

TWO POTTERY DEPOSITS FROM BUILDING AA IN NAQLUN

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Two separate pottery deposits were discovered in structure AA situated west of

Building A, now presumed to have been the monastery keep.¹⁾

DEPOSIT FROM ROOM AA.30.2

Being the biggest of the units excavated so far in the structure, room AA.30.2 is virtually a square in plan and has a massive pillar standing in the center. The pottery from the fill falls into two distinct occupational phases: the later one from the 10th/11th century,²⁾ which was contemporary with the last efforts to adapt the dilapidated complex for further use, and an earlier one, of the 8th/9th century, perhaps even the first half of the 9th century.³⁾

Two big storage jars, both made of Nile silt, were discovered dug into the ground in the southwestern corner of the room. Jar Nd.01.218 (*Fig. 1:A*) is 59.4 cm high and has a rim diameter of 24.0-24.5 cm. The thickly ribbed neck narrows toward the top. Four small round handles are set on the narrow and virtually flat shoulders. The body, which is strongly carinated at

one-third of the height, narrows toward a ring foot measuring 7.0 cm in diameter. The vessel is covered with a simple ornament painted in red on a white slip. A red line emphasizes the bottom of the shoulders and between the handles there runs an arcade – a wavy line between two arches. Schematically drawn branches fill the five metope fields on the body, which are separated by double or quadruple straight or wavy lines. The ornament is blurred in many places. The vessel can be dated with considerable certainty to the 9th century,⁴⁾ perhaps even its beginning.

The decoration of the other storage jar (Nd.01.219, *Figs. 1:B, 2*) is much more complex. The jar itself is 60.4 cm high and has a rim diameter equal to 24.4 cm. The everted flaring rim is weakly profiled. The shoulders are broad and sloping, gently

1) W. Godlewski, T. Herbich, E. Wiprzycka, "Deir el Naqlun (Neklioni), 1986-1987: First preliminary report", *Nubica* 1-2 (1990), 171-201; also successive excavation reports by W. Godlewski in: *PAM XII, Reports 2000* (2001), 149-161; *PAM XIII, Reports 2001* (2002), 159-170.

2) The Aswan beakers, *qullae*, glazed bowls and amphorae from this assemblage are typically found in 10th-11th century layers.

3) Pottery from this layer finds parallels in the fairly well dated ceramics from Elephantine (7th-8th century), the monastery of Epiphanius (7th-8th century), Tebtynis (mid 7th-mid 9th century) and Ashmunein (8th century).

4) Two similar vessels were discovered in 2001 in House X at Tebtynis, in layers from the early 9th and second half of the 9th-first half of the 10th centuries, cf. M.-O. Rousset, S. Marchand, "Secteur nord de Tebtynis (Fayyoum). Mission de 2000", *AnIsl* 35 (2001), 442 and 458. They have more sloping shoulders than the Naqlun jar.

rounded, with two small round handles attached to them. The body again is strongly offset at a third of the height, mildly narrowing toward a high ring foot of 7.8 cm in diameter. The decoration is a complicated relief and painted red and black design on a white slip, clearly divided into front and back (the handles marking the plane of division). On the front, an appliqué face with painted eye contours and a curly beard appears on the shoulder of the jar (cf. *Fig. 2 top*). On the body below the face a tree (palm) was depicted between antithetic representations of birds and two fish facing right. On either side there are fields filled with geometric ornament. On the left, there are four double circles in superposition set between two sets of five lines each, below

this a panel filled with black crosshatching and a small red doubled circle in each little square. On the right, we see three double circles in superposition, a pattern of checkered rhomboids below them. The ornament on the back of this jar recalls that from jar Nd.01.218. The area of the body is divided into four panels closed with an arcade on the shoulders, the arches containing each a half-rosette (stylized architectural conch?). The panels contain the following motifs, respectively: wavy line, stylized four-petal flower, stylized ornamental leaf, six-petal flower. The colors of the decoration are surprisingly vivid and the drawing very distinct. The vessel may be assigned to the 8th/9th century or perhaps the beginning of the 9th century.⁵⁾

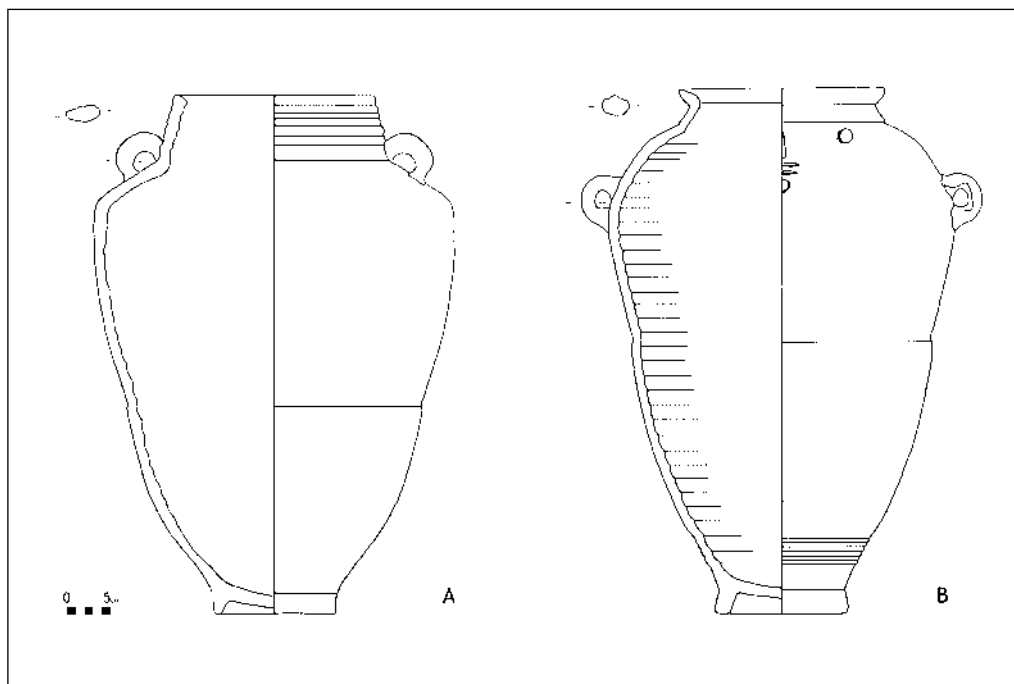
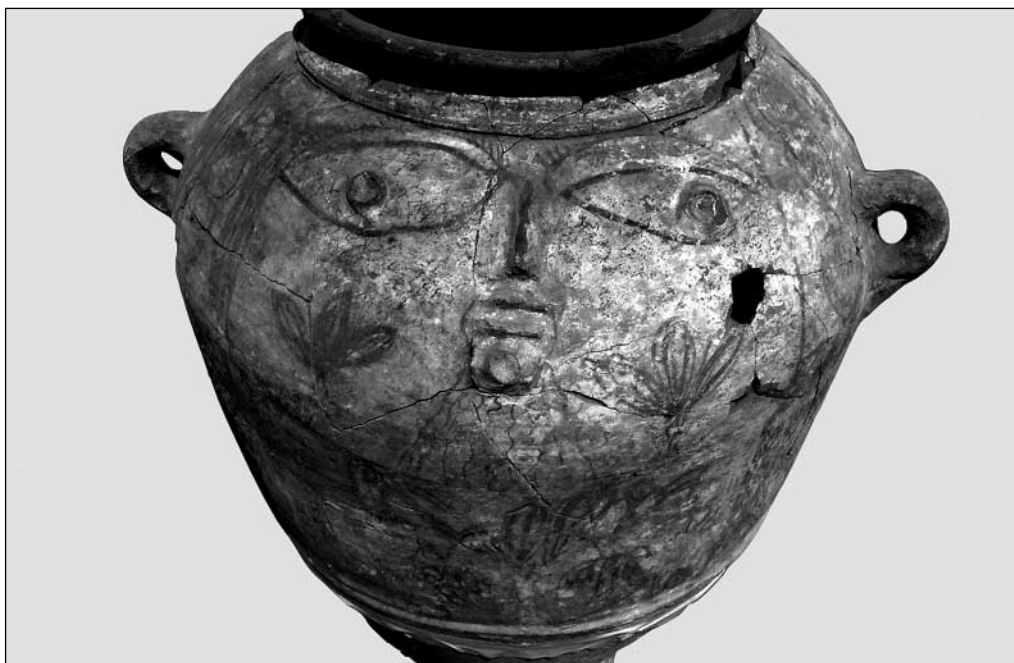


Fig. 1. Storage jars from Room AA.30.2: Nd.01.218 (A) and Nd.01.219 (B) (Drawing M. Žurek)



*Fig. 2. Storage jar (Nd.01.219) with appliqué face (top) and painted decoration
(Photo M. Žurek)*

It is likely that the two jars had been in use for what was presumably not a very long time before being sunk into the floor of

room AA.30.2. This event occurred most certainly in the same time, corresponding to the earlier occupational phase.

DEPOSIT FROM ROOM AA.40.2

Sixteen mostly intact vessels were found scattered on the floor in the southeastern part of room AA.40.2 (*Fig. 3*). The owners apparently abandoned them when moving out of the building.

The two plates are of the Late Roman Ware kind. Nd.00.242 (*Fig. 4:1*) is quite deep, thick-walled and with an elaborately profiled rim (dia. 33.0 cm). The rim is somewhat flaring with four flat semi-bands separated by incuts, a straight flaring wall and fairly high ring base. Plate Nd.01.011 from layer 2 in room A.20.2 is of similar form albeit less elaborate rim (not illustrated); also similar are the examples of

plates from sector D (Nd.98.137) and E (Nd.98.165). On the grounds of these parallels, a dating in the 9th century, perhaps the second half, is very probable. The other plate (Nd.00.244) appears very similar; it is smaller and has a lower ring base and depressed floor.

Bowls Nd.00.241 (*Fig. 4:2*) and Nd.00.255 (not illustrated) feature flaring walls and flat bases. Similar vessels were found in room D.12 (Nd.92.314) and in sector E.E.3 (Nd.98.288, Nd.98.289). They are apparently from the 9th century.⁶⁾ Another big thick-walled bowl of red clay (Nd.00.256, *Fig. 4:3*) has a somewhat



Fig. 3. Pottery deposit from room AA.40.2
(Photo M. Žurek)

5) Once again, House X at Tebtynis yielded a similar vessel from an 8th-century layer, cf. *ibid.*, 432. The decoration, however, is in the case of this parallel vessel much poorer.

6) They are dated thus by W. Kubiak, cf. *id.*, *Unglazed Domestic Wares from Fustat* (typescript), 120-121. The archaeological context at Naqlun confirms this dating.

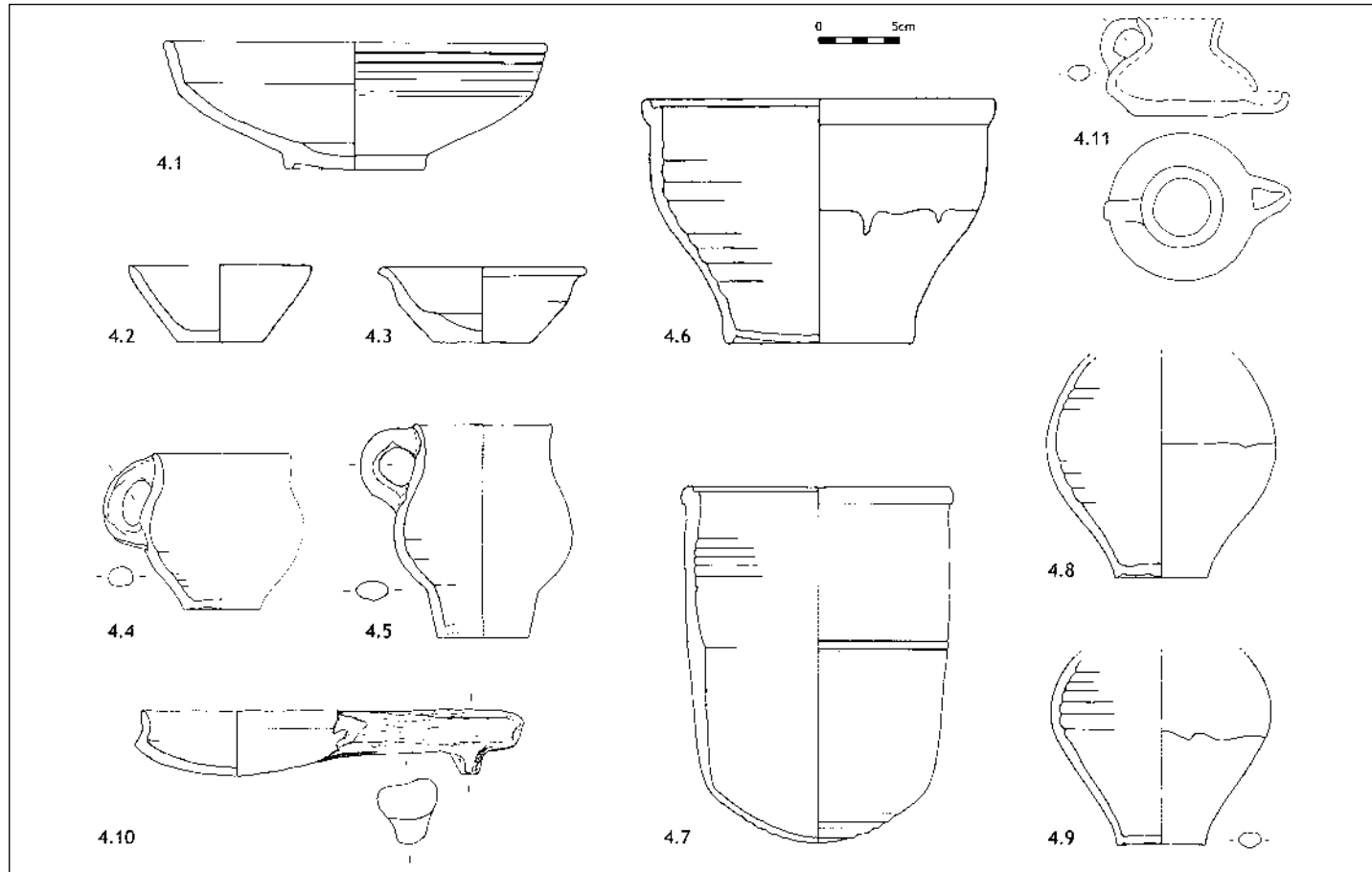


Fig. 4. Pottery deposit from Room AA.40.2: 1,2 - plates and bowls, red clay, red-slipped; 3 - bowl, red clay; 4,5 - beakers, red clay; 6 - vase, Nile silt, worn white slip; 7 - vase, red clay; 8,9 - quillae, red clay; 10 - pan, yellowish clay; 11 - oil lamp, red clay (Drawing M. Žurek)

everted rounded and undercut rim, rounded wall and flat base. A similar bowl originated from sector D (Nd.92.055).

The deposit included two beakers. Nd.00.240 (*Fig. 4:4*) had a slightly flaring rim, bulging body, massive handle and weakly defined ring base. Nd.00.243 (*Fig. 4:5*) is virtually cylindrical near the bottom, but otherwise it is very much like the previous one in shape. Beakers of this type are frequent finds at Naqlun. They were recorded in layers from the second half of the 8th through the beginning of the 12th centuries, in room D.1 (Nd.88.197 and Nd.88.198),⁷⁾ room D.28 (Nd.98.013), and sector D in general (Nd.98.043, Nd.98.056), as well as E.E.3 (Nd.98.286). At Fihl, similar beakers appear just before the middle of the 8th century,⁸⁾ at Nishapur in the 10th century.⁹⁾ In Fustat, they are found in layers from the end of the 10th and the 11th century.¹⁰⁾ The Naqlun beakers can be assigned to the 9th-10th centuries.

Vase Nd.00.254 (*Fig. 4:6*) features a banded rim that is undercut inside, rounded walls and a ring base. The upper part of the vessel is covered with a light streaky slip. Vessels of the same type, which appears to have been very popular at Naqlun, were discovered in assemblages from rooms D.3 (Nd.89.126, Nd.89.128), D.9 (Nd.92.210), B.1 of hermitage 25 and sectors E.E.3 (Nd.98.388) and D (Nd.98.063). Variants made of Nile silt and characterized by the same kind of band rim, with a rounded or carinated body and

a light slip streaking on the upper parts of the vase have also been found in rooms AA.40.4 (Nd.00.293), AA.30.3, layer 1 (Nd.01.038), under the *sebakb* in courtyard D.15 and in sectors E.E.3 (Nd. 98.292, Nd.98.293) and D (Nd.98.080). Not all come from dated contexts. Based on parallels with the vases from hermitage 25 and from room AA.40.4, the vase should be placed in the 9th century.

The tall vase of red clay Nd.00.260 (*Fig. 4:7*) has a rounded rim with inside ledge, virtually vertical walls and a rounded bottom. Similar vases were recorded in room D.9 (Nd.91.208) and D.6 (Nd.89.364). Other examples, from room AA.50.4 and from sector AA, are less tall and have a flatter, although still rounded bottom; unfortunately, they are not well dated contextually. They resemble to some extent the vases from Elephantine: not very tall, with almost vertical walls and a flattened rounded bottom, dated with considerable probability to the 8th/9th centuries.¹¹⁾

The two *qullae*, Nd.00.257 and Nd.00.258 (*Fig. 4:7,8*), feature bulging bodies and a small, low ring base. They are both of red clay. This type with its flaring neck furnished with a strainer and a more or less bulging body, occasionally a pair of handles and mostly a small ring base, was very common at Naqlun. *Qullae* with long necks and relatively tall bodies were recorded in rooms AA.30.2, layers 2 and 3; sectors A.SE and E; *qullae* with handles – in rooms AA.30.3, layer 3, and D.3 and

7) W. Godlewski, T. Derda, T. Górecki, "Deir el-Naqlun (Nekloni), 1988-1989, Second Preliminary Report", *Nubica* III/1 (1994), 228.

8) R.H. Smith, A.W. McNicoll, J.B. Henessy, "The 1981 Season at Pella of the Decapolis", *BASOR* 249 (1983), fig. 11.4.

9) C.K. Wilkinson, Nishapur. Pottery of the Early Islamic Period (New York 1973), pl. 341.37.

10) Kubiak, op. cit., 205, fig. 42.B.

11) R.D. Gempeler, Die Keramik römischer bis früh-arabischer Zeit, *Elephantine* X (Mainz am Rhein 1992), 166-167, pl. 100.1.

D.21; *qullae* with relatively bulging bodies – in room D.21, lowest layer, and in sector D (Nd.98.042, Nd.98.246). These vessels are attributable to the 9th-10th centuries.

The pan Nd.00.263 (Fig. 4:10) is small, c. 12.0 cm in diameter, with a rounded rim and sharply carinated wall, flattened but rounded bottom and a massive handle with a knob on the underside that served to

support the pan stably on a flat surface. A few big pans, almost twice as big in diameter, were recorded from assemblages in sector D (e.g. Nd.92.336 and Nd.92.337 from courtyard D.15, Nd.95.138 and Nd.95.184 from room D.24, all from layers dated to the 9th-11th centuries). A similar form (without handle) is demonstrated by vessel Nd.88.205 from room

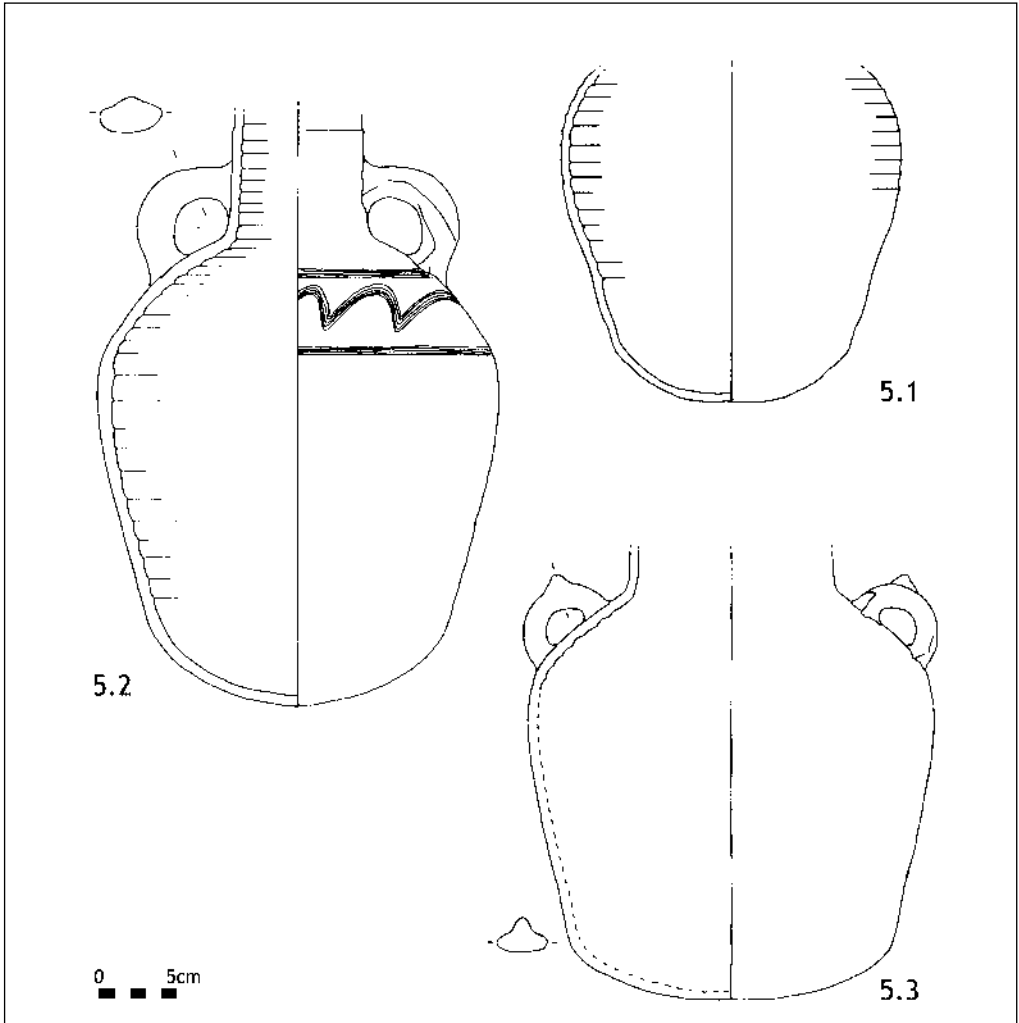


Fig. 5. Amphorae from the pottery deposit found in Room AA.40.2: 1 - brown clay; 2 - red clay, white slip; 3 - red clay (Drawing M. Żurek)

D.1. The assemblage from this last room has been dated rather broadly from the middle of the 8th to the middle of the 12th century.¹²⁾ Based on parallels, the pan from the deposit in room AA.40.2 should be assigned a date in the 9th-11th century, but most likely in the beginning of this period.

Of the three amphorae, Nd.00.259 (*Fig. 5:1*) is of brown clay. The body is heavily shortened, narrowing to a somewhat rounded bottom, with ribbing in the upper part. The rim, unfortunately, has not been preserved. Nd.00.261 (*Fig. 5:2*) has a similarly rounded bottom, but is made of red clay. It is big (39 cm high) with a fairly long, slightly inward sloping neck, broad shoulders, round handles, a heavily shortened and narrowing body. It is covered with white slip and bears a wavy combed decoration on the shoulders. Finally, Nd.00.262 is also an amphora of red clay, big (more than 30 cm high) with a wide neck, narrow shoulders and small loop handles (*Fig. 5:3*). The body is also foreshortened and narrowing toward a gently rounded, flattened out bottom, the walls covered with flat wide ribbing. Of similar form (but with handles attached in a dif-

ferent way) is amphora Nd.98.119 discovered in sector D.

Finally, the assemblage yielded an oil lamp of the Fustat type, Nd.00.239 (*Fig. 4:11*). It is characterized by a flaring rim, short nozzle and not very high oil reservoir. Many similar lamps have been found at Naqlun, for example, in the fill of the staircase AA.30.1 (Nd.00.013, Nd.00.129). At nearby Tebtynis, a lamp of this type was recorded in a well-dated layer from the second quarter of the 9th through the middle of the 10th century.¹³⁾

As can be seen from the above presentation, the deposit from room AA.40.2 consists of typical vessels, representing forms that remained in use for a long time. Vessels of this kind occurred at Naqlun from the 8th/9th centuries through the middle of the 10th century. The pottery discussed here was deposited presumably sometime in the late 9th century. At this time most of the AA complex went up in flames. Traces of a violent conflagration can be seen in many of the rooms, while an associated thick layer of ashes recorded in the northern part of the complex yielded a golden dinar issued in AD 891/892.¹⁴⁾

12) Godlewski, Derda, Górecki, op. cit., 227.

13) Rousset, Marchand, op. cit., 448.

14) C. Morisot, "Quelques monnaies découvertes a Deir el-Malak", *AnIsl* 34 (2000), 327-333.