



FROM THE EDITOR

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I am pleased to announce that the newsletter has now been allocated an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number). This issue includes a range of papers from Europe, the Near East, India and beyond, highlighting the diversity of ongoing malacological research. 2014 was a very busy year for archaeomalacology conferences with the AEA spring conference/ Conchological Society meeting; the Sea People Conference; and several shell-based sessions, papers and posters at the 12th ICAZ Meeting. Details of the forthcoming AMWG workshop can be found on Page 25. If you'd like to contribute, email annalisa.christie@gmail.com.

All opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editor or online hosts. Current and previous issues of the newsletter are available at <http://archaeomalacology.com> and <https://archive.org/details/AMWGNewsletter24>.

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NOTE ON AQUATIC MOLLUSCS RECOVERED DURING THE EXCAVATION OF HORVAT KARKUR 'ILLIT, ISRAEL

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I would like to thank Prof. Pau Figueras (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) for entrusting me with the archaeomalacological object and Oz Rittner (The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel Aviv University) for the excellent photograph of the shell fragment.

INTRODUCTION

The aquatic molluscs recovered during the excavation of Horvat Karkur 'Illit, carried out by Prof. Pau Figueras during the years 1989-1995, were published by Mienis (2004a). Nine different species were found among the remains of the Byzantine cemetery and church. Marine species from the Mediterranean Sea were represented by *Erosaria spurca* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Hexaplex trunculus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Glycymeris nummaria* (Linnaeus, 1758) [as *Glycymeris insubrica* (Brocchi, 1814), a junior synonym], *Spondylus gaederopus* Linnaeus, 1758, *Acanthocardia tuberculata* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Donax trunculus* Linnaeus, 1758; the Red Sea but more likely the Indian Ocean was represented by a single species *Monetaria moneta* (Linnaeus, 1758), while two freshwater bivalves from the Nile River in Egypt were also among the recovered material: *Mutela dubia* (Gmelin, 1791) and *Chambardia rubens arcuata* (Cailliaud, 1823) [as *Aspatharia rubens* (Lamarck, 1819)].

When the monograph dealing with Horvat Karkur 'Illit (Figueras, 2004) containing the short archaeomalacological report was in print I received from the excavator still a single shell which had

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been mislaid. Since this item belonged to a species not mentioned in the original report, it is briefly dealt with in this note.

RESULTS

The shell fragment had been found during the sixth season (1994) in Area B in the lower layer of a garbage heap (Locus 3003). In the upper layer of that garbage heap (Locus 3001) most of the interesting pieces of marble had been found.

The shell fragment (Fig. 1) had a length of 53.12 mm and at the upper end it had a width of 24.39 mm and at the lower end it measured 9.98 mm. This conical, highly polished fragment was immediately recognized as part of the internal columella of Seba's Spider Conch *Lambis truncata sebae* (Kiener, 1843). The latter is one of the largest gastropods inhabiting the shallow waters bordering the Arabian Peninsula including the Red Sea with the bays of Aqaba and Suez.



Similar fragments of *Lambis truncata sebae* had been recovered in large numbers during the excavation of Nessana (Auja el-Hafir), in the southwestern Negev near the border with Egypt (Mienis, 2004b-c). Also in Nessana most of the conical, highly polished fragments were encountered in a Byzantine context, more particularly among the remains of a church. The purpose of these conical fragments has so far remained unknown.

FIG. 1: [LEFT] PART OF THE COLUMELLA OF SEBA'S SPIDER CONCH *LAMBIS TRUNCATE SEBAE* FOUND DURING THE EXCAVATION OF HORVAT KARKUR 'ILLIT. (PHOTO: OZ RITTNER)

CONCLUSIONS

Seba's Spider conch is most likely the only species recovered during the excavation of Horvat Karkur 'Illit, which originated from the Red Sea or one of its northern bays. Although the Money cowry *Monetaria moneta* is also known from the Red Sea, more particularly from its southern part, in the northern part it is considered a rather rare species (Heiman, 2002). Most shell beads made from either the Money cowry or its close relative *Monetaria annulus* (Linnaeus, 1758) and found in excavations carried out in the Middle East were most likely imported to the Levant from East Africa or the N.E.-Indian Ocean.

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