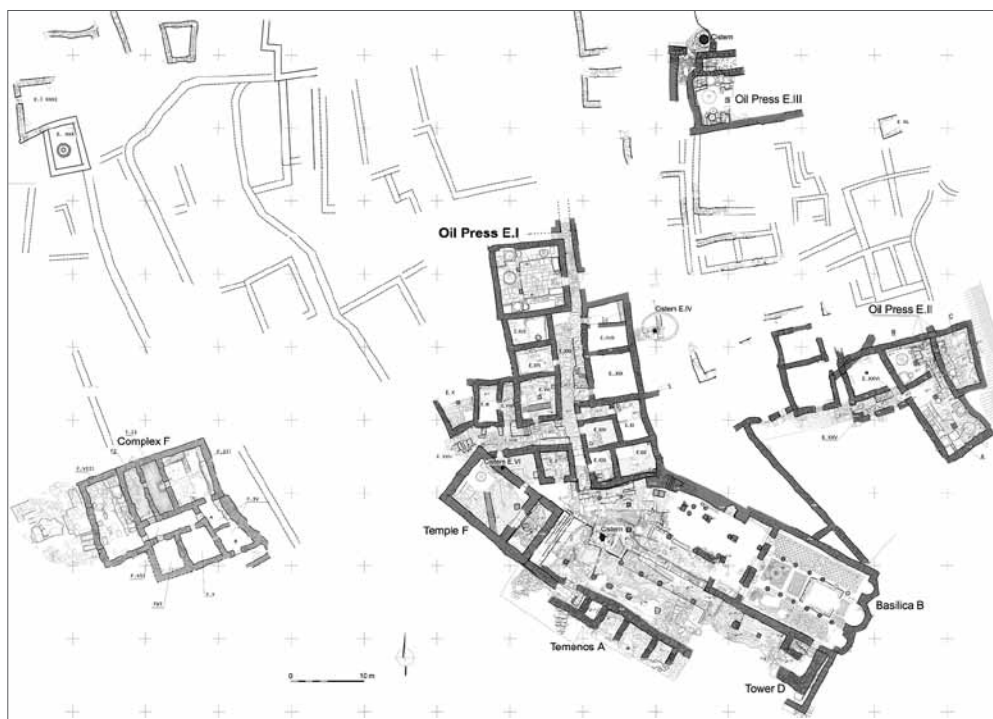


# Roman fine pottery from a cellar under Oil-press E.I at Chhim (Lebanon)

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The aim of the paper<sup>1</sup> is to present a small assemblage of fine pottery vessels discovered recently above and, especially, under the floor of a vaulted cellar in Oil-press E.I at Chhim-Marjiyat. The site [*Fig. 1*] was a Roman and Late Antique settlement situated



*Fig. 1.* Roman and Late Antique settlement at Chhim-Marjiyat: structures surveyed, cleared and excavated in 1996–2010 (Plan M. Puzkarski, PCMA)

<sup>1</sup> It is a great honor to be able to offer this short contribution to Professor W.A. Daszewski, my first tutor of archaeological excavations in the Mediterranean, who introduced me to the fascinating world of Hellenistic and Roman ceramics in the course of several field campaigns in the late 1980s in Nea Paphos on Cyprus.

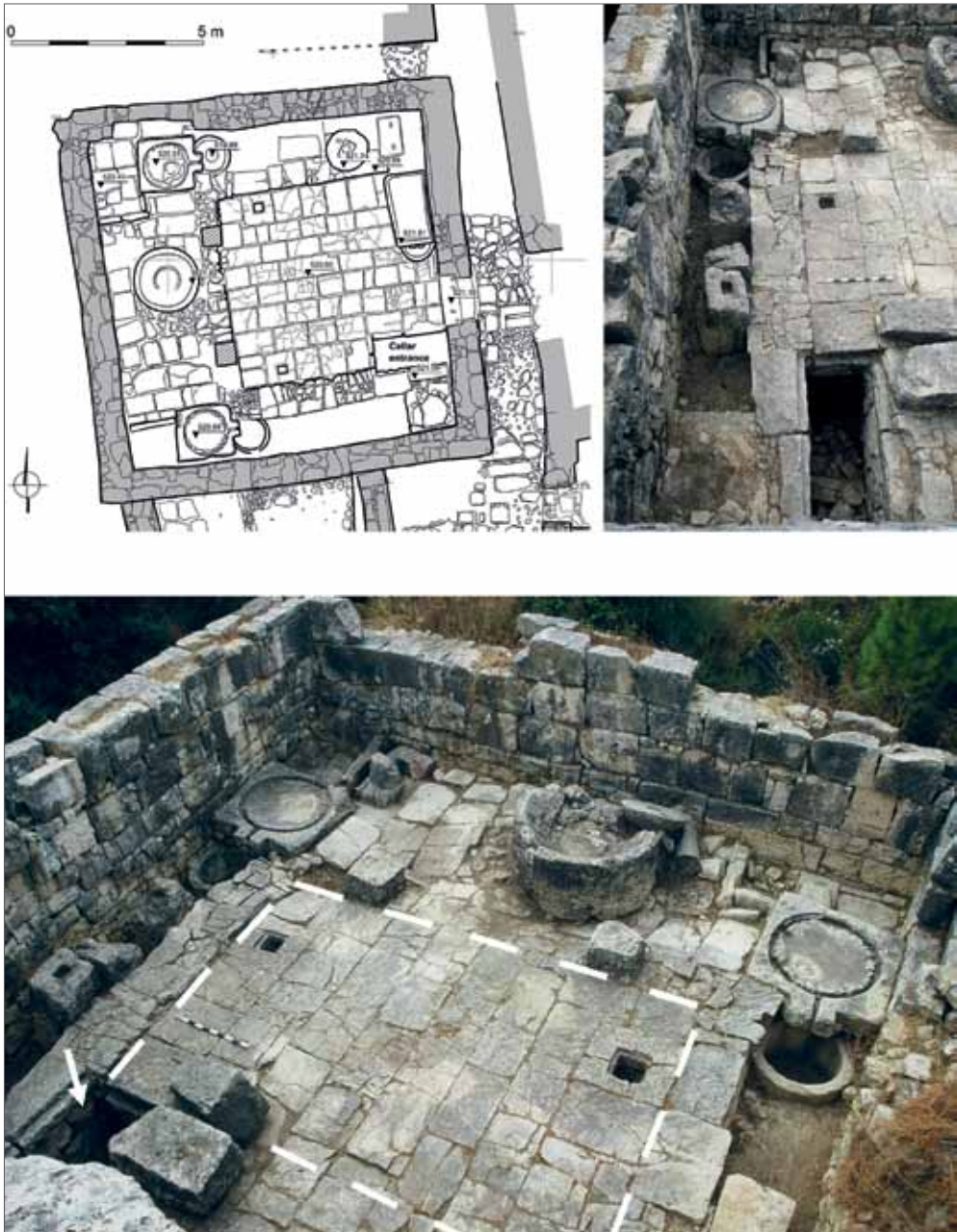


Fig. 2. Plan of Oil-press E.I. (top left); entrance to cellar filled with stone rubble seen in the foreground in a view from the east (top right); view of oil-press from the northeast after clearing in 1996, arrow and dashed line (bottom) mark the entrance and extent of the cellar (Plan M. Puzkarski, photo T. Szmagier, PCMA)

in a hilly area, some 550 m above sea level, just 10 km east of the Mediterranean coast, between Berytus (Beirut) and Sidon (Saida). All the vessels found under the floor, three near-complete plates and one jug, together with four small fragments of other plates and bowls represent the Early Roman Eastern Sigillata A “service”, a basic tableware traded along the Levantine coast and its hinterland. This discovery of well preserved and chronologically homogeneous vessels provides an important indication for dating the construction of the said oil-press and confirms the nature of the fine pottery supply to the settlement in the Early Roman period. Two further fineware fragments, found above the floor,



*Fig. 3. Eastern Sigillata A plate form 37B and broken coarse ware vessels found in situ in a trial-pit dug in the cellar, near its entrance, in 1999 (Photo K. Kotlewski, PCMA archives)*



*Fig. 4. Exploration of the cellar floor in 2009 (Photo M. Bogacki, PCMA archives)*

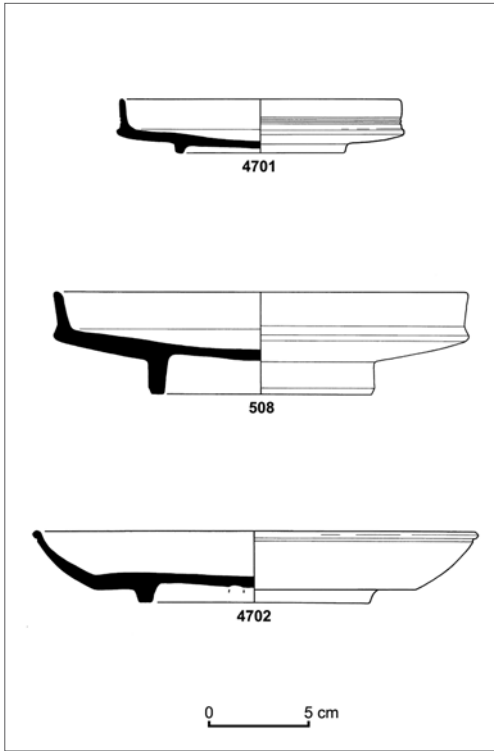


Fig. 5. Eastern Sigillata A plates: form 35 (CHM 4701), form 37B (CHM 508), form 53 (CHM 4702) (Drawing K. Domzalski, PCMA archives)



Fig. 6. Eastern Sigillata A plate form 37B (Photo K. Kotlewski, PCMA archives)

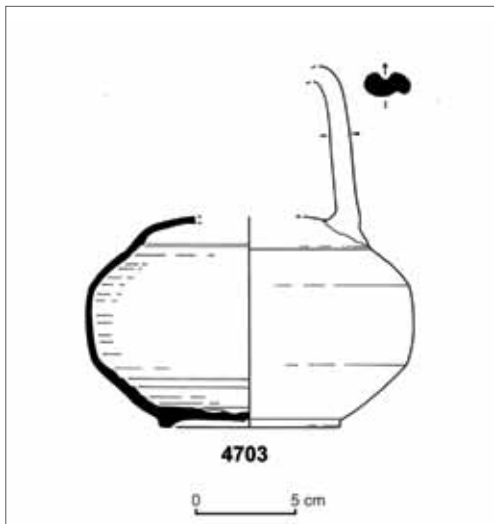


Fig. 7. Eastern Sigillata A jug form 108 (Drawing K. Domzalski, photo B. Wójcik, PCMA archives)



Fig. 8. Late Roman C/Phocean Red Slip Ware dish form 1(?) base fragment (CHM 4704) and Late Roman D/"Cypriot" Red Slip Ware plate form 1 rim fragment (CHM 4705) (Drawing K. Domzalski, PCMA archives)

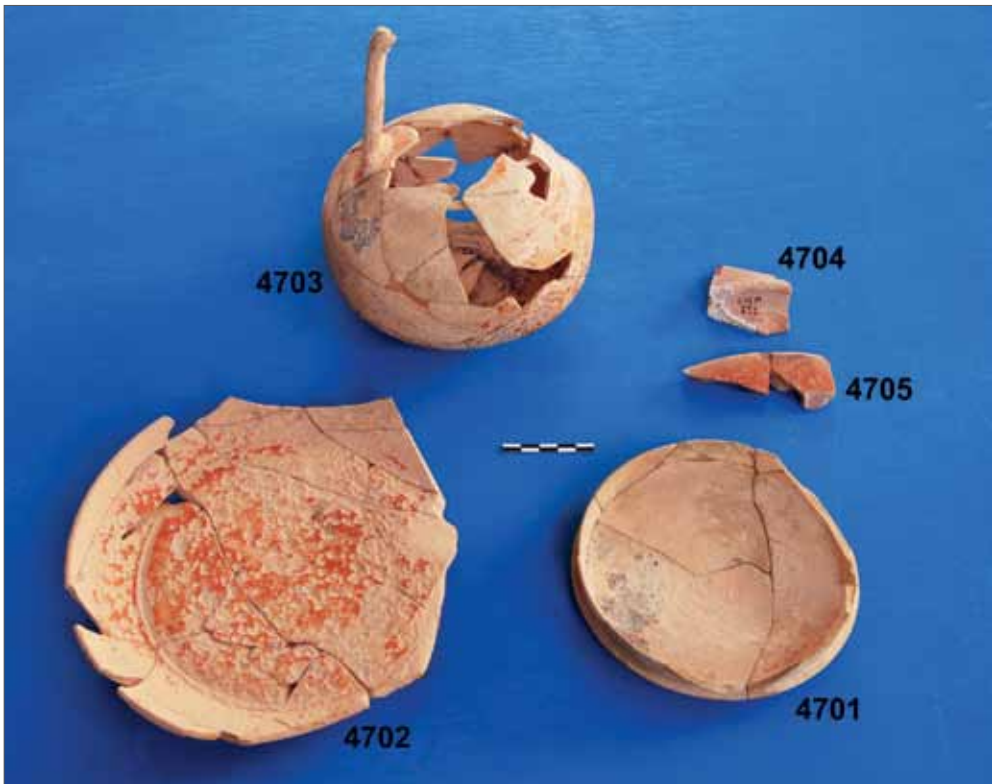
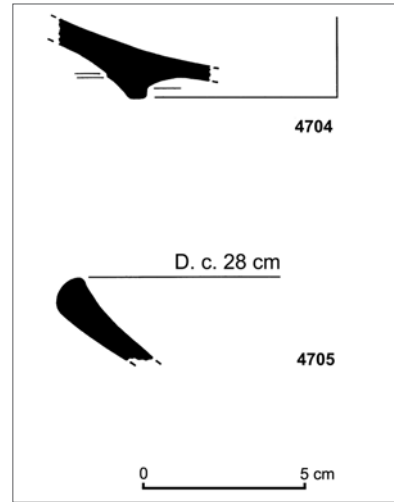


Fig. 9. Early Roman vessels found under the cellar floor: Eastern Sigillata A plates form 35 (CHM 4701) and 53 (CHM 4702), jug form 108 (CHM 4703) and Late Roman vessels found above the cellar floor: Late Roman C/Phocean Red Slip Ware dish form 1(?) base fragment (CHM 4704) and Late Roman D/"Cypriot" Red Slip Ware plate form 1 rim fragment (CHM 4705) (Photo B. Wójcik, PCMA archives)

represent Late Roman red slip wares (LRC/Phocean Red Slip and LRD/“Cypriot” Red Slip wares)<sup>2</sup> and were deposited during the use of the examined facility.

Oil-press E.I at Chhim [Fig. 2], one of the most impressive installations of this type preserved in the Near East, was cleared during restoration works by H. Kalayan, conducted on behalf of the Direction Générale des Antiquités (DGA) in Beirut, in the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The structure in question consisted of a large (approximately 9.00 x 9.00 m) room equipped with all the necessary fittings for producing olive oil, as well as a smaller (approximately 5.00 x 3.50 m, maximum height about 2.20 m) vaulted cellar beneath it, entered through a shaft near the southeastern corner of the main room. The clearing work removed some of the rubble from the entrance to the cellar allowing entry [Fig. 2, top right]. The cellar, which may have been used as a storage-room, was emptied when the settlement was abandoned and blocked with stone rubble gradually as the ruination of the oil-press building progressed. Its interior seems not to have been excavated, but only briefly examined by Kalayan’s workers, the DGA being focused on architectural rather than archaeological issues. No records exist of any finds, whether pottery or other, but had there been any, they would have comprised objects from the last phase in the use of the storage room, before its abandonment, which would have corresponded to the ultimate decline of the settlement as a whole in the late 7th century AD or slightly later.

The settlement at Chhim-Marjiyat was excavated by a joint Polish–French–Lebanese expedition from 1996. Oil-press E.I was cleaned again with greater care at the beginning of these regular excavations, bringing to light few finds, but important ones. These included small pottery fragments and a completely preserved bronze balance, proving that the olive-oil producing workshop had operated in Late Antiquity, at least until the early 7th century AD (Waliszewski, Kowalski 1997: 155; Waliszewski, Ortali-Tarazi *et alii* 2002a: 53–56, Figs 70–73; 2002b: 23, Figs 19, 27; Kisielewicz 2002a; 2002b). In 1999, a trial pit approximately 1.50 x 1.00 m was dug in the cellar next to the entrance to determine the structure of the lower part of the cellar, the level of the tamped floor and its relation to bedrock. It was by accident that the trial-pit was located over a depression in bedrock, in which several vessels and pottery fragments had accumulated [Fig. 3]. These included an almost intact Eastern Sigillata A (ESA) plate form 37B (Waliszewski 2000: 243–244, Fig. 6 left; Waliszewski, Ortali-Tarazi *et alii* 2002a: 45, Fig. 57 left, 122 no. 18; Domżański 2002: 77–78, Fig. 66, Pl. 14:508) [Figs 5:508,<sup>3</sup> 6], together with four very small ESA fragments coming from: plates forms 30 and 53, as well as bowls forms 50 and 51 (not illustrated; inv. nos CHM 529, 519, 521, 518, respectively). The assemblage comprised also two almost completely preserved coarse (brittle) ware closed vessels: a pinched-mouthed jug and a table amphora, as well as

<sup>2</sup> For the typology and dating of respective finewares in this paper, see: ESA after Hayes 1985: 9–48, Pls 1–11; LRC/PhRS ware after Hayes 1972: 323–370; Hayes 1980: 525–527; LRD/“CRS” ware according to Hayes 1972: 371–386; Hayes 1980: 528–529; cf. also Meyza 2007: esp. 46–48.

<sup>3</sup> The numbers identifying individual items in the figures refer to the general register of fineware finds from Chhim (1996–2010).

the upper part of another jug, all representing a locally isolated fabric, called “Chhim Ware” (Waliszewski 2000: 243–244, Fig. 6 center/right; Waliszewski, Ortali-Tarazi *et alii* 2002a: 45 Fig. 57 center/right, 122 nos 19–20; Wicenciak 2002: 68–71, Fig. 62, Pl. 8:339, 410, 472). This assemblage of chronologically homogenous vessels, along with some contemporary small oil lamp fragments, was dated by the excavators to the middle of the 1st century AD and linked to the earliest phase of settlement occupation (Waliszewski 2000: 243–244).

Excavation of the vaulted cellar under Oil-press E.I was completed in 2009 when a layer 20–40 cm thick, comprising earth and small stone rubble, was removed from the tamped floor of the cellar [Fig. 4]. It produced a moderate amount of pottery fragments, mainly from different coarse vessels, as well as two small fine-ware sherds: a base fragment of Late Roman C/Phocean Red Slip (LRC/PhRS) ware early dish, possibly of form 1 [Figs 8–9:4704] and a rim fragment of Late Roman D/“Cypriot” Red Slip (LRD/“CRS”) ware plate form 1 [Figs 8–9:4705]. Both can be dated to the late 4th–early 5th centuries AD. Their presence indicates that the layer on the floor of the cellar accumulated when the oil-press was in use.

The tamped floor of the cellar proved to be undisturbed, except for the said trial-pit dug next to the cellar entrance in 1999. Examination of the substructure of this walking level revealed a layer of compact clayey soil, deliberately mixed with rubble comprising small irregular stones and lumps of mortar, resting directly on bedrock. The thickness of this layer ranged from 20 to 50 cm, leveling the irregular rock surface. The contents of this layer included an insignificant number of stray coarse pottery fragments, as well as many small sherds belonging to three Eastern Sigillata A vessels: two plates and a jug [Figs 5:4701–4702, 7, 9:4701–4703]. Judging from the close concentration of these sherds, larger sections of broken vessels had been pressed into the floor priming. The surfaces of the collected fragments were badly worn, bearing traces of apparent long-term use. Enough was recovered to restore almost complete profiles and identify shapes. The plates represented forms 35 and 53, generally dated to the second half of the 1st–early 2nd century AD, the jug was a version of form 108, the principal date for which is tentatively the 1st–early 2nd century AD.

The dating of the vessels spans production, long-distance trade and average primary use until the forms they represent were replaced with other products of different shape. Based on a morphological analysis, all the fineware open vessels discovered below the cellar floor can be assigned to popular Eastern Sigillata A forms in their very developed, somewhat simplified variants, bearing no potters’ stamps or rouletted decoration encountered on the earlier versions.<sup>4</sup> This may also concern the jug, but since few ESA closed vessels have been found, it is more difficult to trace how they changed over time. One could assume that the vessels, all characterized by the ware’s typical, pale orangeish/pinkish, soft fabric (see Hayes 1985: 9), reached the Early Roman settlement at Chhim

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<sup>4</sup> The only exception is a single residual fragment of a much earlier plate form 30, dated to AD 10–50.

around the late 1st–early 2nd century AD. The worn surfaces of most of these vessels, however, suggest long use.

The stratigraphy leaves no doubt that the vessels were deposited in a leveling layer under the beaten earth floor of the cellar when the Oil-press E.I complex was built. Their incompleteness clearly indicates secondary deposition. One theory is that they were reused as a kind of temper, together with stones and mortar, for making a more stable substructure for the floor.

The whole and fragmentary fineware vessels give a basic *terminus post quem* for the construction of the cellar, but the actual date should certainly be moved forward, taking into account the wear evidenced on the vessel surfaces and the secondary character of the deposition. Assuming that the vessels were dumped more or less simultaneously or just slightly earlier than the construction, the establishment of Oil-press E.I could be dated tentatively to around the middle of the 2nd century AD. This would be confirmed by the absence from the assemblage of final-phase Eastern Sigillata A forms, dated exclusively to the 2nd century, especially to its later part, and noted in abundance at Chhim (Domzalski 2002: 77–78). The other possibility, less probable but still to be considered, is that the discussed ceramics had come from a much earlier rubbish dump that the workers discovered digging the pit for the cellar; this would place the construction of Oil-press E.I somewhat later in time. As for the occupation of the oil-press complex, the definite evidence for this is provided by the two fragments of Late Roman red slip wares dated to the late 4th–early 5th centuries, found in the layer accumulated above the cellar floor.

The presented pottery assemblage is also important in terms of studies of the fine pottery supply to the investigated settlement. To date, after several seasons of more or less regular excavations at Chhim after 1996, the red slip wares from the late 4th–early 7th centuries make up almost 80% of the studied fine pottery material. Most of the finds come from the best exposed contexts dated to Late Roman times, such as the final occupation layers of dwelling houses, oil-presses, the Christian basilica, streets and particularly the big water cisterns reused for dumping rubbish. Pottery sherds and other materials from the Early Roman period, usually very fragmented, were found mainly in stratigraphical tests under the best preserved structures.

Eastern Sigillata A constitutes approximately 95% of the finds of Early Roman (1st–2nd century AD) finewares at Chhim. This share corresponds to results obtained for other sites located in this part of the Levantine coast, including Berytus, which is understandable considering the close vicinity of the ESA production centre. It is not certain if the ware in question, recently identified tentatively as the *Rhosica vasa* known from the written sources, was actually manufactured in Rhosos, because no kilns or wasters have been found there so far. Nonetheless, the area between Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Tarsus is the most probable location for these workshops, as suggested by distribution patterns and archaeometrical analyses of clay composition (Hayes 2001: 146–147 note 11; Lund 2005: 237–238; Lund, Malfitana, Poblome 2006: 492–500; 2008: with further literature. See also Greene 2008).



A widespread distribution of Eastern Sigillata A products in the Levant and beyond spanned the period from approximately the late 2nd century BC to the late 2nd century AD. The vessels from the cellar under Oil-press E.I represent a highly developed, but not the final part of this period. Excavations at Chhim have also yielded later ESA forms, dated to the late 2nd century (Domzalski 2002: 77–78). The open vessels represent the most popular forms in their developed, undecorated variants, but the jug on the other hand may contribute importantly to further studies. ESA closed vessels were less commonly produced and when found broken and incomplete they are much more difficult to restore than the open forms, hence their formal development has not been studied satisfactorily. The apparent chronological homogeneity of the under-floor assemblage could be considered as a date for this variant of the jug form characterized by a softer profile and the absence of any stamped, grooved or rouletted ornaments.

To sum up, the interesting set of surprisingly well preserved Eastern Sigillata A vessels from the late 1st–early 2nd centuries AD, found recently in a secondary deposit included in the substructure of a cellar floor, has demonstrated the Early Roman date of Oil-press E.I, indicating at the same time that the inhabitants of the settlement at Chhim, presumably because of their involvement in large-scale olive oil production, had the means to buy the best tablewares available on the Levantine coastal market.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

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AA	<i>Archäologischer Anzeiger</i> , Berlin
AAAS	<i>Annales archéologiques arabes de Syrie</i> , Damas
ABSA	<i>Annual of the British School of Athens</i> , London
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> , New York
APF	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete</i> , Leipzig, Stuttgart
ASAE	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i> , Le Caire
BAAL	<i>Bulletin d'Archéologie et d'Architecture Libanaises</i> , Beirut
BABesch	<i>Bulletin antieke Beschaving</i> , Louvain
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i> , Paris
BdÉ	<i>Bibliothèque d'étude</i> , Le Caire
BEFAR	<i>Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome</i> , Rome, Paris
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Le Caire
BSFE	<i>Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie</i> , Paris
CCE	<i>Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne</i> , Le Caire
CCEC	<i>Cahiers du Centre d'études chypriotes</i> , Nanterre
CdÉ	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i> , Bruxelles
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i> , Paris
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Vienna
EtTrav	<i>Études et travaux</i> , Varsovie
GM	<i>Göttinger Miscellen</i> , Göttingen
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i> , Durham, NC
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i> , Jerusalem
JbAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> , London
JGS	<i>Journal of Glass Studies</i> , New York
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i> , London
JJP	<i>Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i> , Warsaw
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i> , Ann Arbor, MI
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> , London
KHKM	<i>Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej</i> , Warszawa
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> , Zurich
MDAIA	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung</i> , Berlin
MDAIK	<i>Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo</i> , Wiesbaden
MEFRA	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité</i> , Paris
MIFAO	<i>Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Le Caire
NC	<i>Numismatic Chronicle</i> , London
NumAntCl	<i>Numismatica e antichità classiche</i> , Logano
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta</i> , Louvain
PAM	<i>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</i> , Warsaw
RACrist	<i>Rivista di archeologia cristiana</i> , Cité du Vatican
RBK	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i> , Stuttgart

*Abbreviations*

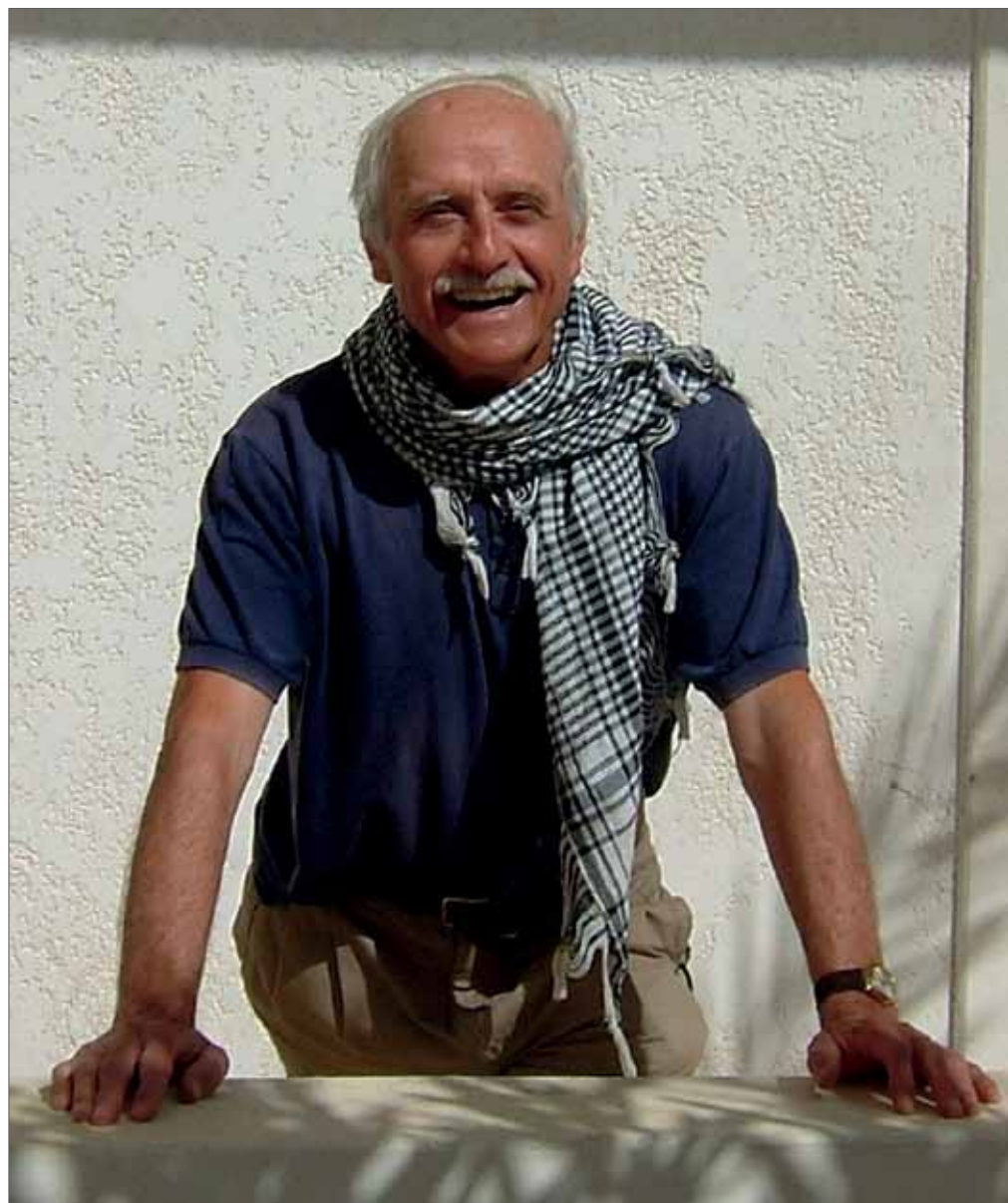
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<i>RDAC</i>	<i>Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, Nicosia</i>
<i>RdÉ</i>	<i>Revue d'égyptologie, Paris, Louvain</i>
<i>REPPAL</i>	<i>Revue du centre d'études de la civilisation phénicienne-punique et des antiquités libyques</i>
<i>RMNW</i>	<i>Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie, Warszawa</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Rivista degli studi orientali, Roma</i>
<i>RTAM</i>	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Gembloux</i>
<i>RTAM</i>	<i>Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, Gembloux, Louvain</i>
<i>SAAC</i>	<i>Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization, Kraków</i>
<i>VetChr</i>	<i>Vetera christianorum, Bari</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik, Bonn</i>

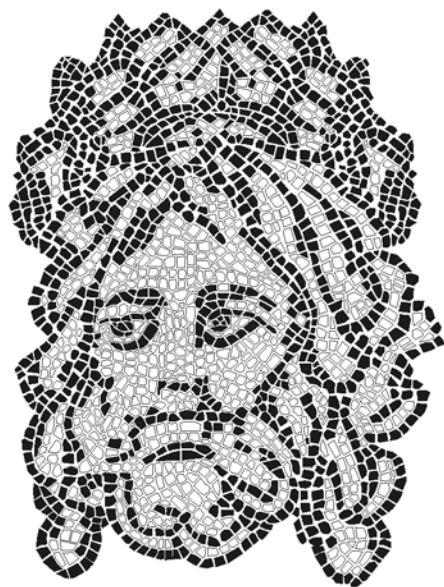
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<i>DACL</i>	F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> , Paris, 1907–1953
<i>LCI</i>	E. Kirschbaum, W. Braunfels (eds), <i>Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie</i> , Rom: Herder, 1968–1976
<i>RealEnc</i>	A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, K. Mittelhaus, <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart–Münich, 1893–1980

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Zygmunt Wysocki  
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Jerzy Żelazowski  
Bogdan Żurawski

# CONTENTS

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Abbreviations.....	9
Foreword.....	11
Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski: Essay presented on his 75th birthday anniversary.....	13
Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski: List of publications.....	31
KRZYSZTOF BABRAJ	
Interprétation de la lettre τω̄ sur le vêtement du Christ et du geste de l'ogdoade sur la mosaïque absidiale de l'église Santa Pudenziana à Rome.....	43
JANINE BALTŲ	
Le rinceau d'acanthé à fond noir dans la mosaïque syrienne : l'exemple de Mariamin.....	73
JEAN-CHARLES BALTŲ	
Une « nouvelle » dédicace apaméenne à Cn. Marcius Rustius Rufinus.....	89
GRAŻYNA BĄKOWSKA-CZERNER	
Aphrodite in Egypt. Images of the goddess from Marina el-Alamein.....	97
GIUSEPPINA CAPRIOTTI-VITTOZZI	
Un gruppo scultoreo da Dendera al Museo del Cairo: due fanciulli divini e i due luminari.....	115
RAFAŁ CZERNER	
The peristyle of House H1 in the ancient town at Marina el-Alamein.....	129
KRZYSZTOF DOMŻAŁSKI	
Roman fine pottery from a cellar under Oil-press E.I at Chhim (Lebanon).....	147
PIOTR DYCZEK	
From the history on ancient Rhizon/Risinium: Why the Illyrian King Agron and Queen Teuta came to a bad end and who was Ballaios?.....	157
PAVLOS FLOURENTZOS	
New evidence of the aniconic iconography of Astarte-Aphrodite in Cyprus.....	175
MICHAŁ GAWLIKOWSKI	
Bagatelles épigraphiques.....	183
WŁODZIMIERZ GODLEWSKI	
Mosaic floor from the sanctuary of the EC.II cathedral in Dongola.....	193
TOMASZ GÓRECKI	
Roman ceramic <i>thymiaterion</i> from a Coptic hermitage in Thebes.....	199

TOMASZ HERBICH, HARALD VAN DER OSTEN, IWONA ZYCH Geophysi EC.II cs applied to the investigation of Graeco-Roman coastal towns west of Alexandria: the case of Marina el-Alamein.....	209
MARIA KACZMAREK Human remains from Marina el-Alamein.....	233
ZSOLT KISS Deux fragments de portraits funéraires romains de Deir el-Bahari.....	259
JERZY KOLENDO Zita, une ville oubliée de Tripolitaine.....	267
RENATA KUCHARCZYK Glass medallion in the shape of a lion's head mask.....	277
BARBARA LICHOCKA <i>Delta-epsilon</i> issues of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander.....	287
JOHN LUND Head vases of the Magenta Group from Cyprus.....	325
ADAM ŁAJTAR <i>Divus Probus</i> (?) in a fragmentary building(?) inscription in Latin found in Kato (Nea) Paphos, Cyprus.....	341
ADAM ŁUKASZEWICZ A fish from the sea.....	353
GRZEGORZ MAJCHEREK, IWONA ZYCH The Cretan presence in Marina el-Alamein.....	357
HENRYK MEYZA A mask of ἡγεμῶν θεράπων with ὄγκος(?) from Paphos.....	379
KAROL MYŚLIWIEC L'acquis des fouilles de Tell Atrib pour la connaissance de l'époque ptolémaïque.....	387
JANUSZ A. OSTROWSKI Najwcześniejsza polska wzmianka o sycylijskich <i>antiquitates</i> (with summary in English).....	399
EWDOKSIA PAPUCI-WŁADYKA The contribution of Kraków archaeologists to excavating Nea Paphos, the ancient capital of Cyprus.....	413
ANNA POŁUDNIKIEWICZ “Megarian” bowls from Tell Atrib.....	425
ZOFIA SZTETYŁO Amphoras on Knidian amphoras.....	441
HANNA SZYMAŃSKA Two “armed” terracottas from Athribis.....	451