

Greco-Roman Jewellery from the Necropolis of Qasrawet (Sinai)

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Introduction

The ancient site of Qasrawet is situated south-west of Qatieh, the largest oasis in northern Sinai, and 30 km. or one day's journey east of Pelusium and 10 km. south of the el-'Arish-Qantara road on one of the minor roads leading from northern Sinai to the Gulf of Suez, and is tentatively identified with *Castrum Autaei*¹. First occupied in the 2nd century BCE and abandoned, though not violently destroyed in the late 2nd or early 3rd century CE, Qasrawet served as transit for Nabatean caravans on their way to the Gulf of Suez². In the necropolis Clédat investigated six tombs and three mausolea³; two burials (Tombs 1–2) were again cleaned in the later campaign under Oren and Netzer⁴. Clédat noted three types of burials. First, the dead were placed in a shallow cavity of a metre or less into the ground, so that the body was hardly covered by the soil. Second, the dead were laid into a bottomless coffin constructed of stone or brick. The cover was formed by slabs of limestone, held together by plaster. Since the shape recalls Egyptian anthropoid sarcophagi Clédat speaks of the sarcophagus type. These two types had no tomb marker. The grave-goods comprised mainly jewellery. Third, there are chamber tombs built of ashlar and reached through a vaulted corridor with steps, the mausolea. Since all were pillaged in antiquity no items of personal adornment were found *in situ*; some clay vessels and a horned altar were recovered. When remains of the skeleton were retrieved the dead were found to have been placed on their back facing east.

In a recent study⁵ the jewellery from Tomb 2 at Qasrawet and from Tombs 119 and 100 at Mampsis was examined, focusing on two questions: first, whether jewellery can serve as marker for ethnicity; second, whether it can support the existence of a Nabatean school of goldsmiths. It was suggested that the jewellery, inspired by Egyptian and Levantine Greco-Roman types, was manufactured by local craftsmen and that Nabatean jewellery should be defined as objects created in regions under Nabatean control and within the range of the Nabatean trading zone in the Near East. Furthermore, jewellery should be taken as a marker

¹ OREN 1982, 204 fig. 1; TSAFRIR 1982, 214; ROKÉAH 1983, 95. Tsafirir convincingly argues that in the 1st century CE the area was inhabited by Arabs named Autaei who were probably Nabateans.

² OREN 1982, 207–208. Oren suggested that Qasrawet was first a station of tent-dwellers and from the late 1st century BCE onwards a permanent settlement, a possible hypothetical interpretation based on historical conjecture rather than archaeological evidence.

³ CLÉDAT 1912, 158–164.

⁴ OREN – NETZER 1977; Oren 1980; 1982.

⁵ ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015.

for ethnicity only in combination with other indicators and features of Nabatean remains⁶. The Negev desert with Mamfisis was an integral part of the Nabatean realm; for Qasrawet in the Sinai⁷ ethnic markers are the Nabatean temples, a fragmentary alabaster incense altar from one of them with a Nabatean inscription mentioning al-Kutba' and an ostrakon with the name of 'Azîzî / 'Azîzu⁸, all pointing to the Roman period, i.e. the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Yet, analysing the archaeological data from Qasrawet the import of Rhodian, Knidian and Koan amphoras and of moldmade bowls in conjunction with 2nd century BCE lamps⁹ documents the existence of a Hellenistic, late Ptolemaic settlement. Hence, the question arises whether any of the finds from the necropolis can be attributed to the Hellenistic period and whether it is possible to differentiate between Hellenistic and Roman shapes and style. In jewellery study it is a severe handicap that so many items were acquired on the antiquities market, lacking archaeological context and secure provenience, and that the number of dated assemblages is negligible. Nevertheless, the singularity of the assemblage from a remote settlement justifies a fresh look at the archaeological data. In this paper the items of jewellery¹⁰ will be presented according to their find spot with the addition of four artefacts in the Ismaliya Museum, their typological and chronological significance will be discussed and the funerary rites examined.

Tomb 1

According to Clédat the tomb contained the disintegrated burial of a female who was laid to rest with two pairs of earrings, a necklace of blue, green, and gold-covered beads (Ismaliya Museum No. 775), and a silver finger-ring¹¹.

*Pair of earrings: hoop with animal head finial (fig. 1 – Ismaliya Museum Nos. 778–779)*¹²

Length 3.2 cm, weight 3.15 and 3.7 gm.

The slightly damaged earrings consist of a barrel-shaped cornelian held between two gold caps decorated with wire. From it a hoop made of two strands of twisted wire emerges, forming a hook at the other end. It is inserted into a small eyelet attached to the lion's head.

Clédat defines the type as ›Persian‹ style. On typological grounds the dating of the Qasrawet items is not easy. Earrings with human and animal head finials – the head of a lion, lion griffin, ram, antelope, bull, lynx, or dolphin – are a popular Hellenistic form of Achaemenid design and origin; the hoop generally made of twisted wires¹³. In a burial cave in the Shephelah, attributed to Greek settlers of the early Hellenistic period, a single earring with a ram head finial was uncovered¹⁴. In the 2nd century BCE a new version was created,

⁶ I hesitate to speak of Nabatean culture the components of which are not clearly defined.

⁷ The Nabatean graffiti in the Sinai are another important source of information; on their significance for Nabatean identity and ethnicity see GRAF 2004.

⁸ OREN 1982, figs. 3–4; STRUGNELL 1959, 34–35; ROKÉAH 1983, 94.

⁹ OREN 1982, 207.

¹⁰ The jewellery is exhibited in the Ismaliya Museum (figs. 1–2. 4. 9–10 from Clédat's excavation; figs. 11–14 were also found at Qasrawet; all illustrations North Sinai Survey, E. D. Oren). In the later re-cleaning of the tombs additional finds came to light (figs. 3. 5–8; North Sinai Expedition, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba; photos by A. Fogel).

¹¹ CLÉDAT 1912, 159–160.

¹² CLÉDAT 1912, pl. 3, 1–2; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 159* fig. 12.

¹³ HIGGINS 1980, 159–160; HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, nos. 70–78; GREIFENHAGEN 1975, pls. 44–45; HACKENS – WINKES 1983, no. 17; DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 40–64; DEPERT-LIPPITZ 1985, no. 40.

¹⁴ KLONER – REGEV – RAPPAPORT 1992, 35* fig. 12.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

continuing into the 1st century BCE and perhaps into the 1st century CE¹⁵. Characteristic is the combination of gold foil and wire with semi-precious stones or glass beads, both small beads or large barrel-shaped ones and thin washer-shaped granulated disc beads. The style heralds the preference for the polychrome fashion brought about by the contrast between the gold and coloured stones which is the hallmark of the later imperial period¹⁶. Among the Egyptian examples in Berlin there is a pair combining dolphin heads with beads of emerald, agate, and gold, a type also depicted on a mummy cover¹⁷. All examples mentioned are technically of a higher standard, the rings forming an elegant circle. The earrings from Qasrawet are more rectangular in outline, giving them a squat appearance, and the bead is always a single tubular semi-precious stone. There are no exact parallels known to me, and the Qasrawet examples form a unique group, plausibly representing a local school goldsmiths.

Pair of earrings: hoop with movable pendant (fig. 2 – Ismaliya Museum Nos. 777)¹⁸

Height 3.2 cm, weight 3 and 5 gm.

The earrings are not identical and might not have formed a pair. The left earring is composed of a rounded hoop with a movable pendant in shape of a lyre made of wire. The right one is boat-shaped (the navicella type, see below Fig. 5) and had a malachite bead now lost. On the museum photo the ends of the hoops are entwined, differing from Clédat's illustration.

¹⁵ HIGGINS 1980, 162–163; PIERIDES 1971, 41–42, pl. 28, 1–7, most dated to the 1st century BCE.

¹⁶ MARSHALL 1911, nos. 2426–2427 = HIGGINS 1980, pl. 47E.

¹⁷ SCHÄFER – MÖLLER – SCHUBART 1910, 87–88, pl. 19, 149; the mummy on p. 79, fig. 79.

¹⁸ CLÉDAT 1912, pl. 3, 3–4.

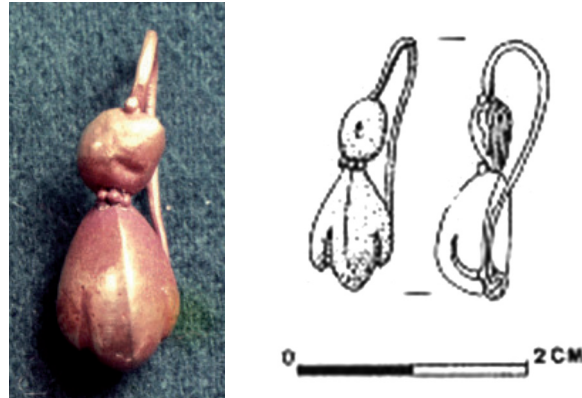


Fig. 3.

The hoop type, either plain or with movable or immovable attached ornaments, is a common Roman form, morphologically not very distinct, technically simple, and widespread in its geographical distribution¹⁹. It is possible that the woman was laid to rest with her personal jewellery: the unpretentious pair of **fig. 2** from her youth or adolescence and the more elaborate pair of **fig. 1** from her adult life – a custom attested in the Nabatean necropolis of Mampsis²⁰.

Small earring: shield with immovable leaf pendant (fig. 3)

Height 2.3 cm, width 0.8 cm.

The earring is composed of an oval, slightly convex shield with an immovable pendant shaped like a three-fingered leaf. The leaf is defined by a central rib and two lateral notches. The transition from the shield to the leaf pendant is disguised by a row of globules. The hoop is a round wire fastened to the shield, the joint decorated by a granule. It projects above the upper edge and its end is hooked into a small loop soldered to the leaf at the back.

According to the size the earring belonged to a child, though so far no exact parallels are known to the author. The discovery of this earring during the later cleaning contradicts the theory of two pairs of personal jewellery deposited at the time of the funeral, yet the disturbed nature of the necropolis does not permit definite conclusions.

Tomb 2

The tomb had already been looted in antiquity. Clédat discovered a pair of earrings and the later excavations yielded four additional single earrings. Clédat mentions that the sarcophagus showed a hole at the height of the head, so that the thieves could easily get at the jewels.

Pair of earrings: hoop with immovable pendant (fig. 4 – Ismaliya Mus. Nos. 780–781)²¹

Height 3.2 cm, weight 4.7 gm.

A pair of earrings of the navicella type with an inverted pyramid pendant. The hoop tapers towards the top. Its system of closure is quite crude: The lobe of the ear was simply clutched between the thin ends of the tube. The pyramid

¹⁹ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 111–136.

²⁰ ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 161* figs. 1–2.

²¹ CLÉDAT 1912, pl. 3, 5–6; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 159* fig. 9.



Fig. 4.

is inverted. Its upper side is a flat triangular plate soldered to the hoop. Three additional triangular plates form a hollow pyramid and are decorated with granulation. The grains are differently sized. At the tip there are three globules soldered end-to-end in a vertical row.

Clédat dates the pair to the Roman period. The motif of granulated pyramids occurs in the Near East since the Late Bronze Age²². In Egypt, there is a concentration of examples identical in design with the pendant soldered directly onto the hoop²³. The finds include four earrings of unknown Egyptian provenance in the Cairo Museum, tentatively dated to the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE²⁴. The hoops of two of the earrings are adorned with pearls²⁵. For earrings from Saqqara and Tanis (Daphnae) a date from the 2nd century BCE to the 1st century CE is suggested²⁶; for the earring from Saqqara an alternative date in the 3rd–4th centuries CE is considered²⁷. Probably from Egypt are the earrings published by Marshall and Rudolph²⁸. A single earring from Egypt in Berlin (height 3.5 cm) is placed into the 4th–5th centuries CE; the closure is made by the two ends twisted around, similar to the earrings in the Cairo Museum²⁹. The Berlin earring is dated in analogy to a pair from Egypt in Athens which is considered Coptic³⁰. Yet, the earrings differ from each other. Like the earrings from Qasrawet the Berlin piece has an immovable pyramid with three globules soldered to the top, while on the pair in Athens a cylinder is set between hoop and pyramid. A pair of earrings from southern Russia in

²² WILLIAMS 1924, 122.

²³ MARSHALL 1911, 300 nos. 2596–2600 pl. 54, WILLIAMS 1924, 121–122 and DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 93–94 include in their discussion not only the earrings with a hollow pyramid but also with smaller and larger clusters of globules, soldered to a hoop. These simple types were popular over a long period and cannot be dated closely; in the Ismailiya Museum several pairs are exhibited which are not included in my paper.

²⁴ VERNIER 1927, nos. 52.504–7.

²⁵ One earring is illustrated in AA 1901, 211 fig. 7.

²⁶ WILLIAMS 1924, 121–122 no. 51.

²⁷ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 93–94 no. 83.

²⁸ MARSHALL 1911, 300 no. 2601 (not ill.); Rudolph 1973, no. 29b.

²⁹ GREIFENHAGEN 1975, 64 pl. 50, 12 = CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 110 no. 10.

³⁰ SEGALL 1938, 103–104 and pl. 35:138, height 4.5 cm.

Berlin assigned to the 3rd century CE³¹ combines pyramid and cylinder which are attached by a ring to the hoop. For the Qasrawet pair and the Egyptian parallels mentioned here Williams tentatively proposed a date in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods, ruling out a later date³². While for several earrings the Egyptian provenience is assured none of them originates from a firmly dated archaeological context, thus all suggestions are hypothetical.

In the Greco-Roman world pyramid attachments occur in three variants: the first with a movable pendant attached to a cylinder with a ring³³ as well as a variant held by a ring³⁴, the second with a cylinder set between hoop and immovable pendant³⁵ and the third with an immovable pendant (the three pairs from Qasrawet, **figs. 4, 11–12**, and several Egyptian parallels). There is no evidence that the three variants are contemporaneous. It is possible to interpret the inverted pyramid as a stylized cluster of grapes (see **fig. 8**). Two mummy portraits from Antinoopolis, now in Dijon, show women wearing a pair of earrings with the design identified as clusters of grapes, another in a private collection, possibly from the same site, can be added³⁶. A single right earring is depicted on another female mummy portrait from Antinoopolis, now in Paris³⁷. These examples clearly speak for an Egyptian tradition. A parallel for the three globules set in a vertical row at the end of the pyramid – a feature supporting the definition as cluster of grapes – is found on a pair of shield earrings with an immovable pendant shaped like a box, dated to the 2nd – 3rd centuries CE, with three globules attached at the bottom of the box³⁸. The stylized cluster of grapes recalls Roman period earrings with a convex disc attached to the hoop and a simple or elaborate cluster of differently sized globules³⁹. Such earrings are represented in 3rd century CE tombs in southern Phoenicia and western Galilee, at Hanitha⁴⁰ and Hurfeish⁴¹. Related and of Roman date are earrings with a flat triangle as an immovable pendant⁴². Greifenhagen suggested that this type constitutes a simpler version of the pyramid pendant⁴³. Indeed, the difference is not only typological but also chronological and can be seen as evidence for the change from Hellenistic plasticity to Roman linearity.

Single earring: hoop with immovable pendant (fig. 5)⁴⁴

Height 2.2 cm, width 1.8 cm.

The boat-shaped hoop is severely damaged; the gold foil has several holes and cracks. The flattened ends of the hoop overlap and are twisted spirally

³¹ GREIFENHAGEN 1970, 46 pl. 23, 14–15.

³² WILLIAMS 1924, 122.

³³ GREIFENHAGEN 1970, pl. 23, 9. 11. 14–15 from southern Russia; HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 133–135 no. 87.

³⁴ NIESSEN 1911, pl. 134, 4506, said to be from Cologne.

³⁵ SEGALL 1938, 103–104 pl. 35, 138; GREIFENHAGEN 1970, pl. 23, 21.

³⁶ CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 289–290 nos. 189–190; 297 no. 196.

³⁷ CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 287 no. 187

³⁸ HACKENS – WINKES 1983, no. 35.

³⁹ SEGALL 1938, pl. 34, 131; EL-CHEHADEH 1972, no. 23b; DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, nos. 138–144.

⁴⁰ BARAG 1978, nos. 96–98.

⁴¹ ABU-UQSA 2002, fig. 2, 10–13.

⁴² MARSHALL 1911, 300 nos. 2596–2600 pl. 54; EL-CHEHADEH 1972, no. 1 from Tafas in the Hauran; GREIFENHAGEN 1975, pl. 48, 7.

⁴³ GREIFENHAGEN 1975, 61.

⁴⁴ OREN – NETZER 1977, cover (image mirror inverted); OREN 1980, 145 fig. 27; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2002, fig. 3; 2015, 159* fig. 10.

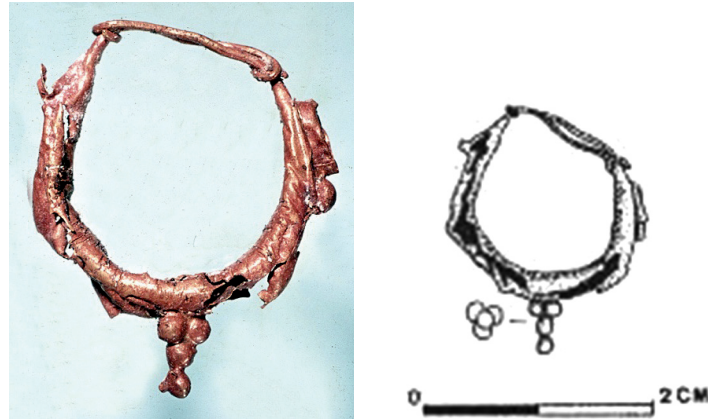


Fig. 5.

around the wire. In the centre there is an immovable pendant of five globules soldered together and forming a minute cluster of grapes. Since the thin ends could not bear much manipulation, it seems that such earrings were worn continuously.

The navicella type of earring has a long history in the ancient Near East. The type was common among the Nabateans and can be dated from the late 1st century BCE into the 2nd century CE. Several pairs were unearthed in tombs at Petra and Mampsis; others of unknown provenience exist in public and private collections⁴⁵. The shape ranges from rounded hoop earrings to the boat-shaped form either simple or decorated with granulation, semi-precious stones, or glass paste. In general these earrings are worked in the technique of beating over a core. Layers of thin metal were prepared by hammering – the sheet metal which received its final form by beating and hammering over a previously prepared core. When the desired objects were spherical in shape, the core could not be removed; it is known that this core was made of paste or wood, and it is often visible when the jewel is damaged⁴⁶. Davidson suggests that the goldsmith added the filling substance after the final shape had nearly been completed and before heating up the earring in the making process⁴⁷. The core was not only important in the working process. It also gave stability to the object, for the sheet metal was thin and soft. There are no remains of the core in the Qasrawet earring. However, due to the bad damage it is most likely that the filling disintegrated.

The damaged state of the Qasrawet earring permits to discuss a technical detail. In general the boat-shaped earrings are made of a single piece of sheet metal⁴⁸ and often the seam is still noticeable running end to end along the top or bottom. The earring under discussion is shaped by twisting a thin narrow strip of metal like a rope ascending in spiral-fashion. There is a parallel in a pair of earrings from southern Russia in Berlin⁴⁹. This observation leads to the question whether the two items displayed in the Ismailiya Museum (**fig. 14**), tentatively identified as hair spirals should not be considered scrap from a goldsmith's workshop. In that case it is unlikely that they were placed in a grave but were recovered from the settlement area; however, the find spot is unknown.

⁴⁵ ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2002.

⁴⁶ For an example see ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2002, fig. 1.

⁴⁷ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 93.

⁴⁸ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 93 fig. 1a.

⁴⁹ GREIFENHAGEN 1970, pl. 23, 17.

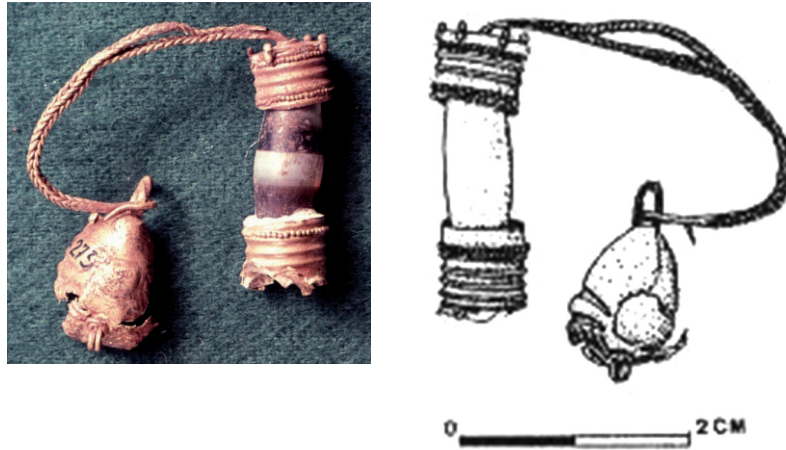


Fig. 6.

*Single earring: hoop with animal head finial (fig. 6)*⁵⁰

Length 2.5 cm.

The damaged earring consists of a barrel-shaped onyx held between two gold caps decorated with wire. From it a hoop made of two strands of twisted wire emerges, forming a hook at the other end. It is inserted into a small ring attached to the broken animal head which originally was joined to one of the caps holding the onyx. The animal head finial cannot be identified with certainty, though a dolphin head is possible.

*Single earring: baretta type (fig. 7)*⁵¹

Height 3.5 cm, width 1.9 cm.

The earring consists of a blue glass paste bead set in a bezel and an immovable nearly square pendant, their ratio in height being 1:3. The pendant has four units. At the top a broad piece of gold foil is soldered onto the lower edge of the bezel, the joint concealed by five tiny globules. It is decorated with wire and globule clusters: a row of globules between two spiral-spool wires and in each upper corner a rosette of five dots. The middle part is filigree work without a background support, a kind of openwork lattice of four double spirals with granule clusters, possibly two flowers. The lower section is made of a double spiral-spool wire to which three globules adorned with globule clusters are attached. The rear side is less elaborate. A large hoop of round wire is attached which is hammered flat and soldered on the bezel. Its hooked end is inserted into a small ring on the central globule of the bottom row.

A singular creation, the closest parallels are a single earring from a late Hellenistic – early Roman tomb at Kaimakli (Nicosia) in Cyprus⁵², another singleton⁵³ and a pair⁵⁴, both of unknown provenience and dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. The technical aspects

⁵⁰ OREN – NETZER 1977, cover (image mirror inverted); ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 159* fig. 11. Photo and drawing illustrate the two sides of the earring.

⁵¹ OREN – NETZER 1977, cover; OREN 1980, 145 fig. 27; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 159* fig. 13.

⁵² PIERIDES 1971, 43 pl. 29, 2. In place of the glass paste bead the earring has a convex shield similar to that on the earring illustrated in our fig. 8.

⁵³ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 97–98 no. 88.

⁵⁴ CAT. VIENNA 1998, 222 no. 143.



Fig. 7.

suggest that the goldsmith of the Qasrawet piece was not particularly skilled. Considering the elements of composition the earring can be attributed to the baretta type composed of three elements: a disc, a bar, and pendants, a type beginning in the 1st century CE and continuing into the 4th⁵⁵. On Egyptian mummy portraits women are depicted with the baretta type characterised by three movable pendants decorated with beads⁵⁶. The type is quite varied. There are differences in the proportions of disc and bar as well as in the number of the mostly movable pendants. A Syro-Roman type in openwork technique⁵⁷ is dated by burials to the 3rd century CE⁵⁸. However the different proportions of the three elements of composition and the use of wire, filigree, and granule clusters suggest an earlier 1st–2nd century date for the earring from Qasrawet.

⁵⁵ DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 97–105; RUDOLPH 1995, no. 67.B.1–2; CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 197 no. 103.

⁵⁶ CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 136 no. 38; 166 no. 66; 218 no. 126.

⁵⁷ HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 141–142 no. 91; EL-CHEHADEH 1972, nos. 19–20; DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 98–104 nos. 89–100.

⁵⁸ RAHMANI 1976, pls. 23, 4 and 24, 1 from Jerusalem; NAGHAWI 1989, fig. 8, 1–2 from Gerasa.



Fig. 8.

*Single earring: shield with immovable pendant (fig. 8)*⁵⁹

Height 4.8 cm, width 1.9 cm.

The earring is made of a convex shield soldered onto a flat frame and an immovable pendant in the shape of a cluster of grapes. In the centre of the shield a red stone is set in a bezel from which granulated rays with three tiny globules at each end emerge – originally six with one missing. They form a star-shaped rosette. The outer edge is decorated in filigree: stringed globules or beaded wire framed on each side by spiral-spool wire like a braided border. A pendant in shape of a large cluster of grapes is soldered to the lower edge of the shield. It is formed by granule clusters in three sizes: at the top a double row of medium sized ones, followed by five larger ones in two rows and an additional bi-conical globule with rows of small globules holding larger ones together. The damaged bottom globule displays a central vertical flat wire by which the cluster of grapes appears to be held together and which also runs along the back side of the shield, ending in a ring projecting above the upper edge of the shield. The transition from the ring to the shield is disguised by two clusters of three tiny globules. The hoop is formed of twisted wire hooked at the top into the ring of the shield and at the bottom into another small ring soldered onto the back of the pendant.

The earring is singular. The plasticity of the grapes is obvious, yet at the same time it is not naturalistic, but disproportionate and bulky. Compare for example the naturalistic rendering of a Hellenistic earring with a shield and an immovable pendant in the shape of carnelian grapes and gold leaf and tendril scroll⁶⁰. Stylistically close to the Qasrawet find are Syrian earrings with elaborate immovable clusters forming an inverted pyramid⁶¹. A more

⁵⁹ OREN – NETZER 1977, cover; OREN 1980, 145 fig. 27; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 159* fig. 14.

⁶⁰ HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 104–106 no. 67.

⁶¹ EL-CHEHADEH 1972, nos. 24–25; GREIFENHAGEN 1975, pl. 50, 13 = CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 163 no. 62; DAVIDSON – OLIVER 1984, 122–123 no. 139.



Fig. 9.

schematic cluster of grapes, made of nine rows of medium sized globules with a larger at the bottom, forms the immovable pendant of a single earring from Egypt, now in the collection of the University of Trier. Dated to late imperial times the upper section of the earring is formed by a flat oval wreath instead of the shield, yet the height of 4.5 cm corresponds to the Qasrawet earring⁶².

The combination of shield and immovable pendant recalls the rather uniform class of Syro-Roman earrings with double spirals on an oval shield and a heavy immovable pendant of globules of different sizes resembling an inverted pyramid. With a height of 6 cm they are relatively large. They are dated to the 2nd – 3rd centuries CE and occur as burial finds over a wide area of distribution in the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan⁶³. A rosette surrounded by star-shaped granulation is found on the shield of another pair of this type⁶⁴. For the Qasrawet earring a date from the 1st century BCE into the 2nd century CE could be considered on typological considerations.

Tomb 3

*Bracelets: silver (fig. 9)*⁶⁵

Diameter 4 and 4.3 cm, weight 4 and 3.7 gm.

The looted tomb of a young girl yielded two bracelets formed by a hoop tapering towards the end, with one of the ends broken off.

Bracelets are common in burials of young girls. Tomb 15 in the Nabatean necropolis of Mampsis contained a silver bracelet together with a pair of simple hoop type earrings – the type given to children or adolescent girls – and a nose-ring⁶⁶. Of particular interest for burial customs are two sets of gold jewellery, said to originate from present-day Israel and now in Berlin⁶⁷. Set 1 comprised a set of bracelets, a necklace, a pair of earrings and another small earring. Set 2 comprised two pairs of bracelets, a plain and an ornamented pair of earrings, a necklace, a capsule, and a wreath. The diameter of the bracelets (inner diameter from 3.4 – 4.7 cm) and the

⁶² CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 118 no. 18.

⁶³ ZAHN 1929, no. 71; SEGALL 1938, no. 132; AUCTION 1960, nos. 186–187; HIGGINS 1961, fig. 30; ZOUHDI 1963, pl. 9, 2 = 1971, pl. 15, 14; HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 139–141 no. 90; AUCTION 1969, no. S 32; EL-CHEHADEH 1972, nos. 26–27; HUGHES 1972, 39; CAT. BERLIN 1972, no. 201; ROSENTHAL 1973, 77; HACKENS 1976, no. 52; HACKENS – WINKES 1983, no. 34; RUDOLPH 1995, no. 66.B.1-2.

⁶⁴ DEPPERT-LIPPITZ 1985, no. 51.

⁶⁵ CLÉDAT 1912, pl. 3, 7–8.

⁶⁶ ROSENTHAL 1970, figs. 17c and 18f; the bracelet is unpublished.

⁶⁷ PLATZ 2000.

necklace (10.2 cm) is so minimal that they could only have been worn by a child aged one to two years. There are no signs of wear and tear and it appears that the manufacture was quick and based on scrap material. Thus Platz concludes that both sets were especially prepared for the burial of the young girls and were never worn but only placed as grave goods. By parallels the objects are dated to the middle or second half of the 3rd century CE⁶⁸. Additional golden bracelets suited for children are included in a 3rd century CE set of jewellery with two bracelets (diameter 4.55 and 4.25 cm), a necklace, a pair of earrings and a finger-ring from the eastern Mediterranean⁶⁹ and an oval bracelet of the same date in Hamburg⁷⁰.

Bracelets are depicted on Nabatean terracottas: the enthroned goddess with a bracelet on the left wrist and anklets⁷¹, the standing nude boy with a bracelet on the left wrist and a lunula pendant⁷² and the child, either boy or girl, with two bracelets, holding a dove or a bird⁷³.

Tomb 6

*Single earring: hoop with animal head finial (fig. 10 – Ismaliya Museum No. 773)*⁷⁴

Length 3.1 cm, weight 3.17 gm.

The slightly damaged earring consists of a barrel-shaped cornelian held between two gold caps decorated with wire. From it a hoop made of two strands of twisted wire emerges, forming a hook at the other end. It is inserted into a small ring attached to the mouth of the lion's head. The object was recovered from the looted tomb of a child.

Jewellery in the Ismaliya Museum

Pair of earrings: hoop with immovable pendant (fig. 11 – Ismaliya Museum Nos. 820+821)

Pair of earrings: hoop with immovable pendant (fig. 12 – Ismaliya Museum Nos. 830+832)

Eye-shaped gold leaf (fig. 13 – Ismaliya Museum No. 702)

On the foil plate the eyeball, eyelid and eyelashes are carefully indicated in repoussé technique. For comparison, two plates, said to be from Jaffo, measure 3.58 x 2.39 cm and 3.61 x 2.39 cm, while two singular pieces with the eyeball marked by glass inlay from a burial at Baalbek have a width of 4.3 cm and 4.2 cm⁷⁵.

⁶⁸ PLATZ 2000, 60. 62; see also CAT. FRANKFURT 1999, 165 no. 64.

⁶⁹ RUDOLPH 1995, no. 70.C.1–2.

⁷⁰ HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 92 no. 59, diameter 4.3 cm, height 3.65 cm.

⁷¹ PARLASCA 1990, 168–170 pl. 34; 1991, 112–114; 1993, 59–63 figs. 7–8; EL-KHOURI 2002, 9–11 figs. 1–3; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2003, 38 fig. 51.

⁷² PARLASCA 1991, 114–115 figs. 9–12; 1993, 59–63 figs. 9–10; EL-KHOURI 2002, 13–14 figs. 22–23; ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2003, 38 fig. 52.

⁷³ PARLASCA 1991, 120–121 fig. 32; 1993, 69; EL-KHOURI 2002, 16–17 figs. 32–33.

⁷⁴ CLÉDAT 1912, pl. 3, 9.

⁷⁵ CAT. STUTTGART 2007, 72–73 no. 62; Fick 1999, 81 fig. 3.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.



Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.

Egyptian gold foil plates shaped like a human eye and placed on the eyes of the mummy wrapped in bandages are known from Roman imperial times only⁷⁶. Thought to guarantee the completeness of the human body they are a characteristic feature of amulet ensembles placed on other body parts like tongue, nipples, navel, and vulva; an example was unearthed at Abusir el-Meleq and there are Ptolemaic mummy plates from Dendera⁷⁷. Eye plates from Abusir el-Meleq in Berlin are dated to the Roman period, one of them found together with additional gold foil amulets near a mummy in a multiple burial of priests of Harsaphes⁷⁸. Plates for eyes and tongue in Hildesheim are also from Abusir el-Meleq⁷⁹.

The practice of placing gold foil plates in burials is also attested in the Roman Levant and is not related to mummification. Of particular interest is the undisturbed, probably female burial in a stone sarcophagus excavated at Baalbek – Douris; most likely once clad in cloth the deceased was endowed with thin gold plates on the forehead, eyes, nose and mouth⁸⁰, in addition 53 leaves of a sepulchral wreath were retrieved⁸¹. Another means to cover the deceased's face was the use of gold masks several of which came to light in Roman Phoenicia⁸². At Dura Europos eye and mouth plates and funerary wreaths were among the numerous and variegated grave goods⁸³. In the Damascus National Museum two rectangular plates carry the outline of the eye in repoussé technique, probably meant to be laid on the eyes of the deceased⁸⁴. In an ensemble said to be from Jaffo there are two eye-shaped objects among the fifteen plates, found together with a pair of earrings and a leaf-shaped pendant and dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries CE⁸⁵.

⁷⁶ HÜTTNER 1995, 18.

⁷⁷ HÜTTNER 1995, 77; CAT. STUTTGART 2007, 73.

⁷⁸ SCHÄFER – MÖLLER – SCHUBART 1910, 79 pl. 18, 134–135.

⁷⁹ GERMER 1997, 30 and fig. 14 on p. 25.

⁸⁰ ESS – PETERSEN 2003, 94–95 fig. 19.

⁸¹ ESS – PETERSEN 2003, 95–96 fig. 22 pl. 2. Golden wreaths were found in burials in lead coffins, see CHÉHAB 1935, 61–62 pl. 18.

⁸² HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 195–199 no. 131; FICK 1999, 80 figs. 1–2; ESS – PETERSEN 2003, 94–95.

⁸³ TOLL 1946, 22 pls. 34. 37. 49.

⁸⁴ ZOUHDI 1971, 101 no. 32 pl. 17.

⁸⁵ HOFFMANN – CLAER 1968, 52–53 no. 38; 84 no. 55; 139–141 no. 90; CAT. STUTTGART 2007, 72–73 nos. 62–63.

Two hair spirals (fig. 14 – Ismaliya Museum Nos. 890+897)

The two objects are similar and are composed of narrow gold foil strips twisted like a rope ascending in spiral-fashion. Having found no parallels one can only speculate about their use and suggest that they were most suited to be for stringing thin tresses of hair (for a different interpretation see the comments on **fig. 5**).

In Cyprus the use of hair spirals made of gold and silver can be traced over a long period; ornaments with a diameter of 1.5 – 2 cm were found in tombs at Lapithos, dated to ca. 1900–1800 BCE; 3–4 cm long spirals are assigned to ca. 475–400 BCE⁸⁶. There are spiral rings dated ca. 2600–2400 BCE, probably from Mesopotamia⁸⁷, yet they are not to be confused with earring pendants⁸⁸.

Dating and Manufacture

A Ptolemaic coin discovered by Clédat in the sand fill of Mausoleum 1 cannot be considered a valid evidence for a Ptolemaic date of the necropolis, since these coins remained in circulation throughout the Roman period⁸⁹. The typological and chronological references presented for the various types of earrings have shown that the comparanda are of little assistance in dating the jewellery and the burials. The Nabateans laid their dead to rest with their personal jewels, thus it can be assumed that not more than fifty years passed from manufacture until deposition. Altogether, the date concurs with the life-span of the settlement from the 2nd century BCE to the late 2nd – early 3rd century CE.

Some of the earrings can be attributed to types with a wide chronological range and geographical distribution: the hoop with animal head finials (**figs. 1. 6. 10**) and the navicella type (**fig. 5**). Even though the hoop earrings with animal head finials herald the polychrome style of the imperial period, motifs and style continue the earlier tradition of the Persian and Hellenistic periods; thus a late Hellenistic date for the Qasrawet finds is conceivable. The simple hoop type is well-represented in Nabatean contexts from the 1st century BCE to the 2nd century CE⁹⁰, yet with a wide chronological and geographical range common in all regions of the eastern Mediterranean. For the navicella type with the inverted pyramid or the stylized cluster of grapes (**figs. 4. 11–12**) an attribution to the 2nd – 1st centuries BCE seems appropriate. The two examples of more elaborate earrings (**figs. 7–8**) illustrate the transition from the late Hellenistic to the Roman tradition. In the late Hellenistic tradition goldsmiths made use of plain and twisted wires and clusters of grapes and globules as decorative elements, still adhering to a degree of plasticity and continuing in the East during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE with an increasing tendency to linearity. In the 3rd and 4th centuries CE goldsmiths and customers gave preference to a polychrome linear style with semi-precious stones, glass paste, and pearls enhancing the effect of the metal⁹¹, a style not represented at Qasrawet.

Where were the jewels manufactured and who were the goldsmiths? For the delicate gold jewellery found in the Mampsis and Petra tombs, with additional items from Oboda in the Negev, Khirbet edh-Dharih in Jordan and sites in the Hauran, exhibited in the Damascus

⁸⁶ PIERIDES 1971, 13 pl. 3, 9–11; 29–30 pl. 19, 4–7.

⁸⁷ RUDOLPH 1995, 50–52 no. 8.

⁸⁸ RUDOLPH 1995, 65–66 no. 10.B.1-2 and 94–95 no. 21.B.1-2.

⁸⁹ CLÉDAT 1912, 162.

⁹⁰ ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2002.

⁹¹ PFEILER 1970, 105–106.

National Museum, the existence of a school of Nabatean goldsmiths has been postulated⁹², although the Nabatean origin of items in the possession of museums and private collectors can only be determined tentatively through stylistic comparison. Admittedly without written evidence Nabatean jewellery should be defined as objects created in the region under Nabatean control for the use of the local population which at Qasrawet on the evidence of the Nabatean temples must have included a significant number of Nabateans. In this context the frequency of the Egyptian type with the immovable pendant of the inverted pyramid or stylized grape cluster (**figs. 4. 11–12**) is significant and points to at least Egyptian stylistic influence or even to Egyptian goldsmiths, while at the same time eye plaques (**fig. 13**) and earrings with animal head finials (**figs. 1. 6. 10**) are attested in Egypt and the Near East.

For the owners jewellery was a status symbol indicating prosperity. The Nabateans acquired an immense wealth based on the revenue from the incense and spice trade and despite their extensive trade connections no foreign jewellery was imported, nor Nabatean types exported. The facts underscore the likelihood for the existence of Nabatean goldsmiths. The question of centralised or decentralised production cannot be answered though Petra should be considered a primary candidate. Neither on typological nor on stylistic grounds the finds from Qasrawet can be connected to the Nabatean jewellery of the Roman period. However, the affinity to Egyptian goldsmith's art (**figs. 4. 11–12**) could indicate that the inhabitants of Qasrawet acquired jewellery from Egyptian artisans and at a later stage set up their own production. For those earrings (**figs. 7–8**) displaying a certain technical clumsiness a local decentralised production should not be discarded.

Funerary rites

The evidence from the undisturbed graveyard at Nabatean Mampsis in the eastern Negev shows that several women were buried with two pairs of earrings: one pair of hoop or boat-shaped earrings and a second more elaborate pair. Possibly one pair was given to the woman when she was a child or adolescent and the more elaborate ones when she was older, perhaps upon her marriage⁹³. Clédat's discovery of two pairs of earrings in Tomb 1 (**figs. 1–2**) suggests the same interpretation. Doubt is cast by the additional earring found in the debris during the later excavations, which however is not an in situ discovery (**fig. 3**). A burial in Jerusalem contained the body of a young woman aged 20 – 25 years who was laid to rest with two pairs of earrings: a simple and an elaborate one. It is dated to the early 3rd century and might belong to the families of Roman military units stationed there⁹⁴. The suggestion that a woman received a simple pair of earrings as a child and a more elaborate one with adolescence or upon marriage does not conform to the evidence from a burial in Israel, now in the Berlin Museum of Antiquities. The little girl dying at the age of one to two years was laid to rest with a pair of simple wire earrings and an elaborate pair of the disc, bar and pendant type in openwork pattern⁹⁵. The custom is evidence for a particular funerary rite just like in two tombs of the early 3rd century not later than 240 CE, found in Jerusalem: two male burials with a pair of earrings each. Since during Roman times only females wore earrings in the East, the authors proposes an attribution to Roman legionaries whose wives placed the earrings as gifts at their heads⁹⁶. The eye plaque and the spirals in the Ismaliya Museum were not found in situ. Thus it cannot be ascertained whether the eye plaque was placed in the burial covering the eyes as evidenced in Roman Egypt. The purpose of the spirals is even less assured.

⁹² ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 161*–162*.

⁹³ ROSENTHAL-HEGINBOTTOM 2015, 161* figs. 1–2.

⁹⁴ RAHMANI 1960, 143 pls. 20, F; 21, D.

⁹⁵ PLATZ 2000, fig. 2.

⁹⁶ GATH – RAHMANI 1977, 213.

These examples point to the difficulty of understanding and interpreting the reasons for placing jewellery in burials. The reasons are related to religious beliefs and ethnic customs, yet the material remains do not permit definite conclusions. Many tombs have suffered from plundering in both ancient and modern times. Gold and jewels are mentioned in a fragmentary, early 2nd century CE inscription from Tomb 64 A, opposite the Khazneh at Petra, in which a female was buried⁹⁷. To sum: The Nabateans laid their deceased to rest with personal jewellery and other grave goods, emphasizing the spiritual bond between the living and the dead, between the earthly and divine spheres.

Outlook

The analysis of the jewellery finds from the Qasrawet necropolis is above all a methodological issue, resulting from the lack of reliable indicators. There are drawbacks. First, with the pillaging of the tombs already in antiquity, none of the burials were undisturbed and no grave goods were found in situ. Second, even though architectural and epigraphical remains as well as objects of daily use like ceramics can be correlated with evidence from the core of the Nabatean realm, the assumption that Nabateans settled at Qasrawet is speculative. Third, for the types of jewellery found, predominantly earrings, few parallels exist and none come from controlled excavations. Thus, the Qasrawet items are compared to jewellery retrieved at Petra and at sites in the Negev and the Hauran, dating exclusively from the Roman period, mainly from the 1st to 3rd centuries CE. However, to date no exact parallels came to light.

Even though there is no final report of the excavations in the settlement area of Qasrawet it is clear that in the course of the 2nd century BCE a permanent settlement was established which continued to exist for more than 300 years. During this time jewellery production and fashion underwent changes. Analysing the Qasrawet items by shape and style they comprise four different types, also to be differentiated chronologically. Tentatively, it is proposed here that they represent the different phases of settlement. To the late Hellenistic phase the hoop earrings with animal head finials (**figs. 1. 6. 10**) and with immovable pendant and inverted pyramid decorated with small globules (**figs. 4. 11–12**) are assigned; the baretta-type and the shield with pendant earring (**figs. 7–8**) can be placed into the late Hellenistic – early Roman period; for the generic simple hoop-type (**fig. 5**), together with the eye plate (**fig. 13**) the 1st to 3rd centuries CE are suggested. Due to the site's proximity to Egypt and the relative frequency of the inverted pyramid type, for which parallels point to an Egyptian origin, it is plausible that at first jewellery was acquired from Egyptian goldsmiths, followed by Nabatean artisans who established a local production centre. Such a conclusion explains the individual creation of items (**figs. 7–8**) and at the same time the affinity to technique and style prevalent in the Hellenistic and Roman East. The same trend can be traced in the development of Nabatean pottery. The beginning of the painted fine ware is assigned to the second half of the 2nd century BCE; influenced by Hellenistic shapes the style was inspired by precursors in Iran, Mesopotamia and the Gulf region and resulted from contacts established in the course of Nabatean long-distance trade⁹⁸. From the early 1st century BCE onwards Nabatean craftsmen created a variegated, unique and highly skilled pottery production. Neither ceramics nor jewellery were exported and traded.

It is hoped that future excavations and research will lead to more precise chronological and typological criteria for the analysis of jewellery, in particular for the question of transition from the late Hellenistic to the early Roman period.

⁹⁷ ZAYADINE 1982, 366–367.

⁹⁸ SCHMID 2000, 147. 157.

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