

# NAQLUN 2001: GLAZED POTTERY

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The glazed pottery that was found at Naqlun during excavations in the 2001 season comes for the most part from the debris filling rooms AA.20.2, AA.30.2, AA.30.3 of a structure in sector A and from layer 1 in trial pit AA.50.4. Graves: T. 246 and T. 253 in this area of the cemetery yielded a few pieces as well.<sup>1)</sup> Considering the disturbed stratigraphy in this area, it cannot be excluded that more pieces from this very uniform assemblage of solely tableware shapes had originally constituted the furnishings of now damaged or destroyed tombs.

The prevalent form is a small bowl.<sup>2)</sup> Regular bowls and a plate have also been recorded. As regards ceramic type, the sherds can be attributed to one of three types that are characteristic of the Fatimid and early Ayyubid periods: Fustat Fatimid Sgraffito (FFS),<sup>3)</sup> Fayyumi and Monochrome. Thus, a provisional dating of the material, based on parallels, points to a late 10th through early 13th century horizon. This is in keeping with the current knowledge of site history, the date of the destruction of the monastic compound and the functioning of the later cemetery.

## FUSTAT FATIMID SGRAFFITO

Fustat Fatimid Sgraffito is represented by a single, incomplete small bowl of olive-green color (Nd.01081: H. 4.5 cm; Dia.rim 12.0 cm; Dia.base 5.0 cm) (*Fig. 1*). The clay in the break is buff in color, the glaze transparent inside and out. The bowl is decorated on the inside with incised stylized floral ornament consisting of branches scrolling away from two parallel stems running across the middle.

A bowl similar in both form and

decoration is found in the Benaki collection in Athens, where it is dated to 1100-early 13th century.<sup>4)</sup> Analogous decoration can be seen on a bowl from the collection of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. The fragment has been dated to the Fatimid period, that is, the late 10th-11th centuries.<sup>5)</sup>

Our bowl is definitely the most luxurious item of glazed pottery from this year's explorations.

1) For a discussion of this year's investigations, cf. report by W. Godlewski in this volume.

2) Distinguished from a regular bowl by its size, that is, having a diameter of less than 20 cm.

3) Also current in the literature as Fatimid Fustat Sgraffito.

4) H. Philon, *Early Islamic Ceramics. Ninth to Late Twelfth Centuries*, The Benaki Museum Athens – Islamic Art. Publication (Athens 1980), Inv. no. 487: 266, Fig. 584.

5) V. François, *Céramiques médiévales à Alexandrie. Contribution à l'histoire économique de la ville*, IFAO, *Études alexandrines 2* (Le Caire 1999), Inv. no. P.13970.3bis: 60, Fig. 6/16. For FFS description and dating see page 23.

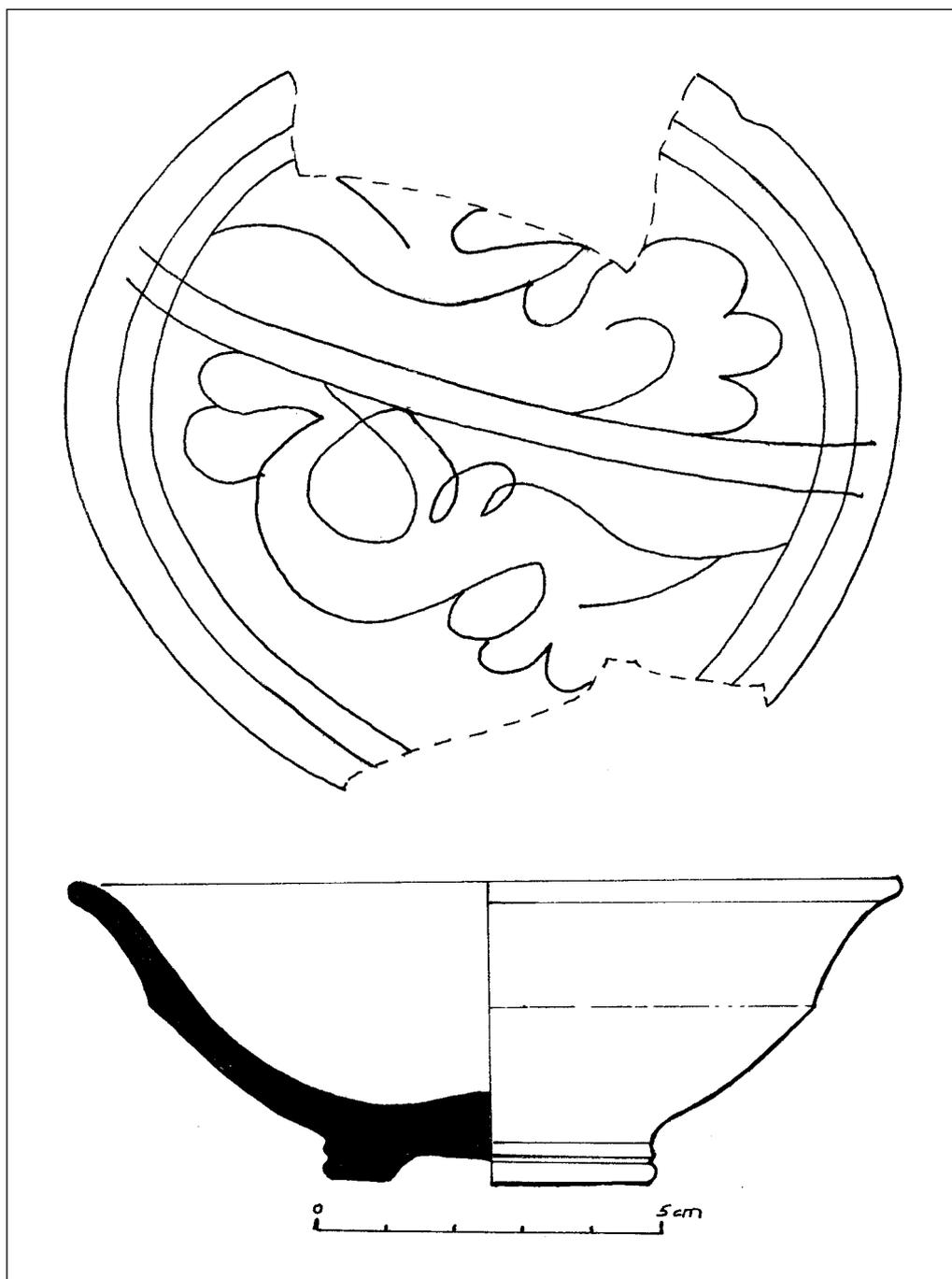


Fig. 1. *Small bowl of Fustat Fatimid Sgraffito ware (Nd.01081)*  
(Drawing A. Łyzwa)

## FAYYUMI WARE

Representing this type are two incomplete small bowls (Nd.01178 and Nd.01006). The first of these (H. 4.2 cm; Dia.rim 11.0 cm; Dia.base 5.0 cm) is characterized by a buff break, transparent glaze both inside and out. Purple-brown dabs appear on a cream background inside the vessel, while the outside has a plain cream slip.<sup>6)</sup> The second small bowl (H. 4.3 cm; Dia.rim 10.6 cm; Dia.base 4.1 cm) has a pink-buff color of the clay in the break and opalescent glaze inside and out. There are splashes of brown and dark-green on the beige surface inside, while the outside surface is also beige but with dark-green dots.

A bowl fragment (Nd.01058: Dia.inner rim 20.0 cm) can also be attributed to this type. The clay in the break is pinkish, the glaze transparent inside and outside of the vessel. Brown streaks appear on the beige

inner surface, while the outside is beige with brown glaze around the rim.<sup>7)</sup>

Finally, there is a partly preserved plate (Nd.01273: H. 4.7 cm; Dia.inner rim 38.0 cm; Dia.base 34.0 cm) with a buff break and transparent glaze inside and out. Brown-black dots and green splashes decorate the inner creamish-white surface; on the outside, the slip is an uniform creamish-white.

On the grounds of parallels from the Benaki collection in Athens<sup>8)</sup> and the collection of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria,<sup>9)</sup> examples of Fayyumi ware from Naqlun can be dated to the early Fatimid period, that is, the late 10th through 11th centuries. W. Kubiak was of the opinion, based on his research at Fustat and Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, that statistically Fayyumi wares were encountered chiefly in the 11th century.<sup>10)</sup>

## MONOCHROME WARE

Importantly for the vague dating of this group of pottery, the Naqlun examples originate from grave assemblages. This season there were two thin-walled small bowls: a honey-colored one (Nd.01167) and a brown one (Nd.01231). The former (H. 4.5 cm; Dia.rim 8.8 cm; Dia.base 4.7 cm) has a buff break and transparent

glaze inside and out. On the floor, there is spiral ribbing, on the outside the bottom part is devoid of glaze (*Fig. 2*).<sup>11)</sup> In the case of the other small bowl (H. 5.9 cm; Dia.rim 13.0 cm; Dia.base 5.0 cm), the clay in the break is buff-orange and the glaze is opalescent inside and out, with the foot being devoid of glaze (*Fig. 3*).<sup>12)</sup> The

6) For a bowl with analogous decoration, cf. Philon, op. cit., Inv. no. 1207: 41, Fig. 71.

7) For analogous decoration, cf. Philon, op. cit., small bowl fragment Inv. no. 16801: 45, Fig. 83; François, op. cit., bowl fragment Inv. no. M.C.9: 207, Pl. 1; in the description on page 34 the bowl is referred to as Fayyumi ware.

8) Philon, op. cit., 41. The author includes Fayyumi pottery with other wares decorated with different colored glazes, dating the entire group to the 10th-12th century. To judge by vessel shape and technological features, the dating should be narrowed down to the early Fatimid period, i.e., 10th-11th century.

9) François, op. cit., 22. Fayyumi ware is dated by the author to the 10th-11th century.

10) W.B. Kubiak with contribution by M. Redlak, "Kom el-Dikka. Islamic Finds - Storehouse Survey 1995/6", *PAM VIII, Reports 1996* (1997), 37.

11) This is a technological feature, showing that the bowl had been held by the foot and dipped in glaze.

12) The outside surface of the foot preserves signs of where the potter had held it to dip the bowl in glaze.

two vessels accompanied child burials and were placed inside the wooden coffins. Bowl Nd.01167 was found at chest level in T.246, bowl Nd.01231 close to the head of the skeleton in T.253.

The remaining glazed monochrome vessels discovered this season come from accumulations of debris filling the ruins of the structure in sector A. Their division into two groups is color-based: one group

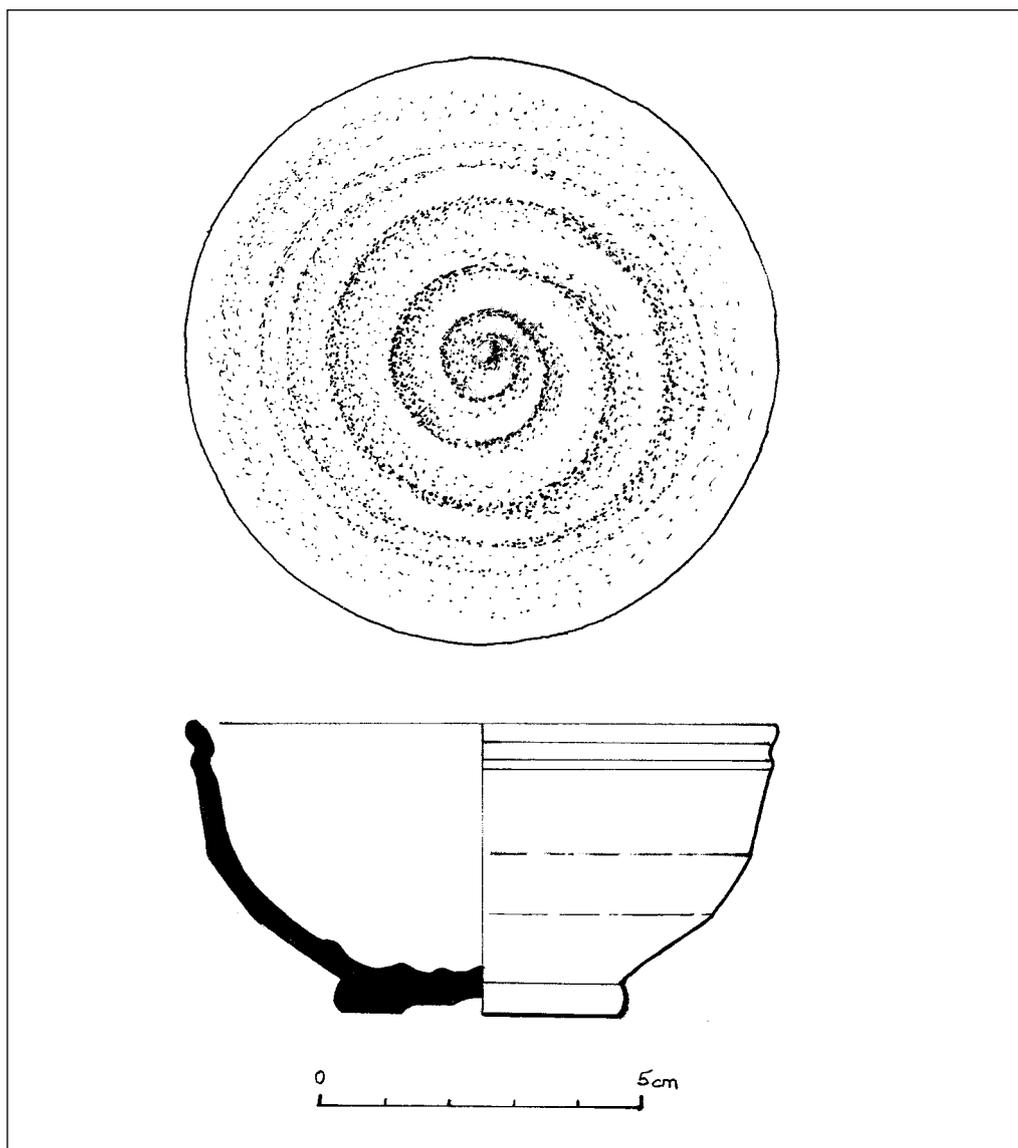


Fig. 2. Small bowl representing Monochrome ware (Nd.01167)  
(Drawing A. Łyżwa)

represents turquoise-green examples, the other pottery that is pale green through yellowish to olive in color.

Among pottery from the first color group one should mention the following:

- **small bowl** (Nd.01080: H. 4.0 cm; Dia.rim 10.6 cm; Dia.base 5.4 cm); clay in break buff, glaze transparent inside and out. Slip on the outside whitish, covered irregularly with green glaze. Irregular traces of turning on the wall;
- **bowl** (Nd.01072 a and b: Dia.rim c. 31.0 cm; Dia.base 14.0 cm), clay in break buff, glaze transparent inside and out. On the floor, spiral ribbing on a turquoise-green background; white slip on the outside, turquoise-green glaze on walls, turning to turquoise in the bottom parts;
- **bowl or cup(?)**, incomplete (Nd.01197: Dia.base 7.8 cm); clay in

break buff, glaze transparent inside and out. On the floor, spiral ribbing; creamish-white slip on the outside.

The second color group consists of:

- **small bowl**, incomplete (Nd.01065: H. 4.4 cm; Dia.rim 10.0 cm; Dia.base 5.4 cm); clay in break buff, glaze transparent inside and out. Glaze pale green to yellowish in color. Uneven width of base edge, ranging from 0.7 to 1.0 cm;
- **small bowl**, incomplete (Nd.01071: H. 5.0 cm; Dia.rim 15.0 cm; Dia.base 6.6 cm); clay in break pinkish-buff, glaze transparent inside and out. Glaze olive in color.

Taking into consideration the shape, nature of the break and technological features, this season's finds of glazed monochrome wares can be dated to the Fatimid and early Ayyubid periods, that is, from the 11th to the early 13th centuries.

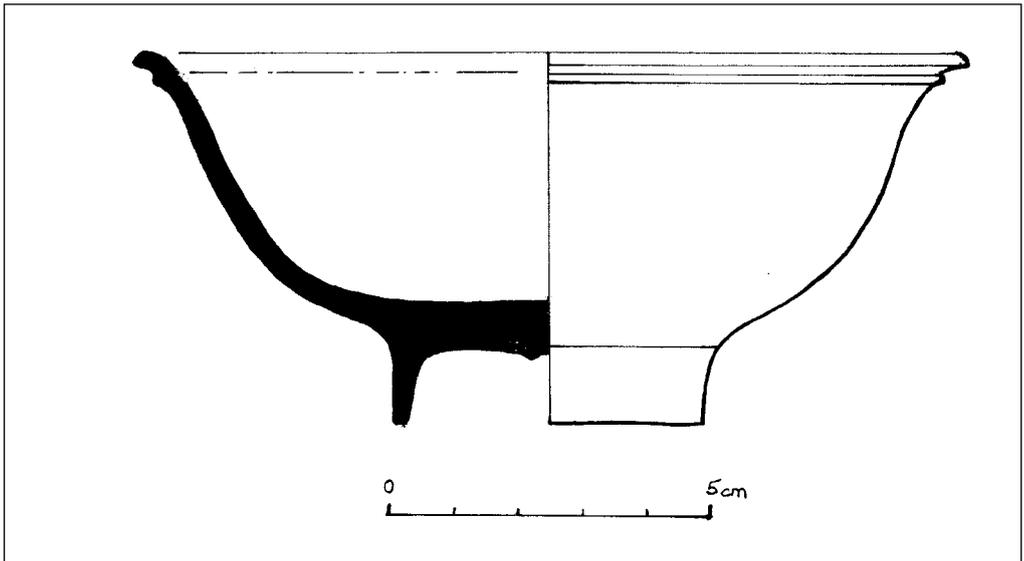


Fig. 3. *Small bowl representing Monochrome ware (Nd.01231)*  
(Drawing A. Łyzwa)