

Edna J. Stern

Crusader and Mamluk Consumption of Food and Drink in the Medieval Levant: a Comparative Study of Ceramic Dining Vessels

Abundant ceramic finds unearthed in excavations conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority in Acre, Safed and Ramle dating to the Crusader and Mamluk periods (12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) have been studied, focusing mainly on typology and chronology. While comparing the finds of the two periods and attempting to place the ceramic material evidence in a broader contemporary cultural context, some interesting issues regarding food and drink consumption come to light.

This paper aims to present and compare food and drink practices of the Franks and the Muslims in some Medieval Levantine cities as revealed through the evidence of three types of ceramic vessels from these excavations, in conjunction with texts of the period. These types are: 1. Simple, unglazed bowls of two different forms found in urban centers and absent in rural sites. The Crusader period version was found in large quantities in Acre and seems to be associated with the Hospitaller order and their care-taking of pilgrims and the sick, while the Mamluk period form, abundantly found in urban centers such as Safed and Ramle, seem to be closely associated with urban food consumption. 2. Glazed bowls. There is an obvious increase in the diameter of glazed bowls from the Crusader to the Mamluk period. There seems to be a close relationship between this phenomenon and different traditional dining habits of the European Franks and the eastern Muslims. 3. Drinking vessels. While in both periods the drinking vessels were designed specifically for sharing there seems to be a difference in the forms of these communal drinking vessels. Wide mouthed krater-shaped vessels, locally produced in Acre, were used in the Crusader period. In the Mamluk period there seems to be a preference to spouted jugs. The reason for the abundance of the spouted jugs is explained in contemporary texts.