

Area C, locus 500-510
SOOSIANA, 20: 21-24, 1992.
Family: Olividae

MIENIS, H. K.:

Molluscs from the excavation of a Byzantine church at
Pisgat Ze'ev,
Jerusalem, Israel

A Pisgat Ze'ev bizánci templom ásatásainál előkerült
puhatestűek

Jeruzsálem, Izrael

ABSTRACT: The few molluscs recovered during the excavation of a Byzantine church at Pisgat Ze'ev, Jerusalem, Israel, belong to four species. Three species had their origin in the Mediterranean Sea: Bolinus brandaris, Glycymeris violascens and Donax trunculus, the fourth came from the Nile, Egypt: Aspatharia rubens. The combination of species seems to be typical for the Byzantine-Early Arab period.

In September 1990 the excavation took place of the ruins of a Byzantine church at Pisgat Ze'ev, Jerusalem, Israel. The project was carried out by DR. R. AVNER of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem.

The faunal remains procured during the excavation were entrusted to DR. L. HURWITZ (Israel Antiquities Authority, Jerusalem and Hebrew University, Jerusalem). She, in turn, transferred the molluscs to the author for identification.

Systematic part

The recovered mollusc material consisted of eighteen, often heavily fragmented, specimens. All could be identified to specific level. The results of the identifications are given in systematic order.

GASTROPODA

Family Muricidae

1. Bolinus brandaris (Linnaeus, 1758)

Material:

Area C, Locus 108, Basket 949: one specimen with a man-made hole in the bodywhorl.

BIVALVIA

Family Glycymeridae

2. Glycymeris violascens (Lamarck, 1819)

Material:

Area C, Locus 47, Basket 672: one valve with a man-made hole in the umbo;

Area C, Locus 47, Basket 777: one valve with a man made hole in the umbo;

Area C, Locus 114, Basket 990: one complete valve.

Family Mutelidae

3. Aspatharia (Spathopsis) rubens (Lamarck, 1819)

Material:

Area C, Locus 47, Basket 751: 6 small fragments of which one of an umbo;

Area C, Locus 52, Basket 922: one fragment of an umbo;

Area C, Locus 92, Basket 758: two fragments;

Area C, Locus 92, Basket 908: one fragment;

Area C, Locus 93, Basket 853: two fragments, both of different umbos;

Area C, Locus 108, Basket 916: one fragment.

Family Donacidae

4. Donax trunculus Linnaeus, 1758

Material:

Area C, Locus 112, Basket 944: one complete valve.

Discussion and Conclusion

The eighteen molluscs or fragments of them, recovered during the excavation of a Byzantine church at Pisgat Ze'ev, Jerusalem, belong to four different species. Bolinus brandaris, Glycymeris violascens and Donax trunculus are marine species from the Mediterranean Sea, while Aspatharia rubens is a freshwater mussel from the river Nile, Egypt.

Three shells showed man-made holes: Bolinus brandaris (1) and Glycymeris violascens (2), and were most probably used as beads or pendants.

According to the number of umbos, the Aspatharia material belonged to at least four different valves. This material is, however, so fragmented that we can only guess to the possible use of these pearly freshwater mussels. In their country of origin: Egypt, they have been used as food, as utensils (combs, scoops, spoons make-up containers) and as ornaments (beads, pendants) (FALKNER, 1981).

The combination of Glycymeris, Donax and Aspatharia occurs often at sites dating to the Byzantine-Early Arab period (MIENIS, 1986) or in a reduced form (MIENIS, 1992 and in print). Our conclusions concerning the age of the material were confirmed by the other finds at the site (R. AVNER and L. HURWITZ, in litt.).

LITERATURE

FALKNER, G. (1981): Appendix F Part 2: Mollusca. In Martin, G.T.: The sacred animal Necropolis at North Saqqara. Excavation Mem., 50: 140-144. MIENIS, H.K. (1986): The molluscs of the excavation of the Early Arabic site of Sde Boqer: some further remarks. Levantina, 60: 657-662. MIENIS, H.K.(1992): Shells from the excavation of a Byzantine-Early Arabic site in the Southern negev, Israel. De Kreukel, 28 (1): 6. MIENIS, H.K. in print. The molluscs from the City of David excavations 1978-1985. Qedem. MIENIS, H.K., in print. The molluscs of the excavation of the Early Arabic site of Yotvata.

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