

Małgorzata Kajzer

EARLY ROMAN FINE WARES FROM THE POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE FOUND IN A CISTERN IN THE AGORA OF NEA PAPHOS, CYPRUS

The Agora of Nea Paphos, Cyprus has been investigated by the team from the Jagiellonian University since 2011. During the second year of excavations, in 2012, in the central part of the area, researchers found the structure interpreted as a cistern. The pottery assemblage discovered inside, dated to the Early Roman period, was not large, however it represents a variety of wares. The fine wares from this group of finds are characterised in the paper, as the representative sample of the pottery found in the site, dated to that period. Beside the table pottery (Eastern Sigillata A, B, D, Italian-type sigillata, lead-glazed ware), oil lamps representing the fine ware as well, were included.

Introduction

The Paphos Agora project has been conducted since 2011 by the team from Jagiellonian University, Krakow, under the supervision of Prof. Evdoxia Papuci-Władyka, in the area of the Archaeological Park in Nea Paphos, Cyprus. The investigation on Hellenistic-Roman Agora located in the centre of the ancient city has so far provided a large amount of data connected with the functioning of this space¹. During the first season of excavations in 2011, the cistern, structure no. 12, was found. It was explored during the next season of excavations in 2012. It represents the first Early Roman deposit identified on the site, dated until the mid 2nd century AD².

Context of find

The cistern was located in the area of Trench I, in the central part of the Agora (figs. 1–2). Its shape and way of construction - the whole structure was cut in bedrock - indicate that it was planned as a well, however there were no traces of water or underground watercourse at the bottom. It was probably constructed during the Early Roman period – the cistern was cut into the Hellenistic layers. The immense effort put to build such a structure, suggests that it could have been used for some period as a water reservoir but it is not possible to prove it archaeologically. The cistern has no connection with water system installations. The whole structure was about 4,5

m in depth from the level of stone blocks to the bottom. The filling of a cistern contained mainly big stones and wasters and was probably a result of levelling of the area, probably after an earthquake, and of rebuilding some part of the Agora. The pottery material dated to the Early Roman period was cumulated mainly in the lower part of a cistern and, what is important to note, some of the forms were almost completely preserved.

The assemblage included the variety of Early Roman materials such as fragments of stone vessels, fragment of marble sculpture, a few small metal objects, glass and pottery. Different pottery categories with amphorae, plain ware, kitchen ware, building ceramics and fine wares were found. The last group consists of almost a full scope of wares representative for the whole site. The important thing is that sherds are not very numerous while the pottery represents rather high variability. The presented material was divided into general groups of table wares and oil lamps, to show all of fine wares found in the deposit. The chronology of the material from the deepest contexts of the cistern can be established to the period between the Augustan period to the mid 2nd century AD.

The overview of fine wares³

Colour-coated ware

The ware, defined by John Hayes on the basis of finds from the House of Dionysos⁴ include different macroscopic groups. It is typical for Cypriot production in the Hellenistic period and it is characterised by the presence of slip, usually covering only the upper part of vessels. It was still produced at the very beginning of the Early Roman period – in the last third of the 1st century BC, or even later. A few examples were

¹ For more information, see <http://www.paphos-agora.archeo.uj.edu.pl>. The project is financed by the National Science Centre, Poland (grant OPUS no. 2011/01/B/HS3/01282, MAESTRO 6, no. 2014/14/A/HS 3/00283).

² E. PAPUCI-WŁADYKA/W. MACHOWSKI, Paphos Agora Project. Preliminary Results of the 2011–2012. In: C. Balandier (ed.), NEA PAPHOS. Fondation et développement urbanistique d'une ville chypriote de l'antiquité à nos jours. Études archéologiques, historiques et patrimoniales. Actes du 1er colloque international sur Paphos Avignon 30–31 octobre et 1er novembre 2012 (Bordeaux 2016) 67–77.

³ The chapter includes only basic information concerning pottery groups from the Agora of Nea Paphos. All of them are described in detail in the publication Paphos Agora 1 in the chapter concerning Roman Fine Wares (M. Kajzer/E. Marzec forthcoming).

⁴ HAYES 1991, 26.



Fig. 1. Orthophoto of the site with the localization of the Trench I (by W. Ostrowski).

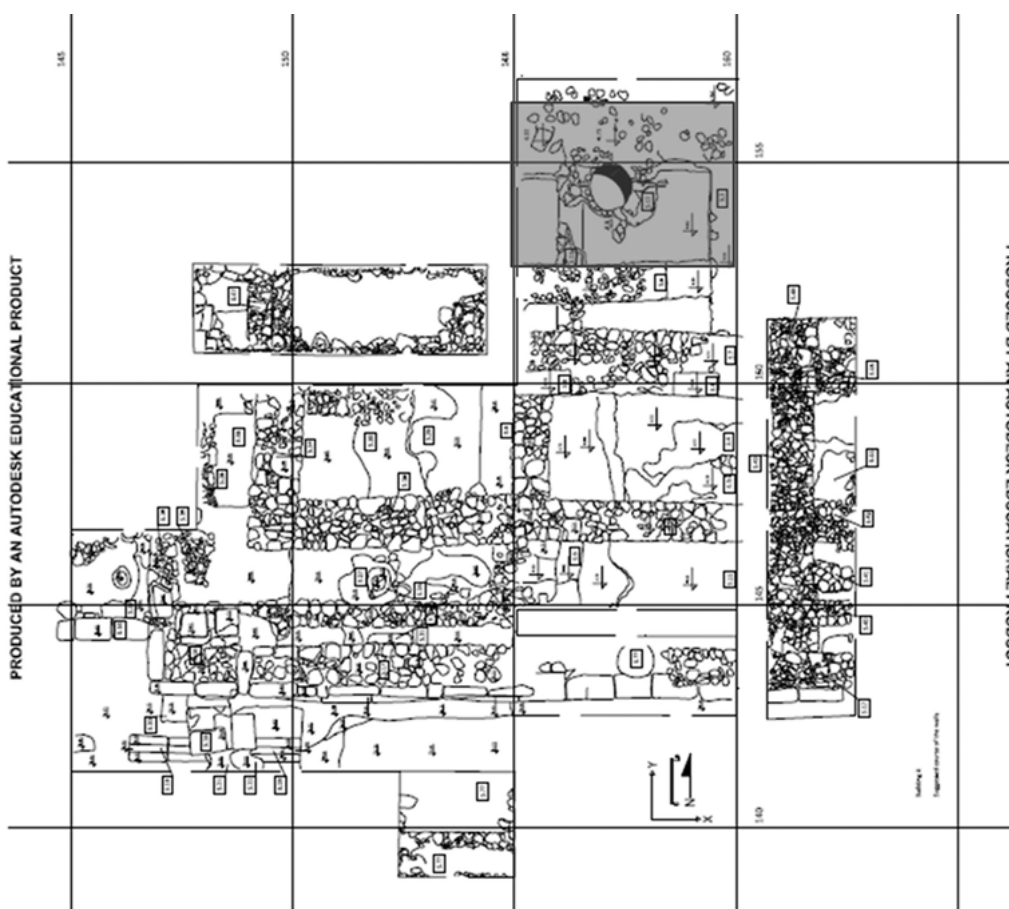


Fig. 2. Plan of the Trench I with the localization of cistern – structure 12 (by K. Rosińska-Balik).

found inside the cistern and they represent the most popular forms – bowls and plates (**fig. 3**). It seems that during the Early Roman period CCW vessels were finished less precisely and at that time their quality decreased.

Red Slip jugs

This separate category of pottery connects technology of production with specific shape. It was also distinguished by J. Hayes⁵. It seems that it was characteristic only for the Early Roman period and finds from the Agora of Nea Paphos confirm this hypothesis. Two fragments of jugs with grooved necks were identified in the cistern (**fig. 4**). Their form and fabric, not very well fired, including a big amount of particles are typical for this type of jugs.

Eastern Sigillata A

Nine fragments of vessels (mostly non-diagnostic) from a deposit, can be classified as Eastern Sigillata A, produced probably in Levant⁶. This group of terra sigillata, dominant in Cyprus in the Late Hellenistic times, seems to lose its priority during the Early Roman period. Among the diagnostic examples found in the assemblage they are plate form 3 characteristic for the first ESA production series and dated in the mid 2nd century BC to the beginning of the Early Roman period. There is also a foot of bowl form 51 typical for the Early Roman times dated between 70 and 120 AD⁷ (**fig. 5**).

Eastern Sigillata B

The ware is connected with the Asia Minor ateliers that are supposed to be located in the area of Ephesus and ancient Tralles⁸. The fabric with a high amount of silver mica flakes and orange tint are the basic characteristics of the ware. Only one example of the ware was found in the cistern. The lower part of plate form Hayes 60, represents the most popular shape on the Agora (**fig. 6**). It can be identified as later variant, of bigger size, made of flaky clay and dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD⁹.

Eastern Sigillata D/Cypriot Sigillata

This ware dominants among the Early Roman fine ware pottery. The problem of its provenance is still open. The high similarity to the so-called Late Roman Cypriot Red Slip Ware caused that for a long time it was treated as the predecessor of this pottery group. However, recent discoveries in Turkey complicated the situation and showed evidence for production of a later one in the area of Pamphylia, Asia Minor¹⁰. The researchers came back to the term “Late Roman D” but still there is a question concerning the production of the earlier group. Moreover, new results of analysis made by using the lead isotope composition method have shown again a high possibility of Cypriot provenance¹¹.

Fragments of 11 vessels in different forms made of this ware were found in the assemblage, including a two-handled cup, jug, plates and bowls. Fragments of plates form P12 with an incurved rim, including the example of complete profile (**fig. 7**), bowl form 22 in variant B with a sharpened shoulder, (**fig. 8**) and the upper part of form P29 (**fig. 9**) are the best examples of fabric in the assemblage. Forms 12 and 29 are dated between the second half of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century AD and form 22B should be dated to the second half of the 1st century AD¹².

Italian sigillata

A piece of Italian Sigillata was identified among the material from the cistern. It represents a fragment of cup form *Conspectus* 34, the rim decorated with a plastic rosette (**fig. 10**). Imports made of this ware are not very popular on the site in general, and this example is one of the most representative finds coming from the chronological homogenous context. It can be dated to the mid 1st century AD¹³.

Lead-glazed ware

One *skyphoi* foot found in the assemblage represents a rare group of pottery known as lead-glazed ware (**fig. 11**). The production of such vessels was a very short phenomenon, dated between 50 BC and 50 AD. The example identified on the Agora came from Asia Minor workshops and it should be probably connected with Tarsus¹⁴.

Thin-walled ware

One small fragment of a base found in the cistern is an example of a thin-walled beaker. The ware was popular especially in the Early Roman times, which goes well with general chronology of the assemblage. The state of preservation does not allow for identifying its specific form, however the fabric, most likely, represents the local production¹⁵.

Oil lamps – local production

Four examples of relief lamps found in the assemblage were made of plain ware fabric. The clay is fine, a little bit powdery, with small lime inclusions.

A fragment of a disc with depiction of an eagle (**fig. 12**) and mostly preserved lamp decorated with a rosette on a disc (**fig. 13**), represent form Loeschcke IV (in Cypriot typology Vessberg 10) dated to the 1st century AD¹⁶. Two more examples of local production, almost completely preserved, include type Loeschcke V (Vessberg 11). It has no decoration on its

using Lead Isotopes. *Archaeometry* 58, 2015, 1–14.

¹² HAYES 1985, 83–86.

¹³ E. ETTLINGER ET AL., *Conspectus formarum terrae sigillatae italico modo confectae*. *Mat. Röm.-Germ. Keramik* 10 (Bonn 1990).

¹⁴ Hochuli-Gysel = A. DE PURY-GYSEL, *La céramique à glaçure plombifère d'Asie Mineure et du bassin méditerranéen oriental (du Ier s. av. J.-C. au Ier s. ap. J.-C.)*. In: F. Blondé/P. Ballet/J.-F. Salles (eds.), *Céramiques hellénistiques et romaines. Productions et diffusion en Méditerranée orientale (Chypre, Égypte et côte syro-palestinienne)*. *Travaux Maison Orient Méditerranéen* 35 (Lyon 2002) 303–319.

¹⁵ Compare: S. ELAIGNE, *Les céramiques à paroi fine dans l'Orient du début de l'Empire et leurs imitations égyptiennes, cniidiennes et paphiennes*. *Acta RCRF* 43, 2014, 61–68.

¹⁶ VESSBERG 1956, 121; BAILEY 1965, 27.

⁵ HAYES 1991, 64.

⁶ BES 2015, 15.

⁷ HAYES 1985, 14; 37.

⁸ BES 2015, 17.

⁹ HAYES 1985, 64.

¹⁰ M. JACKSON/M. ZELLE/L. VANDEPUT/V. KÖSE, *Primary evidence for Late Roman D Ware production in southern Asia Minor: a challenge to 'Cypriot Red Slip Ware'*. *Anatolian Stud.* 62, 2012, 89–114.

¹¹ V. RENSON ET AL., *Pottery Provenance in the Eastern Mediterranean*

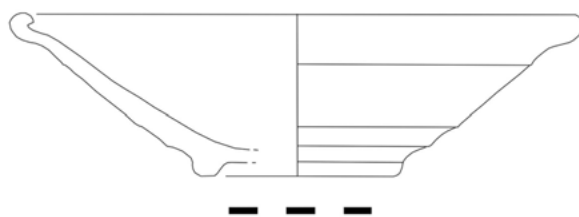


Fig. 3. Colour-coated ware plate (no inv. PAP12/I/37/P10) (drawing by M. Kajzer).



Fig. 4. Fragment of red-slipped jug (no. inv. PAP12/I/37/P7) **Fig. 5.** Fragment of ESA f. 51 (no. inv. PAP12/I/34/P19) (drawing by Ź. Demczuk, photo by M. Iwan).



Fig. 6. Lower part of ESB f. 60 (no. inv. PAP12/I/37/P18).

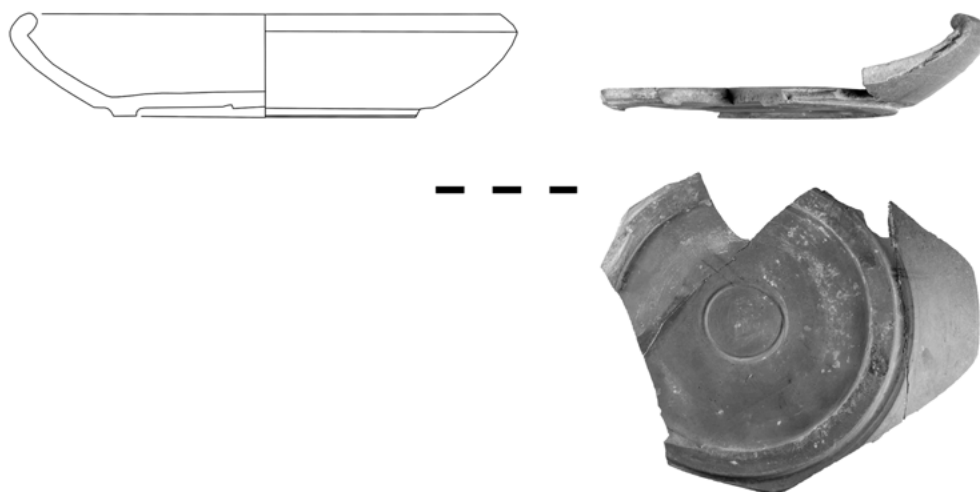


Fig. 7. ESD/CS plate f. P12 (no. inv. PAP12/I/36/P1) (drawing by Ź. Demczuk, photo by M. Iwan).

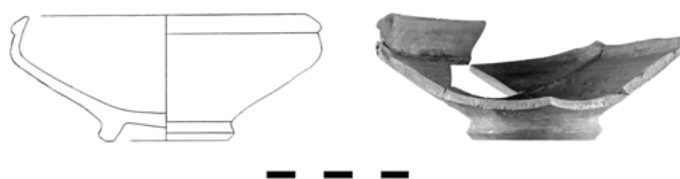


Fig. 8. ESD/CS bowl F. P22B (no. inv. PAP12/I/38/P14) (drawing by Ź. Demczuk, photo by M. Iwan).

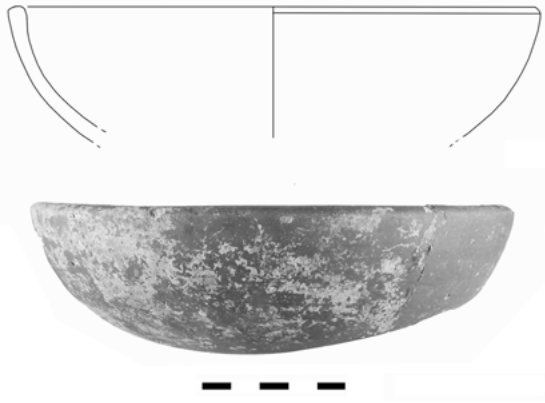


Fig. 9. Upper part of ESD/CS plate f. P29 (no. inv. PAP12/I/36/P3) (drawing by *Ž. Demczuk*, photo by *M. Iwan*).

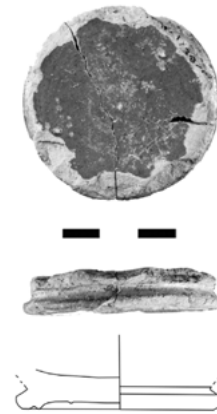


Fig. 11. Foot of lead-glazed skyphos (no. inv. PAP12/I/38/P19) (drawing by *P. Cora*, photo by *M. Iwan*).

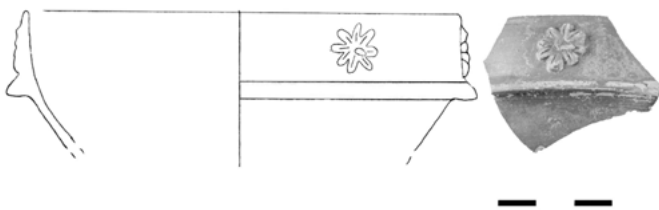


Fig. 10. Fragment of Italian-type sigillata form Conspectus 34 (no. inv. PAP12/I/32/P1) (drawing by *A. Jurkiewicz*, photo by *M. Iwan*).



Fig. 12. Fragment of lamp type Vessberg 10 (no. inv. PAP12/I/36/L1) (photo by *M. Iwan*).



Fig. 13. Lamp type Vessberg 10 (no. inv. PAP12/I/38/L2) (photo by *M. Iwan*).



Fig. 14. Lamp type Vessberg 11 (no. inv. PAP12/I/37/L1) (photo by *M. Iwan*).



Fig. 15. Lamp type Vessberg 11 (no. inv. PAP12/I/37/L2) (photo by *M. Iwan*).



Fig. 16. Fragment of lamp Vessberg 13/14 (no. inv. PAP12/I/38/L1) (photo by *M. Iwan*).

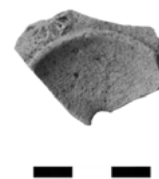


Fig. 17. Fragment of lamp Vessberg 13/14 (no. inv. PAP12/I/38/L3) (photo by *M. Iwan*).

disc and is equipped with a handle. One of the examples represents a rare variant with a slender body and a very small disc (**fig. 14**). Another is a typical form of the type (**fig. 15**). Such lamps are dated slightly later comparing with the previous type, from the mid 1st century AD to the mid or even the end of the 2nd century AD¹⁷.

Oil lamps – non-local production

Three fragments of lamps represent non-local production that should probably be connected with the Levantine region. They are made of pale yellowish clay covered with a dark grey slip. Two of them are decorated with ovule ornaments around the discus and a double-axe motive on the shoulders (**fig. 16**). The third one is adorned with a small rosette on the shoulder (**fig. 17**). Despite the poor state of preservation, their form indicates the type Loeschcke VIII (Vessberg 13/14), dated to the 2nd century AD¹⁸.

Conclusion

The presented assemblage represents a variety of Early Roman fine wares identified so far in the Agora of Nea Paphos. The material has chronologically homogenous character in the deepest layers of the filling, where the best preserved forms were identified. Despite the fact that the material probably does not represent the phase of use of the cistern, still it is very important for dating this structure. The assemblage should be interpreted rather as a result of removing waste after an earthquake or levelling the area before rebuilding. The pottery represents local production as well as good examples of non-local provenance. Further studies will hopefully bring more data for statistical analysis of the Roman pottery materials from the Agora and answer the question about the share of particular wares. Still, the presented group is a good sample representing the site.

gosiakaj@gmail.com

¹⁷ VESSBERG 1956, 122; BEZZOLA 2004, 63.

¹⁸ VESSBERG 1956, 124–125; J. MŁYNARCZYK, Lampki terakotowe z polskich wykopalisk w Nea Pafos. In: W. Daszewski/H. Meyza (eds.), *Cypr w badaniach polskich* (Warsaw 1998) 51–66.

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