

Title: **Pottery from the refuse dump under unit B.26 in Naqlun**

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**POTTERY FROM THE REFUSE DUMP
UNDER UNIT B.26 IN NAQLUN**

Katarzyna Danys-Lasek
PCMA Associate, Warsaw

Abstract: The pottery assemblage from excavations carried out in 2008–2009 in the northern part of a monastic refuse dump at the southern fringes of the kom in Naqlun has proved to be different, in the repertoire of forms as much as the dating, from the pottery evidence recovered twenty years earlier from the southern part of this refuse dump. The ceramics represent a broad range of vessels produced in Egypt in the 6th and 7th centuries, including tableware and storage and transport containers. Imports from North Africa as well as the Eastern Mediterranean were also recorded. The stratigraphy of the monastic refuse dump was disturbed by the cut under two burials; the fill of the graves yielded 12th century pottery.

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Pottery found during the exploration of room B.26 and the refuse dump below it has produced a considerable repertoire of forms dated from the end of the 5th century through the end of the 7th century, possibly even the beginning of the 8th century. The only discordant piece in this assemblage is a glazed bowl fragment (Nd.08.071) of Fayumi Ware, associated usually with the Fatimid period. Its presence, however, is easily explained by a secondary burial

pit from this period (for burials T.500 and T.501 and their stratigraphic relation to the rest of the trench, see Derda, Dzierzbicka 2012, in this volume).

The assemblage is discussed below by stratigraphic units, which have been grouped to correspond to the archaeological phasing of the trench (for this, see Derda, Dzierzbicka 2012, in this volume), from the latest layers on top to the earliest at the bottom.

LAYERS I AND II ABOVE THE REFUSE DUMP

The assemblage from layers I and II [*Fig. 1*] constituted the fill of unit B.26, which consisted of large deposits of ash, hence the pottery was heavily sooted. Bowls and dishes predominated in this group, both locally made (Nd.08.203, Nd.08.206, Nd.08.207, Nd.08.210 – italicized vessel numbers in the text indicate illustrated

items) and produced in southern Egypt (Nd.08.221, Nd.08.226, Nd.08.227). Bowls had ribbed walls inside and outside, S-shaped profiles and collars below the rim edge. They were made of Nile silt and slipped red. Those from southern Egyptian ateliers could be either red- or orange-slipped and were frequently decorated

with one or two rows of roulette ornament. Analogous shapes and decoration have been recorded on Elephantine (types T364a, T344b, T407a) dated to the 6th through 7th/8th centuries (Gempeler 1992: Figs 43,7; 54,6; 55,1; 61,10). Analogous vessels like Nd.08.206 and Nd.08.227 were discovered on the Kom el-Dikka site in Alexandria, in the latrine (unit 9) of House D and in unit 4 of House F, dated to the first half of the 5th century (Rodziewicz 1984: Pl. 28:46; Pl. 38:149).

Other wares included cooking pots with either vertical or horizontal handles

(Nd.8.213), bottles and *qullas* of Nile silt (Nd.08.216, Nd.08.062). A two-handled bulging jar (Nd.08.225) was also found, as well as a storage pot decorated with painted and impressed-rope motifs (Nd.08.209) and the top part of an Egyptian LRA 7 amphora (Nd.08.269), paralleling Egloff's type 174 from Kellia, there dated to the 7th century (Egloff 1977: Pl. 57:3).

The parallels for bowls and dishes from the site of Elephantine suggest a date in the second half of the 7th century, possibly beginning of the 8th century for layers I and II.

LAYERS CONNECTED WITH THE REFUSE DUMP (III–VII, VIII–X, XI–XII)

LAYERS III AND IV

Layer III was composed of fragments of hardened seabkh, additionally cut by burial pits, covering the entire surface of the trench. Its texture suggested that

it and layer IV below it could both be considered as one chronological horizon with underlying layers considered part of the refuse dump (through layer VII), dated from the beginning of the 7th century

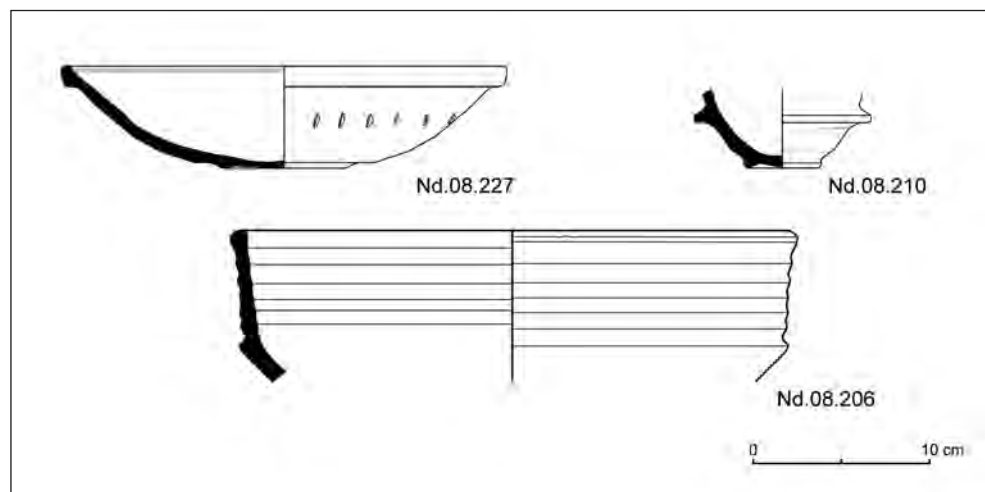


Fig. 1. Selection of pottery from layers I and II
(All drawings by the author)

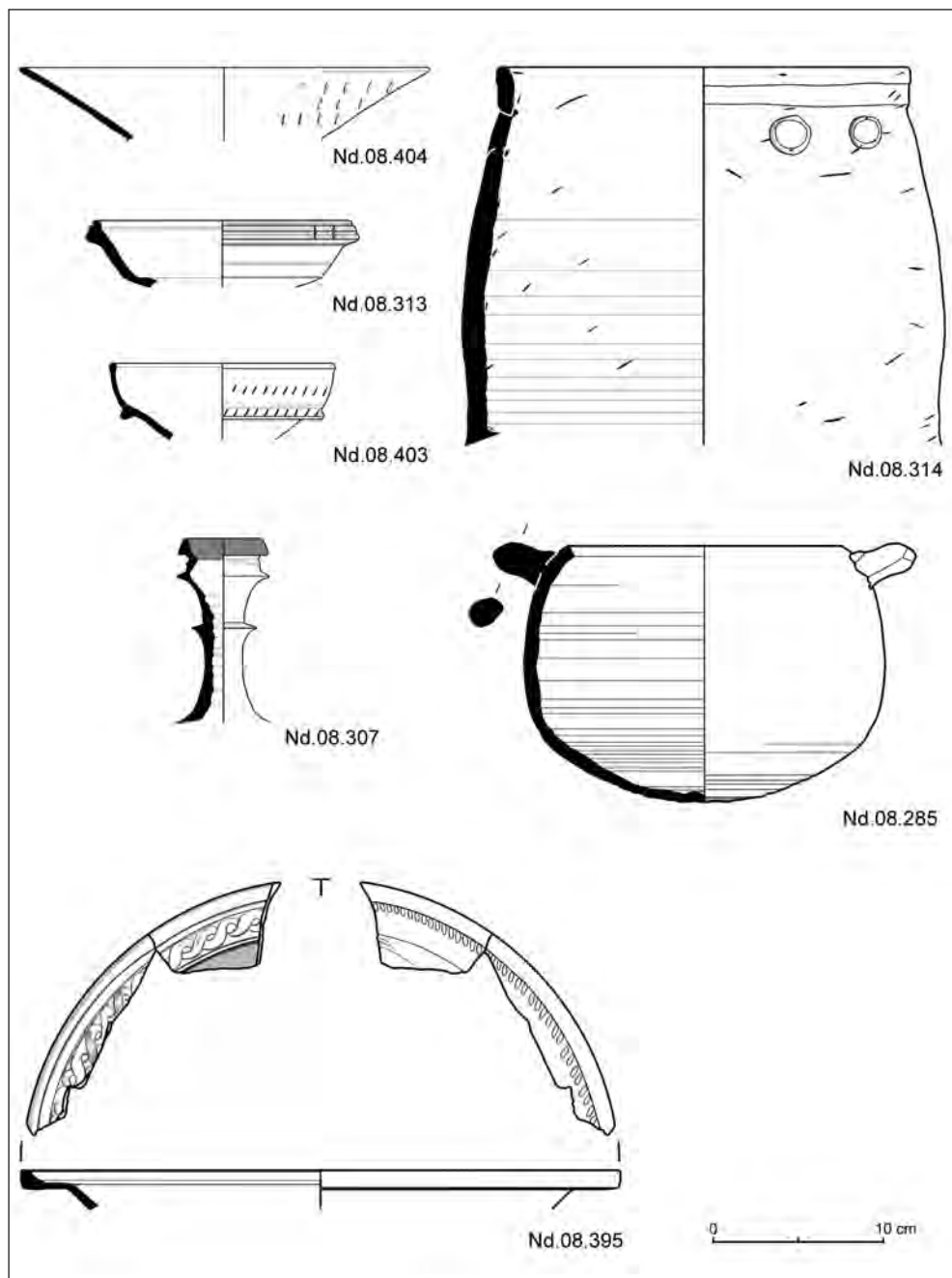


Fig. 2. Selection of pottery from layers III and IV of the refuse dump (7th century)

through its second half. The two layers produced substantial amounts of tableware originating from southern Egyptian production centers [Fig. 2]. These were bowls and dishes coated with a red or orange slip, decorated occasionally with single or double notches on a 'bulging' rim and/or two grooves, and/or painted with a dark red slip on the upper part (e.g. Nd.08.309, Nd.08.313, Nd.08.320, Nd.08.402). Analogous vessels from Elephantine (T325) date from the 5th or 6th century through the end of the 7th century (Gempeler 1992: Fig. 40,9). Bowls with a small collar in the lower part of the body were slightly less numerous; they were red-slipped and in one case decorated with two rows of incised roulette pattern on the upper body (Nd.08.276, Nd.08.281, Nd.08.403). Similar forms from Elephantine (T220) date from the 5th or 6th through the end of the 7th or even the beginning of the 8th century (Gempeler 1992: Fig. 38,12).

Other dishes included vessels with straight, strongly flared walls ending in thickened or straight rounded rims. They were red-, orange- or yellow-slipped (e.g. Nd.08.316), and in the case of dish Nd.08.404 also decorated with three rows of rouletted incisions. Parallels from Elephantine (T253b) date to the 6th–7th centuries (Gempeler 1992: Fig. 24,8). Dishes with bent profile are rare (Nd.08.311, Nd.08.395). The former is red-slipped, the latter cream-slipped and additionally decorated with a painted guilloche between lines on the inside rim ledge; the ornament is black and red in color. A broad repertoire of vessels of this type (T353–354) has been recorded in 6th through 8th century Elephantine (Gempeler 1992: Figs 45,8–10, 46–49).

Cooking ware was represented by hemispherical bowls with two horizontal handles (Nd.08.285). Deep buckets with two openings below the rim on either side of the vessels (Nd.08.314) were also found in layer III, together with the upper part of a bottle (Nd.08.307) of yellow clay with a double collar on the neck and a dropping rim with evidence of resinating.

LAYERS V, VI AND VII

The collection of sherds from layers V, VI and VII contained mostly nondiagnostic sherds of LRA 7 Egyptian amphoras and definitely fewer tableware and cooking vessels compared to later refuse layers in this dump [Fig. 3]. Southern Egyptian products were much less frequent, being represented by a bowl fragment (Nd.08.446) bearing dark slip on the rim and collar below it. The quantity of tableware made of Nile silt increased, among others a dish (Nd.08.417) with bulging rim, grooved externally and painted with red-white-black lines, bands and guilloche patterns internally. Similar vessels were discovered in Naqlun in unit D1, which was dated to the 7th and first half of the 8th century (Godlewski *et alii* 1994: Fig. 18.1–3) and in nearby Tebtynis, in the fill of House X dated to the middle of the 7th century (Rousset, Marchand 2000: Fig. 14f) and in Alexandria, room 3 of House C, dated to the mid 7th century (Rodziewicz 1984: Fig. 197). A wide-mouth casserole with horizontal handle (Nd.08.634) merits note among the cooking pots. A similar form was recorded at Kellia, in deposits L and O dated to the 7th century. Next to the said fragments of Egyptian LRA 7 amphoras, the top of an LRA 5/6 amphora (Egloff 1977: 187–190) made of Nile silt (Nd.08.660) was found in layer V. A whitewashed surface bore a band

of combed decoration. Amphoras of this kind were found in different contexts in Kellia and date to the 7th–8th century (Egloff 1977: 118; Ballet *et alii* 2003: Fig. 140). Non-local products from layer VII included a fragment of the neck of an LRA 1 amphora from the Eastern Mediterranean, which was common on sites around the Mediterranean in the 5th through 7th centuries (Peacock, Williams 1986: 185–187; Egloff 1977: 112; Williams 2005: 618–619). Some of the ceramic forms found in layers V–VII are considered typical of the 7th century. Consequently, it appears very likely that these layers should be assigned to the 7th century as a whole.

LAYERS VIII, IX AND X

The next layer not disturbed by the burial pit (layer VIII) contained absolutely no pottery of southern Egyptian production [Fig. 4]. Instead, there was an abundance of tableware, in this as well as in layers IX and X, that was evidently different, representing an earlier stage in the development of the forms. Amphoras and cooking pots, apparently of 6th century date, were also numerous. On these grounds it can be said that layers VIII through X should be dated from the end of the 6th through the beginning or middle of the 7th century.

Tableware included a North African (African Red Slip ware) import in the

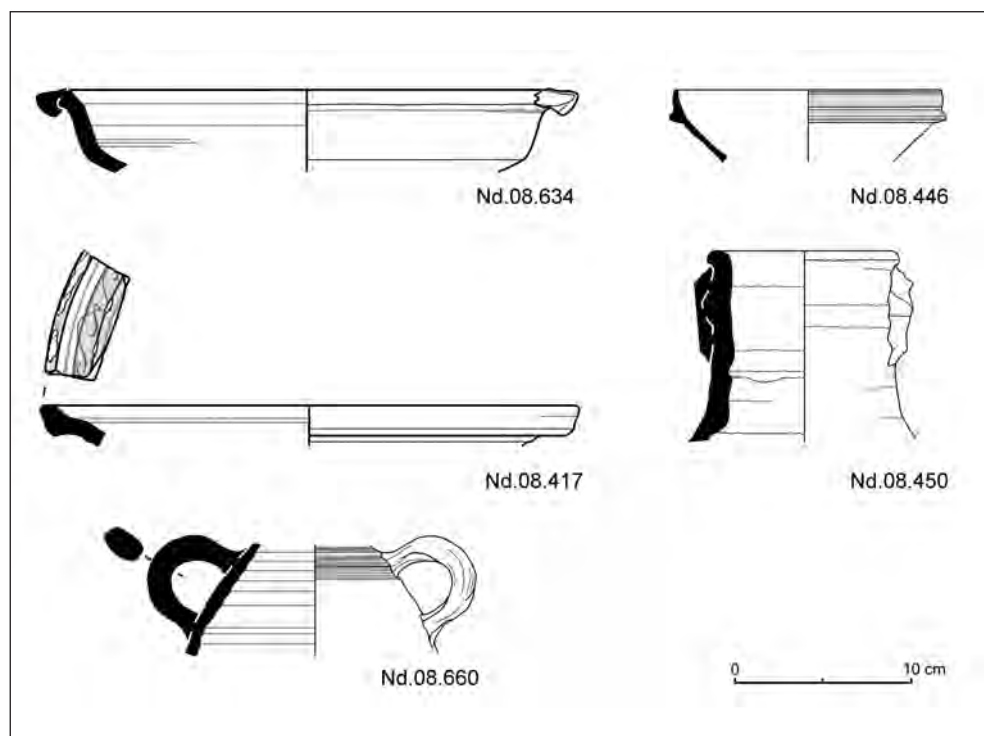


Fig. 3. Selection of pottery from layers V, VI and VII of the refuse dump

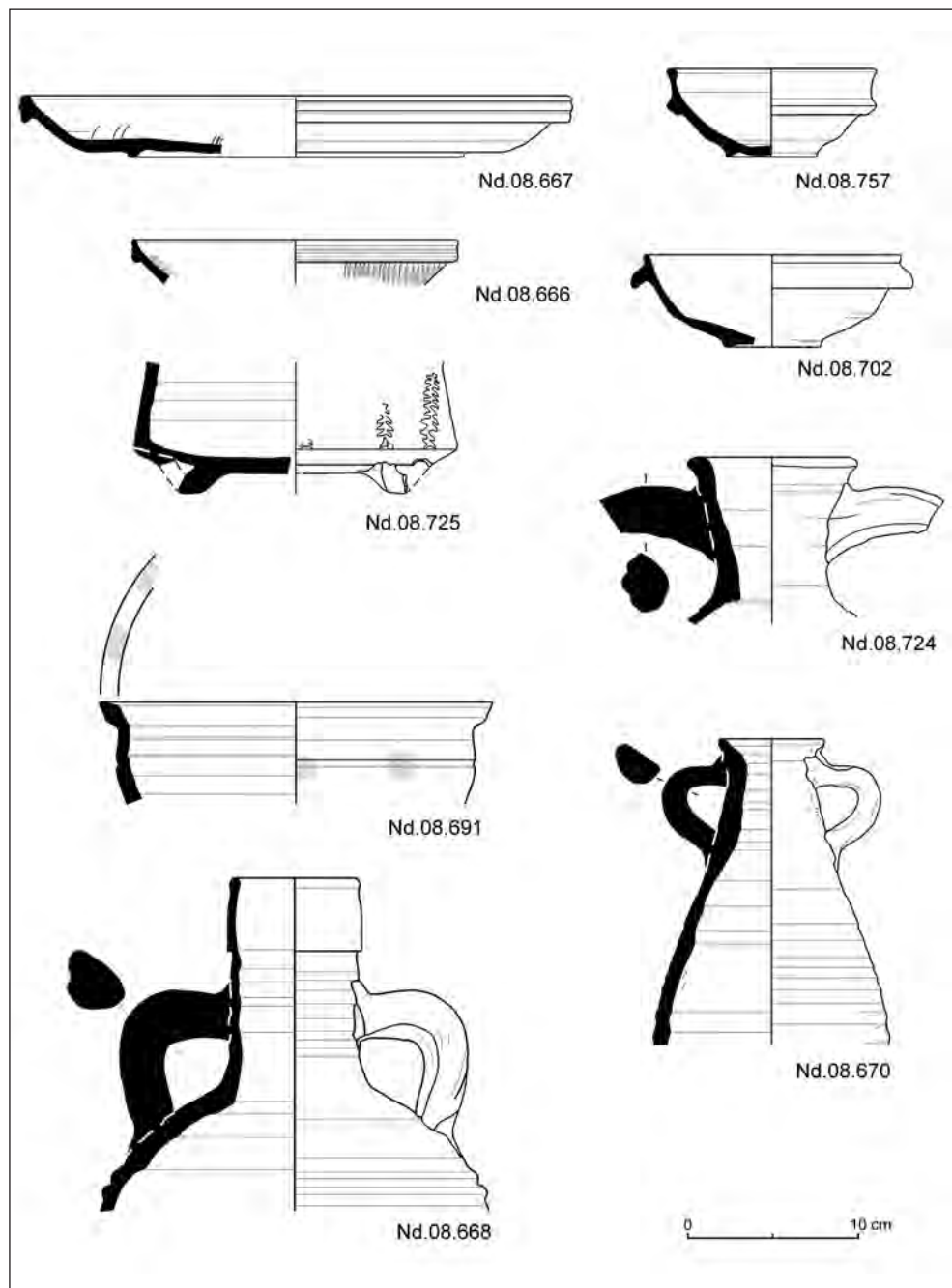


Fig. 4. Selection of pottery from layers XI and XIII (6th century)

shape of a bowl (Nd.08.666) decorated with a double groove on the rim and rouletting on the external surface under the rim. The vessel falls in J.W. Hayes' type 84 dated to about AD 440–500 (Hayes 1972: 133, Fig. 21). Two dishes (Nd.08.665, Nd.08.667) made of Nile silt and red-slipped, bore decoration in the form of a double groove on the outside rim; one of these dishes also preserved a low ring base and a double concentric groove on the floor inside. Both examples were imitations of Hayes type 84. Two collared cups (Nd.08.726, Nd.08.757) resemble vessels found at Tod, in a layer from the end of the 5th century through the middle of the 7th century (Pierrat 1996: 204, Fig. 114). One bowl (Nd.08.702) had a longer drooping collar, analogous to that on a form from Elephantine (T318b), dated there to the third quarter(?) of the 5th century and the middle(?) of the sixth century (Gempeler 1992: Fig. 36,7). A red-slipped bowl (Nd.08.691) featured yellow spots on the body and inner rim; an undecorated parallel from Elephantine (K227) was attributed to the turn of the 5th century (Gempeler 1992: Fig. 87,6). A similar shape, type 86, was noted in Kellia (Egloff 1977: Pl. 44:3).

A casserole (Nd.08.725) made of Nile silt is of note, being red-slipped and decorated with impressed motifs resembling palmettes. It stands on a tripod base. Parallels dated to the beginning of the 6th century were discovered in Naqlun, in the foundations of the monastic buildings on the kom (Godlewski 1990: 50, Fig. 8). Parallel vessels with arched bases were discovered in Alexandria, in unit 2 of House E from the beginning of the 7th century (Rodziewicz 1984: Pl. 48:178). One can also mention from layer VIII

a fragment of bottle rim (Nd.08.662), similar in form to a bottle rim from layer III (Nd.08.307), and the upper part of a bottle or amphora (Nd.08.670) made of Nile silt, featuring a slender elongated form and two handles below the rim.

Two sherds were distinctive in the cooking pot collection from these layers: a vessel with large triangular handles (Nd.08.728) and a pot with inner collar (Nd.08.725). The former resembles a vessel found on the kom in Naqlun in 1986 (Godlewski 1990: Fig. 12), the latter is like a vessel from Tod, from a layer dated from the end of the 5th to the middle of the 7th century (Pierrat 1996: 204, Fig. 88).

Layers VIII–X also contained numerous fragments of Egyptian LRA 7 amphoras (Nd.08.668, Nd.08.758), comparable to variant b found in the southern part of the refuse dump in the 1988 and 1990 seasons (Górecki 1993: Fig. II.4b), as well as in Alexandria, in a deposit found in room 2 of House C, associated with the first half of the 7th century (Rodziewicz 1984: Fig. 196). A fragment of an imported LRA 1 amphora (Nd.08.724) was recorded in layer IX; as noted above, these containers were common in the Mediterranean in the 5th–7th centuries (Peacock, Williams 1986: 185–187; Egloff 1977: 112). The Naqlun fragment may have come from Cyprus judging by a macroscopic observation of inclusions in the clay matrix (Williams 2005: 618–619). An analogous LRA 1 vessel from Naqlun was found inside hermitage 87 (Nd.07.159), where it was dated to the 5th–6th century, and at Tell San el-Hagar (Bavay *et alii* 2000: Fig. 26).

LAYERS XI AND XII

The ceramic assemblage from layers XI and XII is evidently earlier [Fig. 5]. A fragment

of North African bowl and some of the local products suggest a 6th century dating for these layers without reaching further back in time to the end of the 5th century.

The imported bowl (Nd.08.760) represents Hayes' ARS form 91A with a prominent inturned collar. The form is dated from the end of the 4th through the beginning of

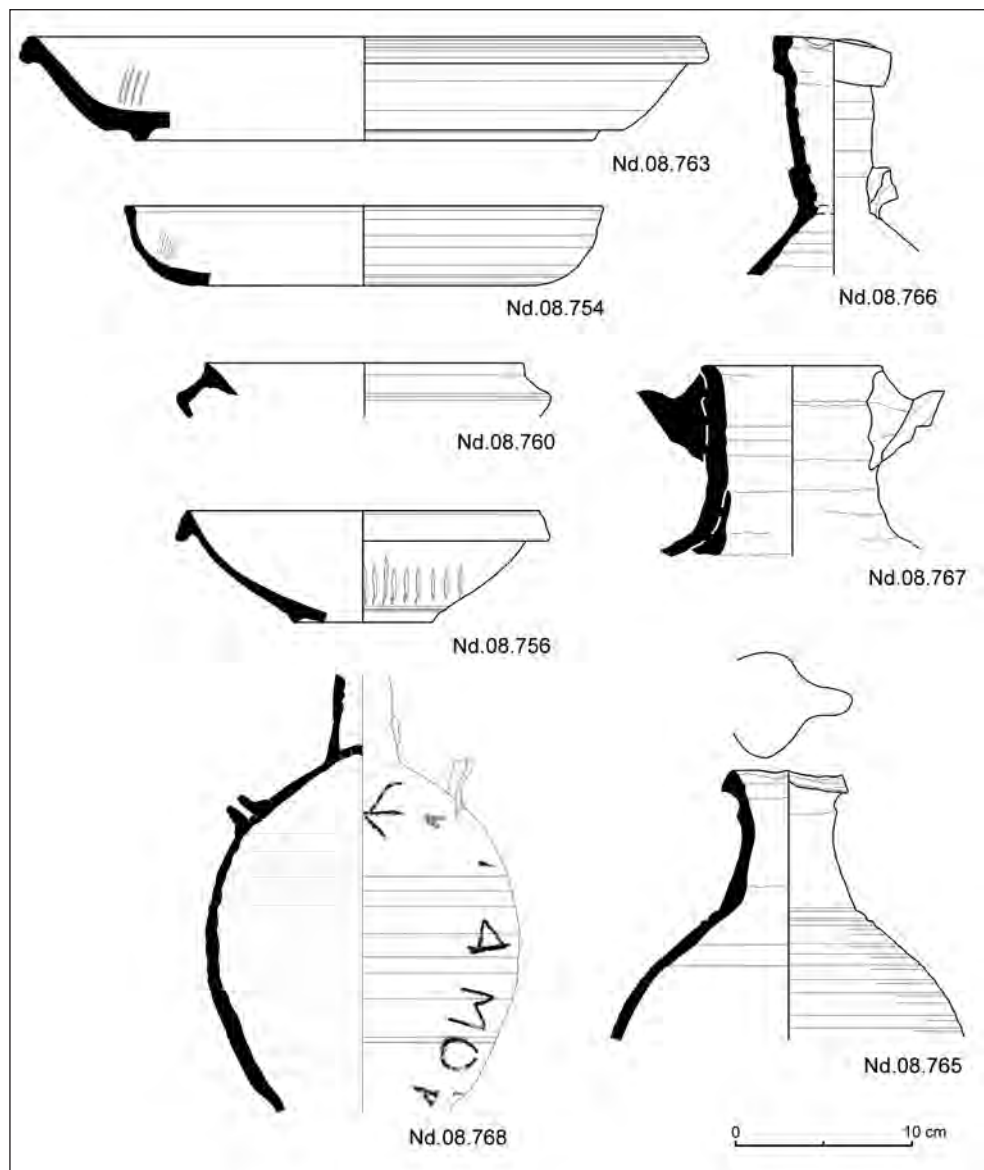


Fig. 5. Selection of pottery from layers XI and XII

the 6th century (Hayes 1972: 142, Fig. 26). A small bowl (Nd.08.756) of southern Egyptian production had a collar directly from the rim and rouletted decoration on the body. Elephantine bowls of type T247 had an analogously formed upper part (Gempeler 1992: 79, Fig. 22,14], while a similar pattern of decoration occurred on form T260 also from Elephantine, dated to the second half of the 6th and early 7th century (Gempeler 1992: 83, Fig. 26,6). A dish presumably from a local pottery workshop (Nd.08.754) featuring a thickened rim and flat bottom, decorated with three grooves on the floor, is an imitation of North African form 64 according to J.W. Hayes, dated to the early and middle 5th century (Hayes 1972: 111, Fig. 18). Another dish (Nd.08.763), representing the same form as dishes Nd.08.665 and Nd.08.667 from layers VIII–X (grooves on a bulging rim, ring base and grooves on the floor), is also an imitation of the North African type 84 dated by John Hayes to about AD 440–500 (1972: 133, Fig. 21). Analogous forms were produced on Cyprus: Hayes LR D type 2, attributed to the late 5th and early 6th century (Hayes 1972: 373, Fig. 80: 12). Two other dish fragments (Nd.08.753, Nd.08.761) also featured concentric grooves on the floor.

The repertoire of forms from layers XI and XII also included two *qullas*,

one of yellow marl clay and unslipped (Nd.08.768), featuring a spout and strainer and bearing an inscription in black ink(?) and another one of Nile silt (Nd.08.766) with an undulating rim and whitewashed surface. There was also a bottle/jar of southern Egyptian production (Nd.08.765), spouted, featuring a wavy rim and pinkish slip on the body. Vessels produced in the same technique as Nd.08.768 were discovered in all 5th century contexts in Kellia, disappearing from the archaeological record there by the beginning of the 6th century (Egloff 1977: 123). Similar spouted jars with wavy rims were found on Elephantine in contexts from the 1st through the 5th century (Gempeler 1992: 138–139, Fig. 78,16–20).

Cooking pots included a biconical form (Nd.08.755) with thickened rim, horizontal handles, rounded bottom and decoration in the form of painted cream spots on the shoulders. Analogous vessels found in Naqlun came from inside hermitage 87, which functioned in the 5th and 6th centuries. The upper part of an imported LRA 1 amphora, different from the other two sherds reported from this excavation of the refuse dump in that it had a thick broad neck, was also documented in layer XII. Amphoras of this particular shape were frequent in the fill of hermitage 87 in Naqlun.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present dating of the ceramic assemblage from unit B.26 is distinctly different from that previously proposed for the refuse dump in this part of Naqlun, that is, the 7th–10th centuries (Godlewski

et alii 1994: 225). None of the material here can be dated later than the beginning of the 8th century. It is also noteworthy that, with the exception of just a few examples, the forms from the southern part of the refuse

dump excavated in 1988 and 1990 do not correspond to this year's. The construction of unit B.26 with its floor in this spot effectively sealed the underlying layers of the dump. The presence of early ceramics, from the end of the 5th and the 6th centuries, in the earliest layers, combined with the absence of any later disturbance (such as the burial pit in the upper layers), confirms an

earlier date than previously proposed for the refuse dump or at least for its northern part. It may have started being used as a dump already at the end of the 5th century or at the beginning of the 6th and was used until the beginning of the 7th century, when the architectural unit was constructed here and occupied throughout the 7th and possibly also at the beginning of the 8th century.

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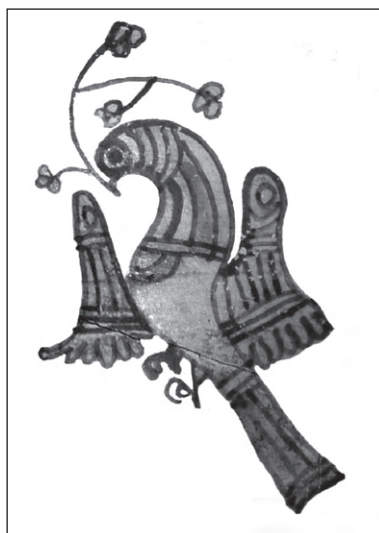
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IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

XXI

RESEARCH 2009



CONTENTS

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 11

OBITUARIES

Aleksandra Krzyżanowska 13

ABBREVIATIONS AND STANDARD REFERENCES 15

PAM REPORTS

PCMA FIELD MISSIONS AND PROJECTS IN 2009 (WITH MAP) 19

EGYPT

ALEXANDRIA

ALEXANDRIA KOM EL-DIKKA: EXCAVATIONS AND PRESERVATION WORK.
PRELIMINARY REPORT 2008/2009

Grzegorz Majcherek 27

APPENDIX: AUDITORIUM E: EXPLORATION IN SEASON 2009

Karol Juchniewicz, Katarzyna Lach ... 43

KOM EL-DIKKA 2005–2009: SELECTED ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Robert Mahler 49

MAREA

MAREA. REPORT 2009

Hanna Szymańska, Krzysztof Babraj 59

MAREA 2009: POTTERY FROM THE EXCAVATIONS

Anna Drzymuchowska 72

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN. CONSERVATION WORK IN THE 2009 SEASON

Stanisław Medeksza, Rafał Czerner, Grażyna Bąkowska with contributions by I. Fuks-Rembisz, W. Grzegorek, G. Majcherek, M. Mrozek-Wysocka, P. Zambrzycki 79

CONTENTS

TELL EL-RETABA

- TELL EL-RETABA: SEASON 2009
Stawomir Rzepka, Jozef Hudec 107
APPENDIX: TELL EL-RETABA: ARCHAEOBOTANICAL STUDIES
Claire Malleson 118
TELL EL-RETABA 2009: THE POTTERY
Anna Wodzińska 124

TELL EL-FARKHA

- TELL EL-FARKHA (GHAZALA). SEASON 2009
Marek Chłodnicki, Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz 135

SAQQARA

- SAQQARA 2008–2009
Karol Mysliwiec 157
APPENDIX: CONSERVATION WORK IN SAQQARA (2008–2009)
Zbigniew Godziejewski 167
SAQQARA 2008–2009: THE POTTERY
Teodozja I. Rzeuska 175

NAQLUN

- NAQLUN (NEKLONI) EXCAVATIONS IN 2008–2009
Włodzimierz Godlewski 193
APPENDIX: NAQLUN 2008: ARCHAEOBOTANICAL STUDIES
Jarosław Zieliński 210
REFUSE DUMP IN SECTOR B IN NAQLUN: EXCAVATION REPORT 2008–2009
Tomasz Derda, Dorota Dzierzbicka 212
POTTERY FROM THE REFUSE DUMP UNDER UNIT B.26 IN NAQLUN
Katarzyna Danys-Lasek 222
TWO BURIALS FROM CEMETERY A IN NAQLUN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL
AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL REMARKS
Dorota Dzierzbicka, Marzena Ożarek 233
ON THE COLLECTION OF WOODEN FINDS FROM NAQLUN AGAIN
Jarosław Zieliński, Iwona Zych 244

DEIR EL-BAHARI

- CONSERVATION WORK IN THE HATSHEPSUT TEMPLE IN DEIR EL-BAHARI (2009)
Rajmund Gazda 251
SANDSTONE SPHINXES OF QUEEN HATSHEPSUT FROM DEIR EL-BAHARI:
PRELIMINARY REMARKS
Agata Smilgin 255

CONTENTS

TEMPLE OF TUTHMOSIS III IN DEIR EL-BAHARI IN 2008 AND 2009: WORK IN THE STORES AND FIELD <i>Monika Dolińska</i>	261
THE TEMPLE OF TUTHMOSIS I REDISCOVERED <i>Jadwiga Iwaszczuk</i>	269
DAKHLEH OASIS	
DAKHLEH OASIS PROJECT. PETROGLYPH UNIT: ROCK ART RESEARCH, 2009 <i>Ewa Kuciewicz, Michał Kobusiewicz</i>	279
SUDAN	
OLD DONGOLA	
DONGOLA 2008–2009 <i>Włodzimierz Godlewski</i>	289
APPENDIX: CONSERVATION OF WALL PAINTINGS INSIDE THE FORMER THRONE HALL OF THE MAKURIAN KINGS IN DONGOLA (2009 SEASON) <i>Cristobal Calaforna-Rzepka</i>	312
DONGOLA 2009: POTTERY FROM BUILDING I (KOM A) <i>Katarzyna Danys-Lasek</i>	315
WALL INSCRIPTIONS IN A BURIAL VAULT UNDER THE NORTHWEST ANNEX OF THE MONASTERY ON KOM H (DONGOLA 2009) <i>Adam Łajtar, Jacques van der Vliet</i>	330
CRYPTS 1 AND 2 IN THE NORTHWEST ANNEX OF THE MONASTERY ON KOM H IN DONGOLA: REPORT ON THE EXPLORATION IN 2009 <i>Włodzimierz Godlewski, Robert Mahler, Barbara Czaja-Szewczak</i>	338
EL-ZUMA	
THE POTTERY FROM FOUR TUMULI GRAVES IN EL-ZUMA (2009) <i>Edyta Klimaszewska-Drabot, Ewa Czyżewska</i>	361
FOURTH CATARACT	
RESEARCH IN THE PCMA UW CONCESSION ON THE FOURTH CATARACT (HAMDAB DAM RESCUE PROJECT). INTERIM REPORT 2009 <i>Marek Chłodnicki</i>	377
ROCK ART RESEARCH IN THE FOURTH CATARACT REGION, SEASON 2009 <i>Ewa Kuciewicz, Andrzej Rozwadowski</i>	387
EXCAVATIONS IN 2009 IN THE ENVIRONS OF EL-AR VILLAGE (FOURTH CATARACT REGION, SUDAN) <i>Anna Longa</i>	393
EL-AR 31: EXCAVATIONS OF LATE/POST-MEROITIC TUMULI. PRELIMINARY REPORT <i>Artur Buszek, Michał Kurzyk</i>	399

CONTENTS

CYPRUS

NEA PAPHOS

NEA PAPHOS. SEASON 2009

Henryk Meyza in cooperation with Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski, Aleksandra Brzozowska, Joanna Michalska, Joanna K. Rądkowska, and Monika Więch..... 407

LEBANON

JIYEH

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2008 AND 2009 EXCAVATION SEASONS AT JIYEH (PORPHYREON)

Tomasz Waliszewski, Karol Juchniewicz, Mariusz Gwiazda 423

APPENDIX 1. SUNKEN VESSELS IN LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE HOUSES IN AREA D

Mariusz Gwiazda 439

APPENDIX 2. PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THRESHOLDS FROM PRIVATE HOUSES IN JIYEH (PORPHYREON)

Mariusz Gwiazda 441

LOCAL HELLENISTIC 'PHOENICIAN'-TYPE AMPHORA AND OTHER POTTERY VESSELS FROM EXCAVATIONS IN JIYEH (PORPHYREON) (SEASONS 2008–2009)

Urszula Wicenciak 446

GROUND AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAMMETRIC DOCUMENTATION IN JIYEH (PORPHYREON)

Miron Bogacki 454

SYRIA

PALMYRA

POLISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION TO PALMYRA. SEASONS 2008 AND 2009

Grzegorz Majcherek 459

HAWARTE

EXCAVATIONS IN HAWARTE 2008–2009

Michał Gawlikowski 481

GLASS FINDS FROM THE MITHRAEUM IN HAWARTE

Krzyszyna Gawlikowska 496

TELL ARBID

TELL ARBID 2008–2009. PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE RESULTS OF THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH SEASONS OF POLISH-SYRIAN EXCAVATIONS

Piotr Bieliński 511

CONTENTS

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY EXCAVATIONS IN SECTOR P AT TELL ARBID (SPRING 2009) <i>Rafał Koliński</i>	537
TELL QARAMEL	
TELL QARAMEL: EXCAVATIONS 2009 <i>Ryszard F. Mazurowski</i>	559
PAM STUDIES	
ADULT BURIALS OF NINEVITE 5 DATE ON TELL ARBID (2007–2008) <i>Dariusz Szelaĝ</i>	585
CHARIOT TERRACOTTA MODELS FROM TELL ARBID <i>Mattia Raccidi</i>	605
NEW PROTODYNASTIC <i>SEREKHS</i> FROM THE NILE DELTA: THE CASE OF FINDS FROM TELL EL-FARKHA <i>Mariusz A. Jucha</i>	625
<i>PITHOS</i> -TYPE VESSELS FROM CHHÎM: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF FINDS FROM 1996–2009 <i>Zofia Kowarska, Szymon Lenarczyk</i>	643
BUILDINGS ON SITE B AT NAQLUN (NEKLONI) <i>Szymon Maślak</i>	653
ZOOARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL FROM CISTERNS STR 1/96–97 AND HA/NEH 2.16.3 IN NEA PAPHOS <i>Ewelina Tepe</i>	677
ANIMAL BONE REMAINS FROM SHEIKH ABD EL-GURNA: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES <i>Urszula Iwaszczuk</i>	691
ANIMALS IN ROCK ART. RESULTS OF ARCHAEOZOOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE SITE OF EL-GAMAMIYA 67 (FOURTH CATARACT, SUDAN) <i>Marta Osypińska</i>	703
INDEX OF SITES	715
GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS	716