

THE GLASS FINDS FROM THE BASILICA IN MAREA, 2003

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The fragmentary glass vessels from the basilica represented types widely used in the Byzantine period. Most of the standard forms characteristic of this period, including lamps, wineglasses and toilet bottles, were represented in the assemblage. All the glass sherds belonged to free-blown vessels except for one mould-blown fragment. Some were finished with the use of a pontil. The majority of the glass was pale blue-green. Like most of the vessels

made of this kind of fabric, also the shards from our assemblage, have black and flaky weathering and some iridescence. To judge by the evidence from previous seasons, the glass should be considered as being of local production.¹⁾

Although the fragments recovered this season do not provide any new chronological data, they are undoubtedly useful for further studies of distribution of these types of vessels.

GLASS LAMPS

Lamps were destined to become one of the most important products of the Byzantine glass industry. In our case, the shards belonged to a type used in bronze *polycandela* for which there is other evidence in the form of chains for their suspension. The assemblage from the Marea site has produced fourteen stems and some rims so far. While no complete examples have been recorded, a hypothetical reconstruction of the form is possible.

This type of lamp usually features a small cup with thin, straight or slightly curved walls, rounded rim and smooth, solid stem (one example had a dark-blue thread along the rim). In Crowfoot's and Harden's typology, it corresponds to type

B.1,²⁾ which, however, does not include the particular stem shape recorded from Marea. This stem is of bulbous shape with a small hole or short vertical groove on one side, the other side always being flat (*Fig. 1:1-4*).

The lamps from the Basilica, which display some variation of typological detail, seem to have been fairly common in the Alexandrian region. Fragments were recorded last year at the Byzantine bath excavated at Marea and it is the author's experience that they are amply represented in the assemblage from the Kom el-Dikka site. Elsewhere the shape of the stem is not common. There are numerous references to solid-stem lamps but few actual parallels for this exceptional shape. A stem similar to

1) R. Kucharczyk, "Marea 2001: windowpanes and other glass finds", *PAM XIII, Reports 2001* (2002), 65-71.

2) G.M. Crowfoot and D.B. Harden, "Early Byzantine and later glass lamps", *JEA 17* (1931), pl. XXIX.

our piece was recorded on the monastery site of al-Tur in the Sinai.³⁾ Another example, found in the South Sinai and distinctive for its twisted mold-blown ribbed pattern on

the bottom of the base, could most probably be ascribed to this type.⁴⁾ Finally, one can mention two more fragments from Sarachane.⁵⁾

WINEGLASSES

An intact foot with bottom part of cup was the only fragment of wineglass found this season. (*Fig. 1:6*) Vessels of this kind are typical of Early Byzantine deposits from public buildings, such as churches and baths, but also from private houses.

Their function cannot be decided with certainty. They must have served foremost as drinking vessels but could have been used as standing lamps as well. In this case, we can assume based on the findspot that the vessel had served as a lamp. The feet were made separately and then fused on, the edges neatly reworked. The pontil mark is crude with traces of blue glass from the pontil.

This kind of vessel corresponds to Ising's form 111,⁶⁾ examples of which were observed last season in the glass as-

semblage from the Byzantine bath at Marea (*Fig. 1:5*). It seems to have been fairly common in nearby Alexandria, at Kom el-Dikka.⁷⁾ I have also noted them among the glass finds from the coastal site of Marina el-Alamein.

The type is widespread. Parallels, generally of 6th-century date, abound. Wineglasses are plentiful on many Cypriot sites.⁸⁾ They are well-attested in churches and on town sites from the eastern Mediterranean. The vessels, described by the author as lamps, were predominant at Khirbat al-Karak.⁹⁾ A large number of such vessels was also reported from other Levantine sites. They were relatively common at Mt. Nebo,¹⁰⁾ Jerash¹¹⁾ and Beirut.¹²⁾ A foot from Marea stands close to the published fragments from Carthage¹³⁾

3) M. Kawatoko, A Port City Site on the Sinai Peninsula, al-Tur, The 12th Expedition in 1995 (A Summary Report), The Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (1996), 68, pl. 40, no. 4.

4) Yael Gorin-Rosen, "Glass from monasteries and chapels in the South Sinai", in: *IAA Reports*, No. 9 (Jerusalem 2000), 236, 238, fig. 2, no. 8.

5) J. Hayes, "Late Roman and Byzantine Glass", in: *Excavations at Sarachane in Istanbul*, vol. 2 (Princeton 1992), 401, fig. 152, nos. 70-71.

6) C. Isings, *Roman Glass from Dated Finds* (Jakarta 1957), 139-140.

7) M. Rodziewicz, *Les habitations romaines tardives d'Alexandrie, Alexandrie III* (Warsaw 1984), 240-241, 438, pl. 73, nos. 376-379.

8) Susan H. Young, "A preview of seventh-century glass from the Kourion basilica, Cyprus", *JGS* 35 (1993), 40-42, with extensive bibliography.

9) P. Delugaz and R.C. Haines, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbat al-Karak* (Chicago 1960), pl. 60:14-18, 21-23.

10) S. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mt. Nebo* (Jerusalem 1941), 318-319, pl. 140:30-39.

11) C. Meyer, "Glass from the North Theater Byzantine Church and Soundings at Jerash, Jordan, 1982-1983", *BASOR*, Suppl. 25 (1987), 197, fig. 9.A-D.

12) S. Jenkins, "The Roman and Early Byzantine Glass from the Souks Excavations: an Interim statement", *Berytus* XLIII (1997-1998), 116, figs. 14-15.

13) J.W. Hayes, "Glass Finds from the 1975 season", in: *Excavations at Carthage, 1975*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor 1978), 187, 193, fig. 4, 33c; M. Sternini, "I vetri provenienti dagli scavi della Missione Italiana a Cartagine", *JGS* 41 (1999), 85-86, 95, fig. 6:65-69.

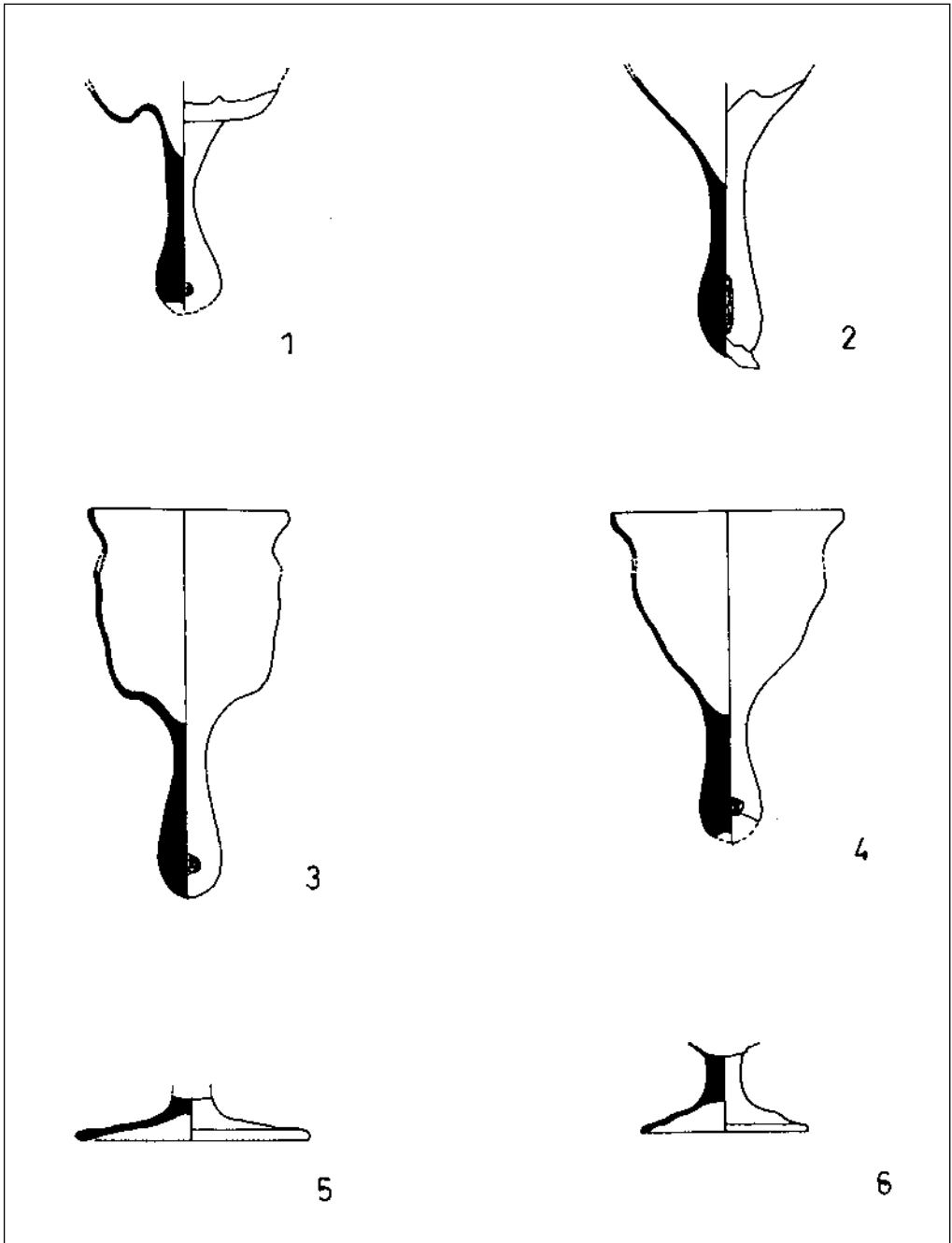


Fig. 1. Glass from the Basilica. Solid-stem lamps (nos. 1-4; the latter two shapes reconstructed based on non-joining sherds) and wineglass bases (nos. 5-6). Scale 1:2
(Drawing R. Kucharczyk)

and Sarachane. Similar material from many sites in the northern Black Sea littoral is noteworthy.¹⁴⁾ Large quantities

of the form have also been noted in excavations at the legionary camp in Novae (Bulgaria).¹⁵⁾

TOILET BOTTLES

Only a few fragments of toilet bottles came to light, unlike the previous season when they had constituted a predominant category. The glass was very thin, pale yellow, transparent and translucent. All of the vessels were free blown with the exception of one sherd, which belonged to

a bottle blown into a mould at the beginning of the manufacturing process. Faint vertical ribbing may have covered the body. The closest parallels for the specimen from Marea are offered by fragments from Kom el-Dikka,¹⁶⁾ Rome¹⁷⁾ and Jerash.¹⁸⁾

14) Y. Ivachenko, "Le Verre Proto-Byzantin. Recherches en Russie (1980-1990)", in: ed. D. Foy, *Le verre de L' Antiquite Tardive et du Haut Moyen Age (Val d'Oise 1995)*, 321, 326, fig. 8.

15) G. Dankowa, "Kieliszki i unguentaria z Novae. Materiały do katalogu", *Novensia* 6 (1993), 81-89, 93-117, pls. I-VI; J. Olczak, "Szkło rzymskie z terenu komendatury w Novae", *Novensia* 8 (1995), 59-81, figs. 2-4.

16) Rodziewicz, op. cit., see note 8, 439, pl. 74, 386.

17) M. Sternini, "Reperti in Vetrola da un deposito tardoantico sul colle Palatino", *JGS* 43 (2001), 59-60, fig. 15:156.

18) O. Doussart, *Le verre en Jordanie et en Syrie du Sud (Beyrouth 1998)*, 282, pl. 42, no. 36; 286, pl. 46, nos. 18-19.