-20th century) included water pipe (*nargile/hookah/shisha*) bowls and pipe bowls for individual smokers (*chibouqs*). These were decorated by slip, burnish, moulding or painting.

Pipes from Zir'in (Tel Jezreel)





