

or specimens of *Levantina spiriplana wernerii* and the hybrid *Levantina spiriplana* were intentionally brought to Tel Gezer for culinary purposes.

The presence of *Melanopsis buccinoidea* at Tel Gezer is also interesting. This typical species of running water is not living anymore in the Gezer region. According to the list of the typological shell collection at least one specimen of *Melanopsis* was found in a mud brick. This raises the question whether mud bricks were made locally or brought from elsewhere. They were found in a debris layer later than the Hellenistic period.

Part of the shells from the Mediterranean Sea show signs that they had been used either as shell beads: *Nassarius circumcinctus* with a man-made hole in the last whorl behind the lip of the aperture and *Conus mediterraneus* with a man-made hole in the apex, or shell pendants: *Glycymeris nummaria* and *Acanthocardia tuberculata* all with a man-made hole in the umbo. All other Mediterranean shells do not show any trace of manipulation.

Both species from the Red Sea: *Monetaria annulus* and *Conus parvatus sharmiensis*, show traces that they had been exploited too as shell beads. In the Cowry shell (*Monetaria annulus*) the dorsum had been removed, while the tiny Cone shell (*Conus parvatus sharmiensis*) showed a man-made hole in the apex.

The freshwater mussels from the river Nile *Chambardia rubens arcuata* are well-known for their beautiful rose coloured interior of mother-of-pearl, however the material from Tel Gezer did not show a trace of manipulation, besides that the study specimens were almost completely disintegrated.

## CONCLUSION

Tel Gezer was a very important major city in ancient times in the northern Shephelah of Israel. Therefore it is a pity that we could study only a small part of the typological shell collection representing the various excavations. Nevertheless these tiny titbits of archaeomalacological material show that they can supply us with intriguing information which deserves a more intensive look at all the shell material.

---

## SOME SHELLS FROM THE EXCAVATION OF HORBAT RIMMON, ISRAEL

HENK K MIENIS<sup>15</sup> Hebrew University of Jerusalem

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Prof. Amos Kloner (Bar Ilan University) and Dr. Liora Kolska Horwitz (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) for giving me the opportunity to study this archaeomalacological material.

## INTRODUCTION

The ruins of Horbat Rimmon are situated some 10 km NNE of Be'er Sheva in the Judean Shefelah, Israel (New Israel grid 187/586). The site was excavated by Prof. Amos Kloner between 1978 and 1981 (Kloner, 1980, 1981 & 1992). These excavations revealed the presence of remains from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods.

The archaeozoological finds at Horbat Rimmon were studied by Liora Kolska Horwitz (1998). Only four samples of shells were present among the 1443 animal bones and bone fragments. They were forwarded to me for further study. They could be identified on the spot.

---

<sup>15</sup> [mienis@netzer.org.il](mailto:mienis@netzer.org.il)

## RESULTS

The shell material recovered at Horbat Rimmon turned out to belong to three different species.

### Gastropoda

Family Helicidae

*Helix engaddensis* Bourguignat, 1852

Locus 135; Basket 496/2: one complete shell.

### Bivalvia

Family Glycymerididae

*Glycymeris nummaria* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Locus 120; Basket 451: one damaged valve with a large hole in the umbo.

Locus 148; Basket 571: one fragment of the ventral margin.

Remarks: This species is better known as *Glycymeris insubrica* (Brocchi, 1814), however according to WoRMS (World Register of Marine Species) that name is a junior synonym of *Glycymeris nummaria*.

Family Mutelidae

*Chambardia rubens arcuata* (Cailliaud, 1823)

Locus 146; Basket 611: one fragment of the umbo.

## REMARKS AND CONCLUSION

### *Origins and age of the material*

Only the Levant Field snail *Helix engaddensis* is of local origin. It was found in the fill of a large cave. Although this fill contained Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine elements the land snail might be of much more recent origin because it is a species which aestivates buried deep into the ground. However not always they awake from such summer sleeps!

The two mussel species *Glycymeris nummaria* and *Chambardia rubens arcuata* were brought intentionally to the site from elsewhere. *Glycymeris nummaria* is a marine species from the Mediterranean Sea, while *Chambardia rubens arcuata* is a Nilotic species i.e. it is a freshwater mussel confined in its distribution to the river Nile in Egypt. These mussels were found in a Byzantine context.

### *Exploitation of the material*

Only the damaged *Glycymeris* valve from locus 120 shows signs that it had been manipulated into a shell pendant by making a hole in the umbo of the valve.

The umbonal fragment of *Chambardia* lacks any traces of manipulation. However the large valves of these freshwater mussels have attracted the attention of man since at least the Natufian period because of their beautiful pearly interior (Reese et al., 1986). The excavation of the nearby Byzantine church of Karkur, 5 km N of Be'er Sheva, revealed the presence of similar fragments (Mienis, 2004: as *Aspatharia rubens*).

It is a pity that during the excavation of Horbat Rimmon no other shells have been preserved for further study.

## REFERENCES

- Horwitz, L.K., 1998. Animal bones from Horbat Rimmon: Hellenistic to Byzantine Periods. 'Atiqot, 35: 65-76.
- Kloner, A., 1980. Horvat Rimmon 1979. *Israel Exploration Journal*, 30: 226-228.

- Kloner, A., 1981. Horvat Rimmon 1980. *Israel Exploration Journal*, 31: 241-242.
- Kloner, A., 1992. Rimmon, Khirbet. *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Jerusalem, 4: 1466-1468.
- Mienis, H.K., 2004. Aquatic molluscs. In P. Figueras (Ed.): *Horvat Kurkar 'Illit. A Byzantine Cemetery Church in the Northern Negev (Final Report of the Excavations 1989-1995)*. Beer-Sheva Archaeological Monographs, 1 (=Beer-Sheva, Studies by the Department of Bible, Archaeology and Ancient Near East, 16): 332-334.
- Reese, D.S., Mienis, H.K. & Woodward, F.R., 1986. On the trade of shells and fish from the Nile River. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 264: 79-84.

---

### RECENT PUBLICATIONS

**DUPONT C.**, 2014 – « Do not mix up apples and oranges! A concept applied to shells from the Mesolithic. » In J.J. Cantillo, D. Bernal, J. Ramos (eds.), *Moluscos y púrpura en contextos arqueológicos atlántico-mediterráneos: nuevos datos y reflexiones en clave de proceso histórico: actas de la III reunión científica de arqueomalacología de la Península Ibérica, celebrada en Cádiz los días 3 y 4 de diciembre de 2012*, Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, Servicio de Publicaciones, ISBN: 978-84-9828-475-1, 41-50.

Sea-shells are both composed of an animal or the flesh, and of a skeleton, the shell. This diversity is crucial for maritime human communities because, for them, mollusks represent sometimes food or raw material. French examples from Prehistory to nowadays demonstrate that the recycling of a shelly skeleton from an animal that had been eaten is not a systematic behavior.

Since the Mesolithic the collecting of shells can correspond to different activities depending on whether Man is looking for food or raw material. This distinction can have a signification in the symbolic point of view. So, shells that are never seen alive by Man can compose personal ornaments. But this dichotomous behavior is not only restricted to our Prehistory. It is what we want to illustrate with French examples through the diversity of uses of marine shells highlight thanks to the development of archaeomalacological studies.

\*\*\*\*\*

**MIENIS, H.K.**, 2014. Shells from Areas J and N, pp. 333-336; Shells from Area Z, pp. 373-375. In: Geva, H., *Jewish Quarter excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969-1982. Volume VI: Areas J, N, Z and other studies*. Jerusalem, Israel Exploration Society and Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

These two short chapters record the relatively sparse archaeomalacological material recovered during the excavation of this extensive site. Areas J and N between them yielded just 13 shells, dating mostly to the second half of the 1st century BC. These comprised the Mediterranean gastropods *Hexaplex trunculus* (1) and *Bolinus brandaris* (2), the Mediterranean bivalves *Ostreola stentina* (1) and *Spondylus gaederopus* (1), the Red Sea bivalve *Pinctada margaritifera* (1), the African freshwater mussel *Chambardia rubens arcuata* (4) and the local land snail *Levantina spiriplana hierosolyma* (3). Some of the marine shells appeared beachworn and none had been modified; all appear to be stray finds. The Red Sea pearl oyster and the Nile pearl mussel may conceivably have been imported for ornamental purposes and imply trade connections with these areas. In contrast, Area Z produced only a cache of 20 shells of the land snail *Levantina spiriplana wernerii*, dated to the 2nd-1st century BC. This subspecies is distinct from ssp. *hierosolyma*, being more globose and lacking an umbilicus. The shells are interpreted as food debris but, interestingly, this subspecies does not occur naturally at Jerusalem and the snails