

Urszula Wicenciak

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

Urszula Wicenciak

Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre, University of Warsaw

Abstract: Archaeological research in Jiyeh (Porphyreon) in 2008–2009 produced a rich assemblage of vessels, both imported and locally made. Preliminary analysis has led to two important general observations concerning Jiyeh. Firstly, identification of ceramics from the Late Bronze Age has moved back by 900 years at least the date of the first occupation of the village. Secondly, a study of the material has contributed to knowledge of the beginnings of pottery production in ancient Porphyreon around the middle of the 2nd century BC, when “Phoenician-style” amphorae began to be produced there in addition to the manufacturing centers in Sidon and Berytus.

Keywords: pottery, amphorae, Phoenician jars, Hellenistic period, Phoenicia, Lebanon

The ceramic material discussed in this report represents the production of workshops operating in antiquity in Porphyreon and in other centers on the southern coast of present-day Lebanon (Tyre, Sarepta, Sidon). The set of vessel fragments is dated broadly from the late Bronze Age through the Roman period. Two main categories of pottery were identified: domestic wares and amphorae. Among the latter, the best represented group comprises Phoenician jars.¹ These vessels were produced from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period, pri-

marily in southern and central Phoenicia (Bikai 1978; Reynolds 2000: 387; Regev 2004: 337–353; Bettles 2003: 60–79; Jabak-Hteit 2003: 80–94; Finkielsztein 2006: 253–263).

The study assemblage comes from the excavation of a dwelling quarter (sector D) in Jiyeh (ancient Porphyreon), carried out by a Polish team in the 2008 and 2009 seasons (for the excavations, see Waliszewski *et alii* 2012, in this volume). However, these excavations have not produced any archaeologically stratified

¹ With regard to pottery from the Levant, the term “jar” is applied to locally or regionally produced amphoras from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period, while the term “amphora” is reserved for Greek and Roman imports. Despite the terminological difference and the different places of production, jars and amphoras share two-handledness as a morphological feature and a transport function, the presumed goods being wine and oil, but not only.

material antedating the 2nd century AD. Layers of younger date must have been removed from the site during excavations of the area in the 1970s (Waliszewski *et alii* 2006: 22–27).²

Architectural remains from the late Hellenistic and early Roman times were damaged extensively by rebuilding during the Roman period. Vessels dating from the earlier phase, the shape repertoire of which is well documented by finds from the industrial area in Jiyeh (Domżański *et alii* 2005; Waliszewski *et alii* 2006), as well as parallels from excavations in Beirut, occurred in leveling layers of considerable thickness. Insignificant quantities of Middle Roman material (amphorae of type AM 14, see Waliszewski *et alii* 2006: 75–77, Pl. 31, found in sealed contexts) in these leveling layers could suggest that the spatial reorganization of the investigated habitation quarter took place between the 3rd and 4th century AD. This preliminary dating should be verified in the course of further comprehensive study of material especially the fine wares, from the test trenches, as well as additional excavation.³

The pottery from the lower layers in the test pits attests to settlement in this part of the site from the Iron Age IIA through the pottery-rich Persian period to the turn of the 3rd century BC. A small share was noted of ceramics representing the Late Bronze Age (ceramologist Hanan Charaf, personal communication).

Virtually the entire pottery repertoire identified in the material from the excavations in the habitation quarter is

well attested at other Phoenician sites on the Levantine coast [Fig. 1]. The most characteristic Late Bronze Age form in the Jiyeh assemblage, one that is found in the Levant, the Aegean and the central Mediterranean, is the so-called “milk bowl” dated to approximately 1300–1200 BC. A wishbone-shaped handle was found in one of the test trenches dug under the Romano-Byzantine habitation quarter in Jiyeh (see Waliszewski *et alii* 2012, Fig. 2 on page 426, in this volume) [Fig. 1:1]. The fabric and the decoration technique (white slip ware) identify the vessel as an import from Cyprus. Sherds of cooking pots with a characteristic sinusoid body profile and carination under the rim [Fig. 1:5], typical of the Late Bronze and Iron Age, form a small collection.

Material from the Iron Age (approx. 1200–546/539BC) included sherds classified as Cypro-Phoenician Black-on-Red Ware (Chapman 1972). Vessels of this type were produced in Cyprus in the Cypro-Geometric period; researchers, however, point to undoubted Phoenician influence (Schreibe 2003). One characteristic shape that was recorded in the Jiyeh assemblage is a small bowl with painted concentric circles on the body [Fig. 1:3]. Small juglets, provided with a distinct ridge under the rim and decorated with black-painted horizontal lines on the neck, were another typical form [Fig. 1:2]. These juglets could be Phoenician imitations of Cypro-Phoenician Black-on-Red Ware.

A predominant form in the Jiyeh assemblage from the Persian period

² Jiyeh was explored for the first time in the 1970s by Roger Saidah. In 2008 and 2009 the surface of the site was sherded and a sizable collection of late Hellenistic through Byzantine pottery recorded.

³ Most of the material from the 2008–2009 seasons still has to be examined in full. The fine ware is being studied by Krzysztof Domżański from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

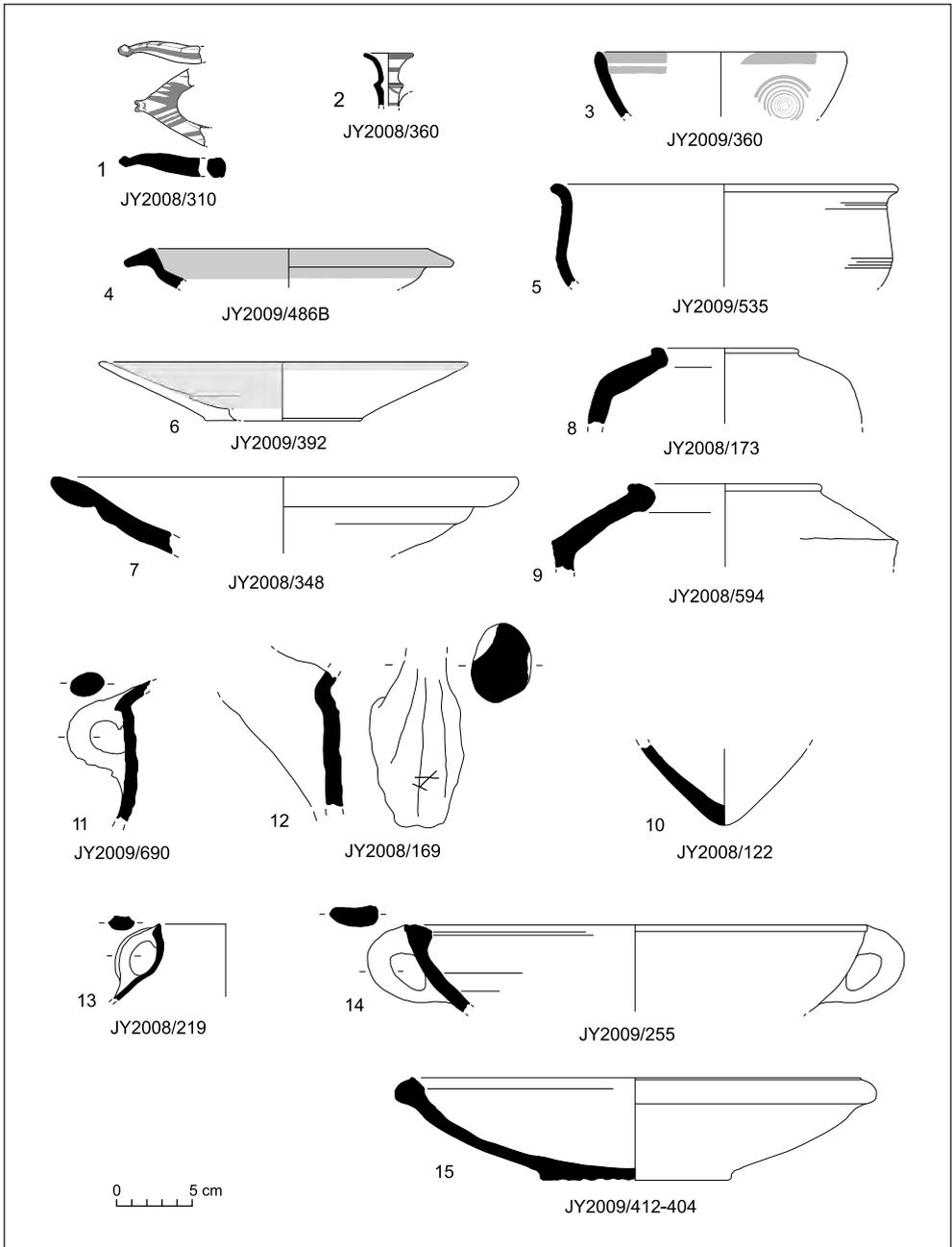


Fig. 1. Selection of forms represented in the pottery assemblage from trial pits in Jiyeh (Porphyreon): late Bronze Age (1); Iron Age (2–5); Persian Period (6–12); Hellenistic period (13–15)

(546/539–331 BC) are small bowls classified as Red Slip Ware [Fig. 1:4, 6]. The fabric observed macroscopically is very similar to that of Phoenician jars produced in the environs of Tyre and Sarepta. There is also a noteworthy collection of vessels referred to in topic literature as “Persian bowls” or “Levantine mortaria” (Blakely, Bennett 1989). These are large and heavy bowls with a flat or ring base [Fig. 1:14, 15]. They were produced in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, in Phoenicia as well as Cyprus and Greece. Even so, Phoenician jars remained the most numerous group in the Jiyeh assemblage from the Iron Age [Fig. 1:8–12].

Standing out in this material is a Hellenistic amphora, which is little known from other sites in the Levant,⁴ but abundantly represented at Jiyeh [Fig. 2]. Its form combines elements typical of Phoenician vessels (Regev 2004: 337–353) with Greek-Hellenistic influence. Like the Phoenician amphoras, it lacks the neck and ring handles attached to the body, and it features ribbing on the outside surface. With Greek vessels it shares the pointed hollow toe (Ala Eddine 2003: 109).

Macroscopic examination has confirmed that this type of amphora was produced in late Hellenistic (second part of the 2nd to mid 1st century BC) Porphyreion.⁵ A small number of sherds representing this type was noted in the assemblage from the industrial quarter in Jiyeh. The form was recognized on the grounds of a short,

vertical rim ending at the top in a rounded point (not illustrated) and characteristic handles, which are broad, round and flat in section, attached to a ribbed body. [Fig. 3]. According to the Beirut typology of this form (Ala Eddine 2003: 115–116)

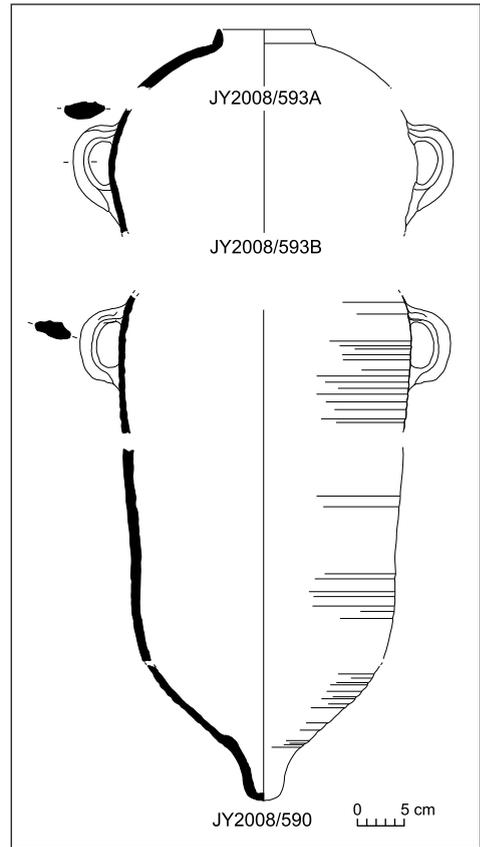


Fig. 2. Hellenistic amphora from Jiyeh (Porphyreion) (trial pit D37, context 11a)

⁴ Sherds of amphoras of this kind were identified for the first time in material from Beirut (Hayes 1999; Ala Eddine 2003) and noted for the presence of stamps with Greek inscriptions on the handles (Ala Eddine 2003: Figs 1–10, pages 111–114; Aubert 2007: Figs 5–8, pages 37–38; Reynolds 1999: 387). Sherds of these amphoras occur in Beirut in contexts dated to the end of the 3rd century through 1st century BC (Ala Eddine 2003: 109). It is the most frequently recorded amphora type found in Beirut in this period (sectors BEY 004, 002, 006).

⁵ In the opinion of Ala Eddine (2003: 111), who pointed out the sites to the Polish excavation team, this type of amphora was produced at Khalde and Nebi Younis/Jiyeh. P. Reynolds (2000: 387) believed Sidon to be a potential production site.

rim shapes distinguished in the assemblage from Porphyreon represented three subtypes, dated respectively to the end of the 3rd through about the middle of the 1st century BC [Fig. 4]. The type was common in material from trial pits excavated in the habitation quarter,⁶ in leveling layers with predominant late Hellenistic and early Roman material.

This type of amphora in Beirut occurred in two different fabrics: pale yellow/yellow buff with quartz and limestone temper, identified by A. Ala Eddine and P. Reynolds at sites BEY 002 and 006 (Reynolds 1999: 387; Ala Eddine 2003: 109), and pale to dark orange, identified by C. Aubert (2007: 9) at site BEY 002. The latter fabric corresponds to the fabric typical of Porphyreon products. Even so,

Catherine Aubert considers the amphora to be a product of the Beirut workshops, based on close parallels between the fabric of amphoras found in Beirut and the common ware vessels and stamps with the inscription “Berytus” (Aubert 2007: 9). In her opinion, local authorities must have recommended the production of vessels with the Berytus stamp. They could have been prepared as containers for the Berytus wine mentioned by Pliny (*HN* 14.7, 74; 15.17, 66), the production of which was overseen by Berytus authorities.

Pottery workshops in Porphyreon could have been subordinated to Berytus, supplying containers to fill the demand, but it is equally possible that the type was copied at Porphyreon to satisfy local needs.⁷ A similar situation had place in the early Roman period when amphoras of an identical “Roman” appearance were being produced in Porphyreon as well as in Berytus (Waliszewski *et alii* 2006: 57–66, Pl. 16: 6–8). It is not clear, however, whether these vessels were produced for the newly established Roman colony at Berytus or were imitations made for a local market.

The presented type of Hellenistic amphora was weakly distributed in Phoenician territory; outside of Beirut and Jiyeh a few fragments were found in Kamid el Loz in the Beqa’a Valley (Ala Eddine 2003: 118). One is inclined to agree with Abdalla Ala Eddine when he classifies this type of container as a strictly local product, manufactured and distributed only in Berytus and the neighboring territory to the south of it (Ala Eddine 2003: 118).

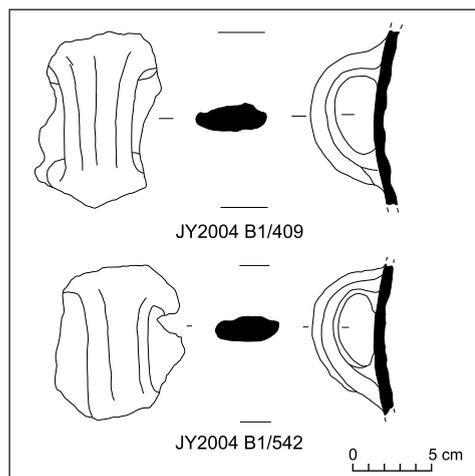


Fig. 3. Hellenistic amphora handles from the late Hellenistic industrial area at Jiyeh (Porphyreon)

⁶ Test pits D37: context 5 (JY2008/83, 85), D37: 11 (JY2008/110, 346), D37: 11A (JY2009/308, 590, 593A, 595, 596), D37: 14 (JY2008/319), D37: 18 (JY2008/174); D20: 11 (JY2009/140, 256), D20: 13 (JY2009/286), D20: 13B (JY2009/407); D44: 5 (JY2009/29, 33, 52), D44: 6 (JY2009/125, 117).

⁷ Stamps were not found on any of the handles from Jiyeh, contrary to what is the case for amphoras from Beirut.

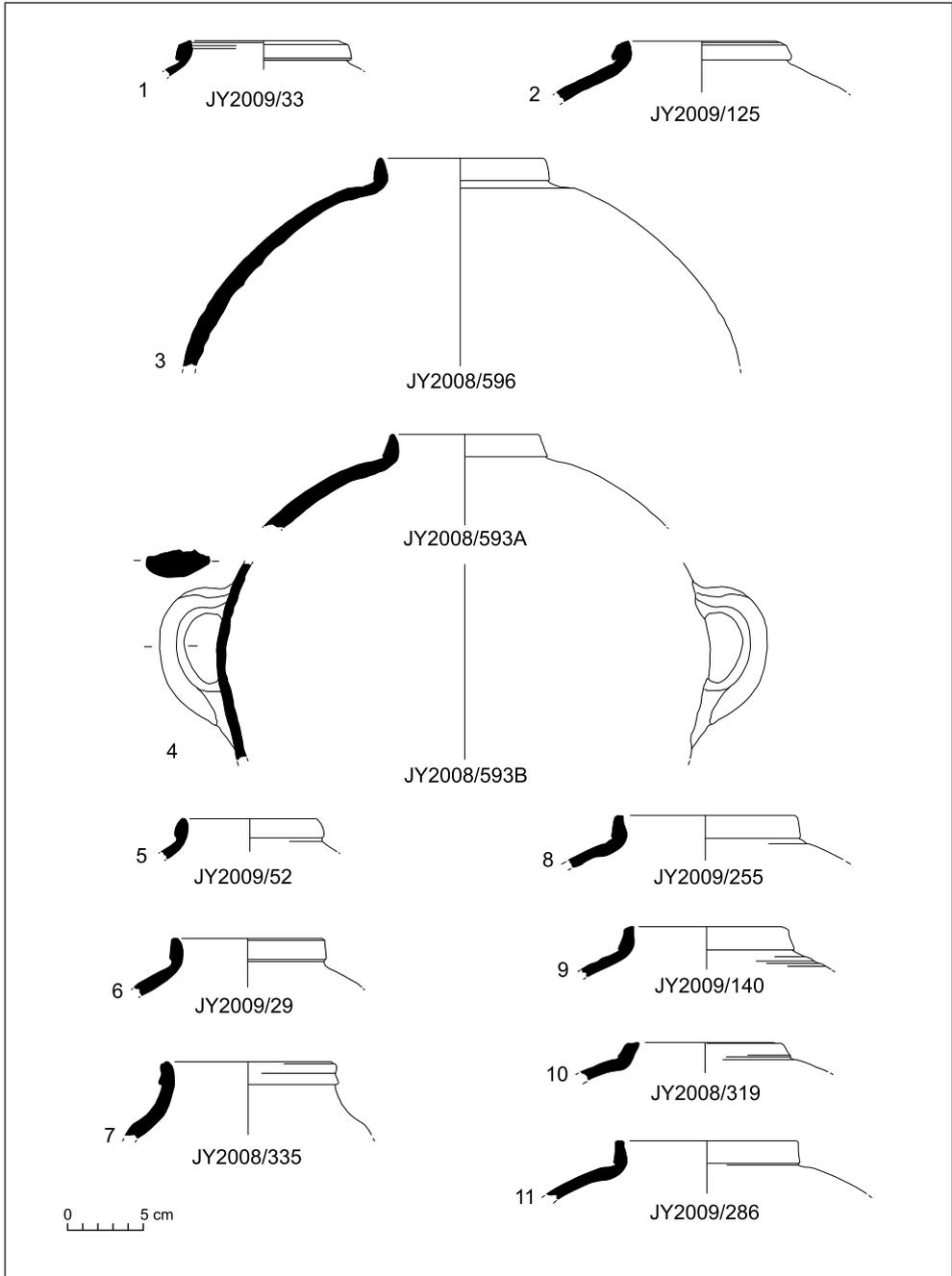


Fig. 4. Fragments of Hellenistic amphoras from trial pits in the dwelling quarter in Jiyeh (Porphyreon)

Urszula Wicenciak

Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Centre, University of Warsaw

00-927 Warsaw, Poland

ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28

ulawicenciak@gmail.com

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