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Marea 2009 : Pottery from the Excavations

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MAREA 2009: POTTERY FROM THE EXCAVATIONS

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Abstract: The diversified pottery assemblage from the 2009 season of excavations in the basilica represented different classes: tableware, common and kitchen wares, and amphorae. Tableware included local Egyptian Red Slip Ware and some rare African Red Slip Ware imports. Small plain and decorated jugs, at least 124 in all, constituted a major find. Eight different types have been identified, including a dipper. There were also miniature jugs with brown painted decoration on the upper part of the body. The chronological range of the assemblage studied this season is from the 6th to the 8th century.

Keywords: Marea, Byzantine pottery, miniature jugs, jugs

The ceramic material coming from Polish archaeological excavations in 2009 in the basilica in Marea presented a typologically diversified assemblage, including both local and imported pottery and representing different classes: tableware, common and kitchen wares, and amphorae. Tableware was represented by local Egyptian Red Slip Ware and some rare African Red Slip Ware imports. The common and kitchen wares were locally produced. These included bowls, lids, strainers, large storage jars, as well as small jugs with incised herringbone decoration and deep bowls with everted rims, often with black painted decoration in the form of a wavy line pattern and dots (Majcherek 2002: 61). The amphorae were also all of local manufacture.

The pottery has been dated, by archaeological context as well as parallels, to the 6th–8th century. It came from three

areas of the excavations: the central part of the nave and aisle of the basilica, the southwestern part of the basilica complex with a complex of units referred to provisionally as “shops”, and a cellar located by the northern corner of the basilica proper (for location of the excavated areas and results of the 2009 season of excavations, see Szymańska, Babraj 2012, in this volume, especially Fig. 1 on page 61).

The assemblage recovered from the nave and aisles of the basilica included a large group of amphora sherds identified as LRA 1 (Kellia 164) and LRA 5/6, found in the fill of a well discovered next to the stylobate separating the north aisle from the nave (see above, 61–67). Sherds of LRA 7 amphorae, dated to the 6th–7th century when the basilica was in use, were infrequent in the assemblage. The pottery finds from the nave also included fragmentary necks of jugs decorated with incised wavy lines.

Some deep, footed carinated bowls, jugs and unguentaria were also discovered (for parallels found in other, previously excavated parts of the basilica, see Majcherek 2002: 63).

The units explored in the southwestern part of the basilica complex produced mostly common wares: jugs, bowls, lids, strainers, large storage jars, all of local production. Amphorae types included Kellia 167, 187–190 from the 6th–8th century, but the majority was made up of sherds of LRA 5/6 and LRA 7 amphorae, representing local products from Abu Mina dated to the second half of the 7th century (see, among others, Ballet

et alii 2003; Johnson 1981; Hayes 1976; Rodziewicz 1984; Kaminski-Menssen 1996; Egloff 1977).

One of the units in this part of the basilica complex, locus 24 interpreted as a kitchen, produced the bottom part of a plate with a painted depiction of a rider on horseback [Fig. 1]. The plate can be dated to the 7th–10th century (for parallels, see Gempeler 1992; Scanlon 1991: II/507, Fig. 8). It was a rare piece in the pottery assemblage from this season of excavations.

The richest set of pottery finds came from a unit in the northern part of the complex of “shops” to the west of the basilica front (Szymańska, Babraj 2005; 2007; 2010; 2011). The unit appears to have functioned as a kind of cellar (see above, 71–72). The assemblage included numerous coins (to be cleaned in the coming season), lamps, unguentaria, figurines (including a fragment of a human face and the head of a horse), glass vessels. The pottery comprised fragments of imported amphorae types LRA 1, LRA 4, as well as local amphorae, all dated to the 6th–8th centuries (Majcherek 2002: 63).

The major pottery find in this context was a set of at least 124 small jugs, plain and decorated. Similar jugs have been interpreted as water jars (Kaminski-Menssen 1996: 263–265, Pls 112–118), but their sheer number and a cool cellar used for their storage suggests wine rather as a commodity requiring specific conditions. Jugs of this kind can be dated from the end of the 6th to the mid-7th century. Eight types of jugs, including a dipper, have been distinguished based on form and decoration [Fig. 2].¹

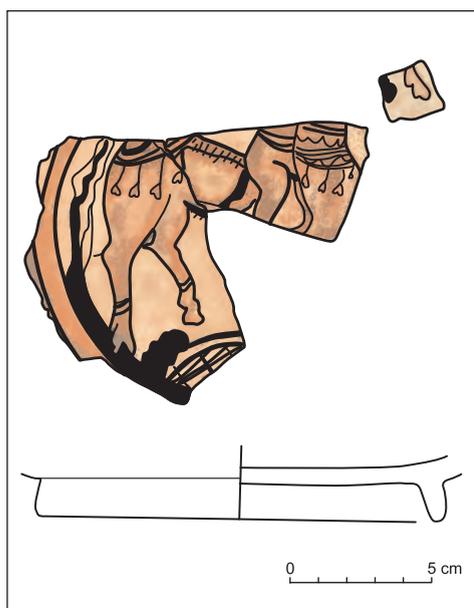


Fig. 1. Plate with painted decoration in the form of a rider on horseback, 7th–10th century (All drawings A. Drzymuchowska)

¹ I am grateful to Anna Południkiewicz and Tomasz Górecki for their suggestions regarding the studied material.

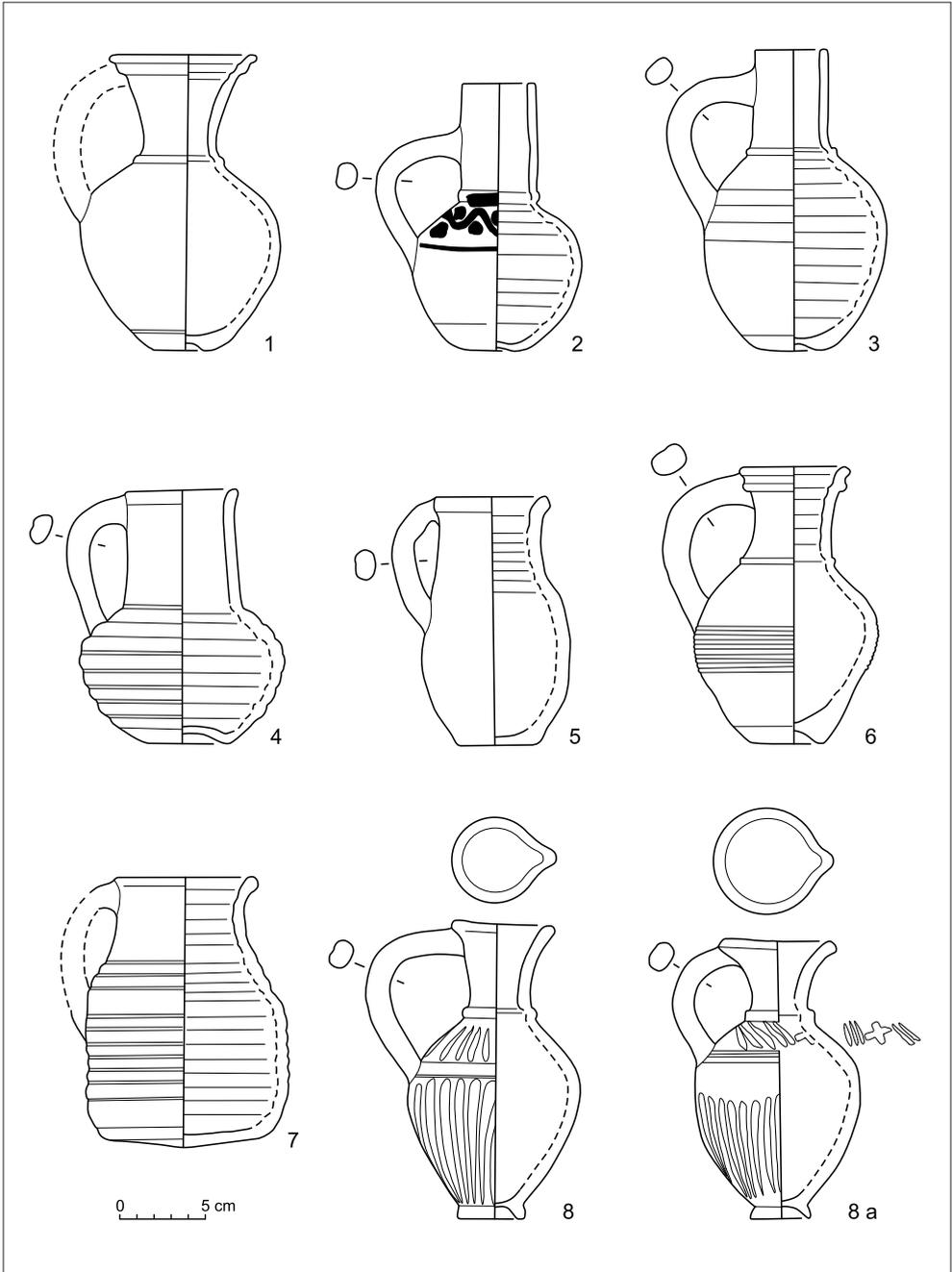


Fig. 2. Different types of small jugs, including a dipper form (7)

TYPE 1

Five examples [Fig. 2:1]. H. 17 cm, Dia. rim 8 cm, marl clay, creamy-colored slip.

Molded rim, funnel-shaped neck separated from the body by a broad offset. Plain, bulging undecorated body. Handle attached to rim and shoulder. Produced at Abu Mina.

Parallels: Egloff 1977: I, 134–135, types 229–230, II, Pl. 72, Figs 6–8, 10.

TYPE 2

15 examples [Fig. 2:2]. H. 15 cm, Dia. rim 3.8 cm, marl clay, whitish slip and black decoration.

Narrow, long neck separated from the body by a broad offset. Shoulder decoration in the form of painted dark brown wavy lines and dots in the curves, between horizontal lines. Oval-sectioned handle attached to the neck at mid-height and to the upper part of the body. Jugs in this group differ in size.

Parallels: Egloff 1977: I, 136, type 232, II, Pl. 72, Fig. 11.

TYPE 3

48 examples [Fig. 2:3]. H. 18 cm, Dia. rim 4 cm, marl clay, creamy colored slip.

Similar to type 2, but larger and ovoid rather than globular in the shape of the body. Usually slimmer. The long narrow neck is separated from the body by a broad offset. The body is slightly ribbed below the handle. The handle is attached to the neck at mid-height and to the upper part of the body.

Parallels: Egloff 1977: I, 136, type 232, II, Pl. 72, Fig. 11; Rodziewicz 1984: 393, Pl. 31, Fig. 89.

TYPE 4

Four examples [Fig. 2:4]. H. 17 cm, Dia. rim 6.5 cm, Nile silt fabric with black core.

Rim slightly everted. Broad, long neck with a slightly everted rim, bulging body,

ribbing on the surface. Handle oval in section, attached to the rim and shoulder (upper part of the body). Parallels: Egloff 1977: I, 134, type 225, II, Pl. 71, Fig. 10; Rodziewicz 1984: 417, Pl. 55, Fig. 213.

TYPE 5

Nine examples [Fig. 2:5]. H. 14 cm, Dia. rim 6 cm, Nile silt fabric with black core.

Rim slightly everted, cylindrical neck with smooth transition to body. Bag-shaped body, oblong, traces of ribbing on the surface. Handle attached to the rim and to the body at the broadest point. The jugs are irregular in form and their size varies.

Parallels: Gempeler 1992: Form T 839, 143, Pl. 80, Figs 10, 11; Rodziewicz 1984: 417, Pl. 55, Fig. 210.

TYPE 6

37 examples [Fig. 2:6]. H. 16 cm, Dia. rim 6 cm, marl clay, white slip.

Wide, everted rim, neck slightly everted, separated from the body by a broad offset. Handle, oval in section, attached to the rim and to the upper part of the body. Produced in the Abu Mina centre.

This type also includes jugs with painted dark brown decoration on the upper part of the body.

Parallels: Ballet *et alii* 2003: 182, Pl. 26, Figs 165, 167.

TYPE 7

One example [Fig. 2:7]. H. 15 cm, Dia. rim 8 cm, Dia. bottom 10 cm, Nile silt with sand temper, black core in the break.

Rim slightly everted, neck broadening into the body. Bag-shaped, ribbed body and a flattened, uneven bottom, irregular shape. Traces of a handle (not preserved) attached to the rim and upper part of the body.

Probably a dipper (J. Młynarczyk, personal communication).

TYPE 8

Six examples [Fig. 2:8]. H. 17 cm, Dia. rim 6.5 cm, marl clay, white slip.

Everted rim with small spout, funnel-shaped neck. Below the broad offset separating the rim from the body, the shoulder is decorated with short, straight, broadly incised diagonal lines and longer, vertical ones on the lower body. Handle attached to the rim and upper body. Small ring base. Produced at Abu Mina.

This group includes a jug with a cross on the upper part of the body between incised lines [Fig. 2:8a]. For parallels, see Ballet *et alii* 2003: 174, type 227–228, 182, Pl. 25; Fig. 163, h, 17; Johnson 1981: 44, Pl. 31, Fig. 194; Hayes 1976: 116, Pl. 31, Fig. 275; Rodziewicz 1984: 394, Pl. 32, Fig. 94; Kaufmann 1910: 68, Fig. 47, 117, Figs 77, 78.

Miniature jugs constituted a separate group of finds from the cellar. One of

these, furnished with a narrow neck and strongly everted rim, globular body with small spout and a small foot, featured dark brown painted decoration on the upper part of the body [Fig. 3]. This jug can be dated to the 6th–8th century (Kaufmann 1910: 117, Figs 77–78).

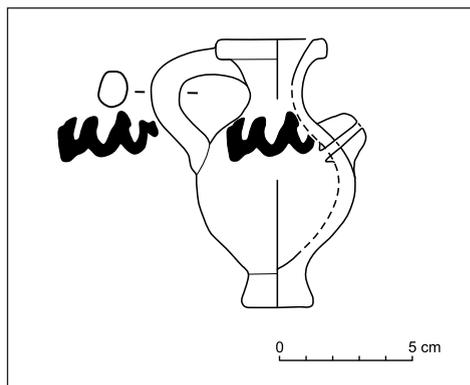


Fig. 3. Miniature jug with painted decoration

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