

Krzysztof Jakubiak

Tell Farama: Preliminary Remarks on the Stratigraphy and Pottery

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE STRATIGRAPHY AND POTTERY

Krzysztof Jakubiak

Several stratigraphical phases were distinguished following the first season of excavations at Tell Farama (ancient Pelusium).¹⁾ The first phase is associated with the actual use of the theater. In the next phase, the building was used as a garbage dump. This is clearly visible in the southern section of the excavated area: just in front of the *pulpitum* there is a 35 cm layer of organic remains and mixed potsherds.

A pit located in the southeastern corner of the area is probably related to a second phase in the abandonment of the building, when the theater was dismantled for bricks, which were used probably to build the Late Roman fortress located west of the theater.

In order to facilitate transport of the removed bricks, the dump was laid with a thin layer of broken bricks. Simultaneously, new layers of lime debris accumulated, and litter continued to be deposited in the ruins, alternating with layers of pure desert sand.

Overlying these is a leveling layer consisting of brown earth with patches of lime and small fragments of pottery, twice remade with bricks mixed with lime mortar. The fill up to the modern surface contains more lime and fragments of bricks, pottery, etc. accumulated inside the theater, showing that the dismantling was a prolonged activity.

Moreover, in the two *parodoi*, east and west, traces of plundering of the *pulpitum* and of the outer wall of the monument are acute. The corresponding stratum was composed of brown compact earth, ashes, lime and potsherds. In the western passage, some 40 cm below the narrow ledge of the stage building, a brick threshold covered by cement was found. Just below the level of the threshold, the foundations cut through two parallel walls of the Hellenistic period.



Fig. 1. Terracotta head of a goddess (?)
(Photo M. Gawlikowski)

1) See contribution by M. Gawlikowski in this volume.

PAINTED PLASTER

Pieces of decorated plaster were found in the whole area subject to excavations, mostly in the vicinity of the stage building. Despite their poor preservation, they show that the theater had had two or three different layers of painted decoration. The first coating was of a beige sandy color; other shades were added at a later date. Red, black, brown, and green paint can be distinguished. Green was probably used along with the beige as a background, while black and brown was mainly for the contours. Generally, it seems that the decoration was rather geometrical than figurative, but some pieces do look like fragments of a landscape.

FRAGMENTS OF TERRACOTTAS
AND OTHER SMALL FINDS

Small finds were expectedly limited. We can mention two worked bone artifacts, perhaps elements of furniture, a small bone

scapula, and a stone pawn with a cross symbol engraved on two sides. Among fragments of terracotta statuettes, there was a head of Zeus-Sarapis, the lower part of a Bes figurine, fragments of naked female figures, and two fragments of horsemen. A fine terracotta head possibly represents a Ptolemaic queen, being similar to the famous Cleopatra head in Berlin (*Fig. 1*). Generally, the figurines can be dated to the Late Ptolemaic (Zeus-Sarapis, the female head) and Late Roman periods.

POTTERY FROM THE THEATER

It was impossible to obtain a clear pottery sequence. The deposits of pottery are mixed, being all secondary and brought into the disused theater as refuse. The bulk of the material from the excavations is Late Roman of the 5th century AD, but some Ptolemaic potsherds have also been found. The oldest sherd – most likely incidental



*Fig. 2. Stamped sigillata bowl, 1st century AD
(Photo M. Gawlikowski)*

in this context – is a big fragment of Persian-period amphora (5th-4th century BC).

Amphorae of Gaza type 4 are very popular, and the bulk of the forms found belongs to the 4th through 7th centuries AD. They were left behind presumably by

the demolition workers. Among the residual sherds, there are two inscribed amphora handles, both Rhodian of early 2nd century BC, and a stamped sigillata bowl of the 1st century AD (*Fig. 2*). Only six fragments of lamps were found, two of them Late Ptolemaic.