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LATE ROMAN WARES FROM MAREA B AT ALEXANDRIA (EGYPT)

In 2018, The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities executed rescue excavations at an archaeological site in the western part of Marea abbreviated Marea B, located approximately 700 m from Hauwâriya, West Alexandria. That site constituted an important stopover for the pilgrims who used to come from all sides to visit the tomb of Saint Menas.

The excavations uncovered several chambers and structures, and an assemblage of pottery dating to the late Roman and early Byzantine periods.

This paper focuses on studying and dating different categories of pottery found during the excavation. These include different types of local production, such as some Late Roman Amphora 1, many examples of Late Roman Amphorae 5/6, some rare Late Roman Amphorae 7, tableware, cooking ware and some fine Egyptian red slipware.

Marea – Hauwâriya – GMR0022 – LRA 1 – LRA 5/6 – LRA 7 – Fine red slipware

1. Introduction

Marea is located in northern Egypt, on the southern shore of Lake Mariout (ancient Mareotis) approximately 45 km southwest of Alexandria according to Strabo (17.1.14), and 4 km south of the Mediterranean coast (Fig. 1).

Lake Mareotis served as a source of food, and a means of transportation. Moreover, the shores of Lake Mareotis hosted major production centers for various agricultural and industrial products, such as wine, oil, glass, and pottery, which contributed significantly to the economy of Alexandria and Egypt as a whole (Khalil 2010:135).

Marea was a very important trade, religious, and agricultural center in the 5th-7th century AD. (Derda et al. 2020: 1).

Marea flourished as a stopover for the pilgrims heading to the holy Byzantine shrine of Saint Menas (Abu Mîna) in the western desert near Alexandria where Christians came from all over to visit the tomb of Saint Menas, now a UNESCO world heritage site (Khalil 2010:137; Gabel and Petruso 1980: 1-27).

The excavation site¹ is located in the western part of Marea, on the Cairo-Borg El-Arab Desert road (Awad 2022: 37) (Fig. 2a).

2. The site

This site belongs to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and it has been excavated between 1995 and 2001. In addition,

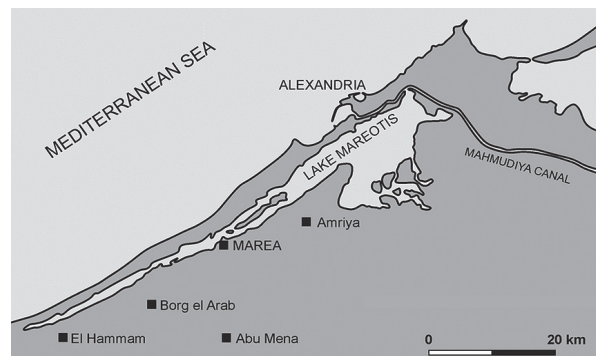


Fig. 1. Region of Marea (© Gabel and Petruso 1980).

the Centre d'Études Alexandrines studied the topography in 2013 and registered the site as a Rond-Point GMR0022 at the Geomar project² (report of CEAlex, 2017).

This site is one of the sites of ancient cities whose surface is covered with many pottery sherds and some stone pieces. The buildings have been destroyed, leaving only some architectural elements, walls, foundations, and structures visible in the archaeological excavation. These vestiges which are useful for identifying the stratigraphic sequence of the excavation site.

3. The excavation

The site was divided into two areas, I and II. In the larger area (Area I), the excavation uncovered several chambers

¹ The excavation was conducted under the supervision of the General Director of Antiquities of Alexandria Dr Khaled Abou El Hamd, with Mr. Maged El Sayed as the Head of Mission and Excavator, and Dr. Amany Shabaan as Excavator and Ceramologist

² The GEOMAR Project, led by ANR, the French scientific research organization, studied the archaeological and historical cultural evidence at Lake Mariout, west of Alexandria.



a



b

Fig. 2. a) Location of the site in western Marea, after Google Earth (addapted by Ismael Awad); b) Rooms A, B, F, and G in the excavation from the north (© Amany Shabaan).

and courtyards. Two trenches were initially dug to identify the nature of the site, which were then extended to reveal the architectural elements of the walls, various foundations, construction methods, and mortar. These excavations exposed four squares in a row. Square A then was extended to square B, F, and G, which became chambers after excavation (Fig. 2b). These chambers are characterized by the Byzantine building method, similar to those found in modern excavations at Kom El-Dikka archaeological site (Majcherek 1995: 133-150).

The smaller area (Area II) is located on the highest level of the site, represented by square C. This revealed a dump containing remains of later activity levels, and some completed objects such as oil lamps, along with many fragments of Late Roman Amphora 5/6, tableware and cooking ware.

4. Pottery in Context and Dump

The excavation revealed a Late Roman occupation, consisting of some chambers. The pottery found at the floor level of these contexts and in the square dump contained numerous and varied pottery materials from the late Roman and early Byzantine periods. These groups included numerous fragments of Late Roman Amphorae, as well as fragments of tableware (Egyptian Red Slip Ware A, group O, LRD ware bowl fragments), cooking ware for daily use, Byzantine lamps, and everyday life wares that the pilgrims would have used to satisfy their daily needs. That sheds light on the importance of the site on the route for pilgrims.

This paper briefly examines the main ceramic types that establish the site's dating. The pottery in question comes from selected contexts representing all parts of the excavated site, dating from the 4th to the 8th century AD.

5. Amphorae

Some types of Late Roman Amphorae have been found at the site, used to transport wine, water, or oil for various rituals.

These include the rare LRA 1, the abundant LRA 5/6 (which pilgrims reused as water jars), some sherds from LRA7, and one large storage jar for keeping grains.

Late Roman Amphora 1 (LRA 1)

LRA 1 was one of the most common amphorae types of the Late Roman period throughout the Eastern Mediterranean in early Christian contexts between the 4th and 7th centuries AD (Demesticha 2014: 600; Duggan 2013: 241; Hill 2016: 21). In a survey of amphorae production centers, Empereur and Picon noted workshops in the Aegean region and Alexandria in the Marotide region (Empereur and Picon 1989: 239, Fig. 18, workshop no. 11; Empereur and Picon 1992: 129).

Additionally, this form was imitated in Egypt using local fabric. Morphologically, they are divided into two basic

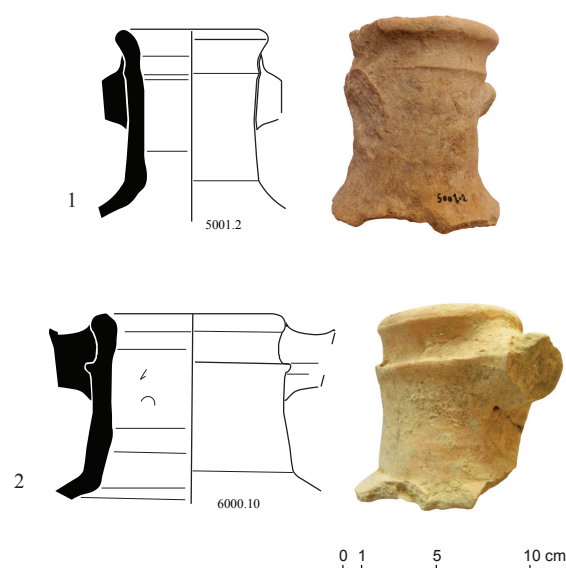


Fig. 3. Illustrations of the analyzed amphora samples of Late Roman Amphorae (LRA1) (© Amany Shabaan).

groups (A and B), with some additional subtypes (Senol and Alkaç 2017: 833).

Two rim fragments of LRA 1 are illustrated in **Fig. 3**, with a wide neck type A found in Rooms A and F, similar to Egloff type 164. The first fragment (**Fig. 3,1**) is made from alluvial clay with a rim diameter of 9 cm, similar to Kellia³ (Ballet and Bosson 2003: 23, 138), which Egloff dated them from the beginning of the 6th to the end of the 7th century AD (Egloff 1977: 112).

The second fragment (**Fig. 3,2**), is made from marl clay, with a thickened rim, slightly concave on the outside, and a diameter of 11 cm. This may be dated to the late 5th to 7th century AD similar to LRA 1 found in House H1 at Marea (Gwiazda and Wielgosz-Rondolino 2019: 265/4-2). Comparable examples have also been found at Deir El Roumi and The Old Monastery of Baramus in the Wadi Natrun (Lecuyot 2007: 380, fig 3/12; Konstantinidou 2013: 71, fig. 5-19; Konstantinidou 2010: 956, fig. 4-3) dated to 6th century AD.

Late Roman Amphora 5/6

LRA 5/6 is well known and was produced in the monastery and pilgrimage site of Abu Mena (Marín 2018: 106). It is very well represented at this site, with the majority of the amphorae found *in situ* in the context of Rooms (**Fig. 4**). This type has a large morphological variety; the production of these globular and ovoid amphorae imitating the bag-shaped type (Palestinian amphora LRA 5), is typically recorded all around the Eastern Mediterranean in large quantities from the 1st to the early 8th century AD.

These amphorae have been identified as being made in the region of Lake Mareotis, especially in Abu Mîna and Marea in Alexandria's hinterland, using marl clay (Empereur and Picon 1998; Empereur and Picon 1992: 150-151). Similar examples have been found at Kom El Dikka (Majcherek 1992: 110).

Ballet mentioned that several workshops produced this type of amphora on the shore of Lake Mareotis south of Alexandria and amongst the Christian religious communities of Abu Mîna (Ballet and Picon 1987: 34), dating back to the 5th century in the workshops of Abu Mîna or the Mareotic region (Konstantinidou 2013: 61/6-25).

A kiln produced this type of amphorae in the middle of the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th century AD was discovered in Abu Mena (Egloff 1977: 117-118).

It is believed that the white wine produced in the Mareotis region was packed in these containers (Dixneuf 2011: 142-148, 203-204). Moreover, this seems to have been associated with fine wines, demonstrating the commercial success of Palestinian wine in Egyptian markets (Kingsley 2001: 57).

The fabric from Abu Mîna is buff beige to pale yellow on the surface (2.5YR 8/2, 3) (Adams 1991: 480), white slip-on the outside and quantities of quartz and some limestone inclusions (Ballet and Picon 1987: 33-34; Monchamp 2014: 56, Fig. 8). Almost all fragments of these amphorae types have been identified in Marea from the 5th to the 7th century AD.



Fig. 4. Late Roman Amphora 5/6 *in situ*
(© Amany Shabaan).

There is a great amount of LRA 5/6 variations in both the shape and fabric according to the production region. We discovered some variants of rims of Abu Mîna amphorae, made with marl clay illustrated in **Fig. 5,1** of the catalogued amphora samples of LRA 5/6, dating from the 5th to 7th century AD, similar to Egloff type 186 (Egloff 1977; Adams 1991: 480, Engemann 1992: 154, Fig. 4).

The shape of these amphorae featured an ovoid body with a rounded base and two handles, while the neck was straight with a rounded or tapered edge. The form parallels those found at the Old Monastery of Baramûs, Kellia, and Tell El-Makhzan at north Sinai (Konstantinidou 2010: 960, no. 28; Ballet and Picon 1986: 31, fig. 4, 2; Dixneuf 2007: Fig.2), dating to the second half of the 7th to 8th centuries AD.

In the Nile Delta region, there was imitation of the the bag-shaped type, using Nile fabrics in the manufacturing process from alluvial clay with gray and brown fabric.

Ballet reports a workshop producing Nile silt Egyptian Amphora 5/6 at Kom Abu Billu⁴ (*Terenouthis*) (Ballet 1994: 353-365; Ballet 2007: 157-160). That workshop producing ovoid Egyptian amphorae LRA 5 (Egloff 1977: type 187) was at work until the 10th or even the 11th century AD (Konstantinidou 2013: 61).

In Marea B, we discovered some variants of LRA 5/6 Egloff type 187 (**Fig. 5, 2A**) similar to Kom Abu Billu and Kellia (Ballet 1994: 358, fig. 3; Ballet and Picon 1987: 37, fig 5, 2), dated to the 7th century AD. This provides additional evidence to suggest that the workshop of Kom Abu

³ A monastic site at Beheira province, in the Northern west Delta, Egypt.

⁴ The above remark is a confirmation of the literary sources, according to which the monks often travelled or took refuge in Terenouthis. It is noteworthy that this city used to be an important station of the Pilgrims rout; see more (Konstantinidou 2010: 951-961).

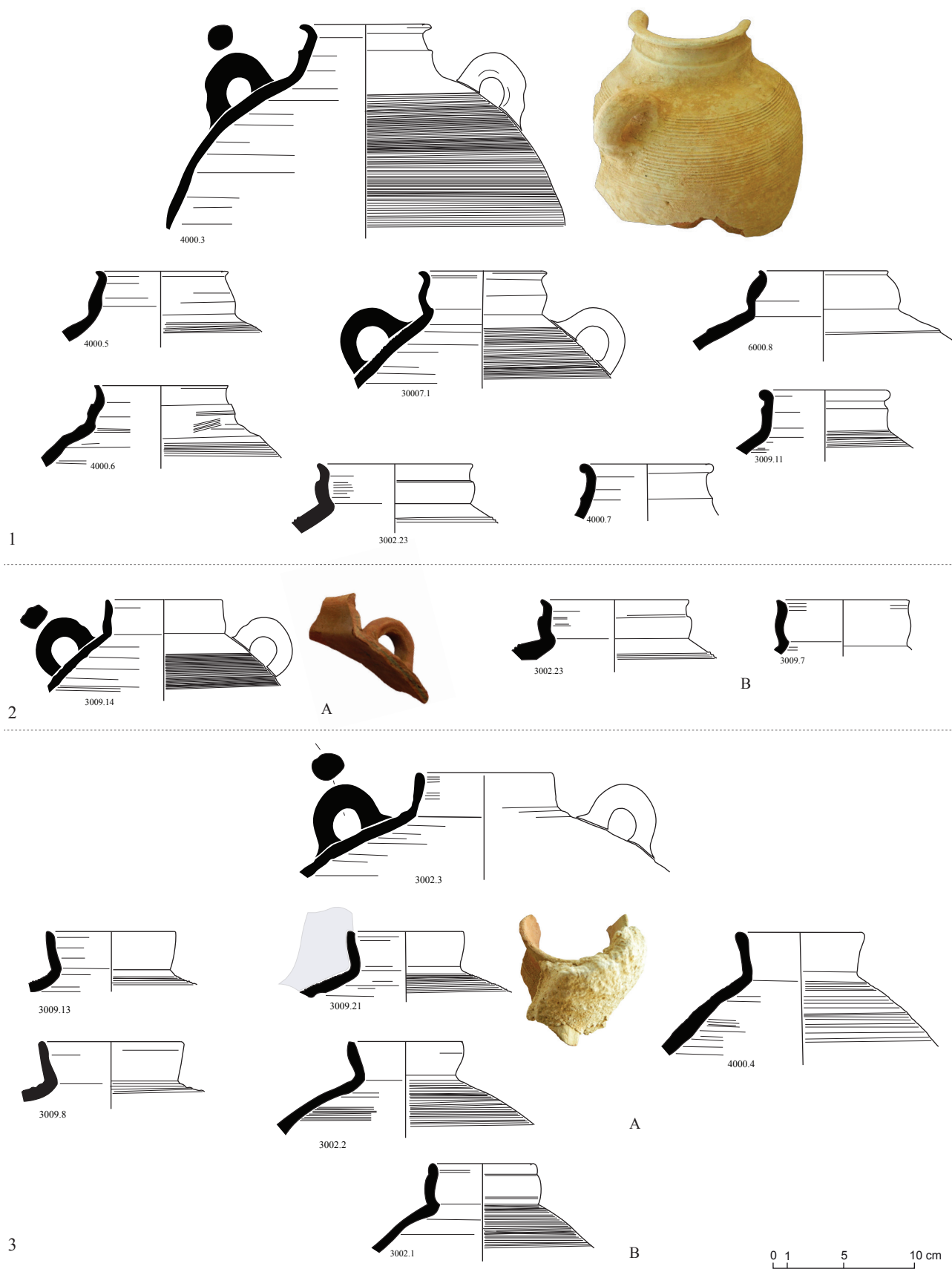


Fig. 5. 1) Late Roman Amphorae 5/6 type 186 Abu Mina /Mareotis; 2) A. Late Roman Amphora 5 Egloff type 187 similar to Delta (Kūm Abū Billū), B. variants Rims of Late Roman Amphorae Egloff type 187 from alluvial clay; 3) A) Illustration of LRA. 5/6 from Marl clay- Marea (Egloff type 190), B) variant rim of LRA 5/6 (© Amany Shabaan).

Billu covered, to a certain extent, the needs of the monastic communities (Konstantinidou 2010: 952).

The variant type (**Fig. 5, 2B**) has not been identified with certainty, but its colour is red to brown, and there are micaceous and grains of quartz inclusions. This type of amphorae is less widespread in Egypt; a similar example from the old monastery of Baramūs is dated to the second half of the 7th to 8th century AD (Konstantinidou 2010: 960).

Four complete amphorae and some fragments of body sherds LRA 5/6 have been identified in Marea B *in situ* Room F (**Fig. 4**), from the production of Mareotis. This type has the same shape as Palestinian LRA 5 (Egloff 1977: type 190), but some differences, such as the rim of this amphora rising from the shoulder, and the neck being straight with a rounded or tapered edge. The body is an ovoid in shape, partly ribbed, with two handles and a rounded base (**Fig. 5, 3A**). It is dated to the second half of the 6th century AD (Konstantinidou 2010: 960, fig 8, no. 29). The variant rim of LRA 5/6 (**Fig. 5, 3B**) dates to the late 7th to 9th century AD (Konstantinidou 2010: 957, Fig. 5, no. 16).

Late Roman Amphora 7 (LRA.7)

LRA 7, also known as Riley's Late Roman Amphora 7 (Dixneuf 2011: 184), is a wine container that was widely distributed throughout Egypt during Late Antiquity (Marín 2018: 106). It was produced in many workshops in central Egypt around the Nile Delta, using alluvial clay fabric of a dark brown colour, characterized by a high mica content.

LRA 7 has a slender shape with a pointed base and more or less pronounced ridges on the shoulder (Adams 1991: 481, 490). In Marea B, we identified two fragments in Room A of a pointed base LRA 7 (**Fig. 6**). It is made from alluvial clay, and the body is characterized by sharp grooves on the surface, and a fermentation hole made post-firing, which should be interpreted as the reuse of the lower part of the amphora as a container for suspension.

The Polish mission found a similar amphora with a hole in the Deir el-Naqlun excavation (Danys-Lasek 2014: 546). This is dated to the 6th -7th century AD, in the monastery of Baramus (Konstantinidou 2010: 952), and Kellia dated from the 5th to 8th centuries AD (Ballet and Picon 1987: 39) in parallel with the amphorae from the Kharga Oasis.

Regarding the undetermined storage jar, a specimen was found *in situ* in Room B (**Fig. 7**). It had a very fragile fabric, brown in colour, with brown and gray core fabric. Its purpose in this context remains unclear.

6. Cooking ware

Cooking ware was the second most common type of pottery found in Marea B, particularly inside the dump of square C. These wares were common in the late Roman and Byzantine periods, comprising cooking pots and abundant of casseroles used for the daily needs of the pilgrims. Konstantinidou mentioned that the lentil soup was boiling in the casserole.

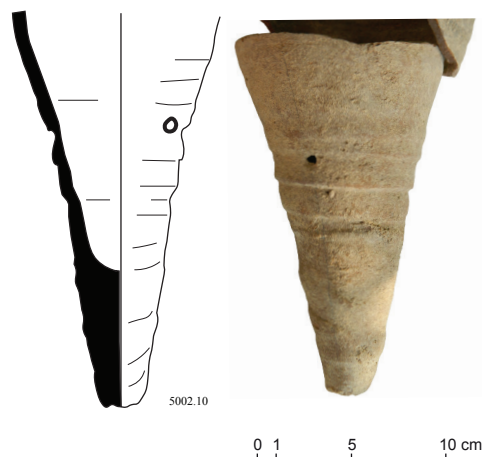


Fig. 6. Late Roman Amphora 7 (© Amany Shabaan).



Fig. 7. Undetermined storage jar *in situ* (© Amany Shabaan).

Most of these pottery items were ribbed, with angled, ledges, or plain rims. However, the wide range of uneven handles and nonstandard forms produced in Egypt from the 2nd to the 7th century AD can complicate the precise dating of Roman and Byzantine sherds without a secure archaeological context (Thomas 2018: 22).

Globular Cooking pots

In Marea B, two types of cooking pots with two handles were identified. The first is a deep-necked cooking pot that is globular with vertical handles (**Fig. 8,1A**). It has a rim diameter of 7 cm and shows traces of burning. This type is dated from the late 4th century AD until the early Byzantine period, and has parallels found at Kellis, Tanis, and Deir el-Naqlun (Egloff 1977: Pl. 49:4; Bavay et al 2000: Fig.20, 1; Danys-Lasek 2014: 11079).

The second shape (**Fig. 8,1B**), with a wide vertical handle and a mostly broken rim, could be an imitation of Aegean cooking ware, dated to the middle of the 5th and early 6th centuries AD. Both types are made of dark and reddish-brown, Nile silt clay, which was commonly used for most utility ware.

Hemispherical Cooking pots (Marmite)

The most distinctive and common type of cooking pot found was the marmite with beveled rim (Egloff 1977: type 115). This pot has a hemispherical body, with a flat or beveled rim, a diameter of approximately 22-27 cm, grooves on the wall, and two horizontal handles that are uplifted or straight, with a rounded base (Egloff 1977: type 114-116), as illustrated in (Fig. 8,2).

All of these are made of Nile silt fabric and show use/wear traces such as burn marks or soot points due to heating over a fire, similar to a specimen found in house H1 at Marea by the Polish mission. According to evidence from Kellia, this

type of pot dates from the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 7th century AD (Ballet 1995: 60). This form persisted for a long period from the 5th to the 10th century AD without significant morphological changes. Parallels can be found at Tanis (Bavay et al 2000, fig 20, 8), the Monastery of Baramus (Konstantinidou 2010: 961, fig 9, no. 35), dating to the 8th to 9th century AD, and at Abu Mîna (Engemann 1992: 159, Fig. 13).

The lids were made to cover the aforementioned pots (Konstantinidou 2010: 953). Only one lid has been identified in Marea B. The edge of the rim fits to cover the cooking pot, similar to form Nd.11.449 found at Deir El-Naqlun (DanysLasek 2014: 567, Fig. 9 B Nd.11449).

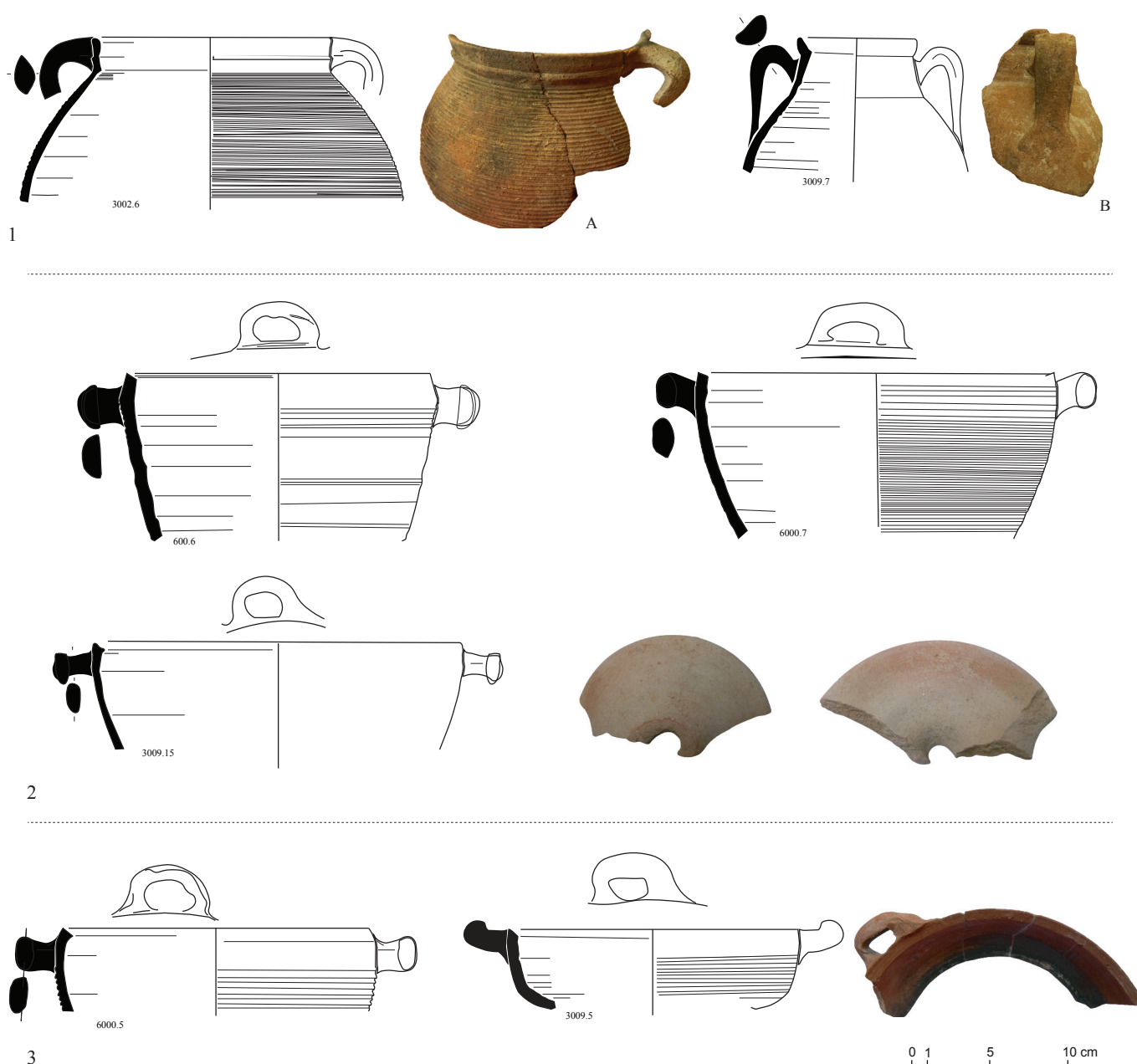


Fig. 8. 1) Spheroidal cooking pots; 2) Cooking pots (marmite) with beveled rim; 3) Pan-casserole.

Casseroles

Casseroles are wide, shallow vessels with vertical walls. The body, particularly on the rounded resting surface, can be heavily ribbed (Bailey 1996: 68). From the late 4th century and continuing until the 7th century AD, globular ribbed casseroles with simple flat, internally bevelled rims and horizontal handles replaced the long tradition of ledge-rimmed casseroles (Thomas 2018: 22).

Fragments (**Fig. 8,3**) have been identified as a ribbed casseroles, with a wide mouth and two horizontal handles, a rounded trapezoidal section, a beveled rim with a diameter of 20 cm, and a flat base. This was made in fine alluvial clay with a dark red slip, showing use-wear traces, and it is approximately dated to the second half of the 6th to the 8th century AD. Similar examples have been found at Abu Mina and are paralleled with one from excavations at Naucratis in 2015 dated to 350-650 AD (Thomas 2018: 22, Fig. 75), and Deir El Nuklan Nd.08.634 (DanysLasek 2012: 226, Fig. 3).

7. Tableware

The third major category of the Late Roman period comprises a series of common tableware items devoted to serving and presentation purposes, known as Egyptian Fine ware. These were produced in the northwestern Nile Delta or the region around Alexandria, in a variety of bowls, dishes, and plate-forms, imitating the most popular forms from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

These items were locally produced from Nile silts, with a few made from fabric sourced from Aswan clay *Kaolinitic* (Hayes 1972; Tomber and Thomas 2011: 47-49).

African Red slip wares (ARSW)

ARSW was produced primarily between the 3rd and 5th centuries AD in North Africa and imported throughout Egypt from the 4th to the 7th centuries AD (Hayes 2008: 250-253).

African prototypes were quite common in the Eastern Mediterranean dating to the late 5th century AD (Hayes 2008: 24, Hayes 91A, 98, 99).

Late red slip ware has been identified in Room A (**Fig. 9,1A**) as a plate with a straight wall without decoration. The diameter of the rim is 16 cm, the base is 14 cm, and the height is 4 cm. The rim is rounded cut, and both the internal and the external surfaces are smooth and covered by a glossy slip, and similar examples were found in Hermopolis Magna (Baily 1996: 62, fig. 11/ 51-53), El Ashmunein (Bailey 1998, plate 20 D9), dating to the 5th century AD (Mondin 2012: 606, Fig. 6, 19). In addition, a fragment of an imported ARSW with zigzag decoration was found in the dump of square C (**Fig. 9,1B**).

Egyptian red slip ware (ERS)

Most Egyptian red slip ware (ERS) is made in kaolinitic fabric (Martin 2017: 859) imitates African Red slipware (Bailey 1996: 55). This type of pottery occurs in plates and

dishes, represented in three groups distinguished by Rodziewicz according to the clay used: Group O, Group K, and Group W (Rodziewicz 1976: 50, 54, 61).

ERSA -Group O

Egyptian fine wares (group O - orange), according to Rodziewicz generally come from the levels of use (Ballet and Picon 1987: 43). Alternatively, Egyptian red slip A is also known, according to Hayes, or Coptic red slip-ware (Adams 1991: 481), imitates the African red slip ware, produced from *kaolinitic* clay in Aswan workshops (Ballet 1995: 76).

This ware has a pink colour in surface, with orange-red slip, and orange-pink fabric in the break, including visible mica, black nodules, and quartz grains (Rodziewicz 1976: 54).

Some fragments of group O are illustrated as common bowls and plates with plain everted rims (Egloff 1977: type 33-37; Rodziewicz 1976: 23). The helicoidal marks of tooling, which are quite visible on the exterior surface, constitute a veritable trademark (Adam 1991: 481). According to Egloff, these wares date to the 7th century 650-730 AD (Bavay et al 2000: 51, Fig. 17, 1).

A range of Group O (**Fig. 9,2A**) is illustrated in the dump of square C, as two plates with flat rims: one showing a diameter of 30 cm, and the other measuring 27 cm. These represent form E33 from Kellia (Egloff 1977: type 33), and El-Ashmunein (Bailey 1998, plate 10, C 274, C 293), dating to the end of the 5th to the middle of the 7th century AD.

A plate from Room F features zigzag decoration on the surface, applied by roulette, which is characteristic of Group O wares according to Abu Mina (**Fig. 9,2B**).

Additionally, fragments of a plate stamped on the inner base with a rose of a six-petaled flower (**Fig. 9,2C**). The diameter of the base is 12 cm, and it is possibly Aswan production with orange slip, similar to stamped motifs found on Manqabad bowls (Incordino 2020: 80).

A fragmentary base with stamped decoration (**Fig. 9,2D**), was also discovered in Room F, with a diameter of 17 cm. This piece is characterized by red slip and reddish fabric, dating to the second of the 6th century to the beginning of the 7th century AD (Ballet 1995: 81). It has a parallels from Kellia (Egloff 1977: 81 type 34, pl.39: 13), Marea, west of the Western courtyard of the bath (Majcherek 2008: Fig. 38: 16), and Alexandria (Rodziewicz 1996: pl. 29: 40).

Late Roman B (LRB)

A range of LRB common dishes was found in Mare B. One notable find is a rim of plate in Room B with a flaring wall (**Fig. 9,3A**). This plate has a rounded rim diameter of 33 cm. Thin, barely marked grooves are visible on the surface, particularly in the rim area, and there are wavy patterns on the inner surface (Ballet and Picon, 1987: 28-29). It features orange-coloured slip, and brown and black fabric (Egloff type 90-92), dated from the 5th to 9th centuries AD. Similar examples include those from El Ashmunein (Bailey 1998, plate 20 D1), and Hayes type 67.

Another example is a flanged rim of a bowl, short, slightly rolled on the underside (**Fig. 9,3B**). This bowl is dark orange with beige fabric and has brown colour on the edge of the rim. It has a diameter of 20 cm and is polished inside, dating to the first half of 6th century AD. A similar example was found at Kom El Dikka (Majcherek 1992: 85, No.56.11.87).

Late Roman C ware (LRCW)

Phocaeen red slip ware was produced in Asia Minor from the middle of the 5th to the middle of the 6th century AD (Hayes 1972; Bonnet-Borel 2013: 150). However, in Egypt, it is usually dated to the second half of the 6th century AD (Majcherek 1992: 91).

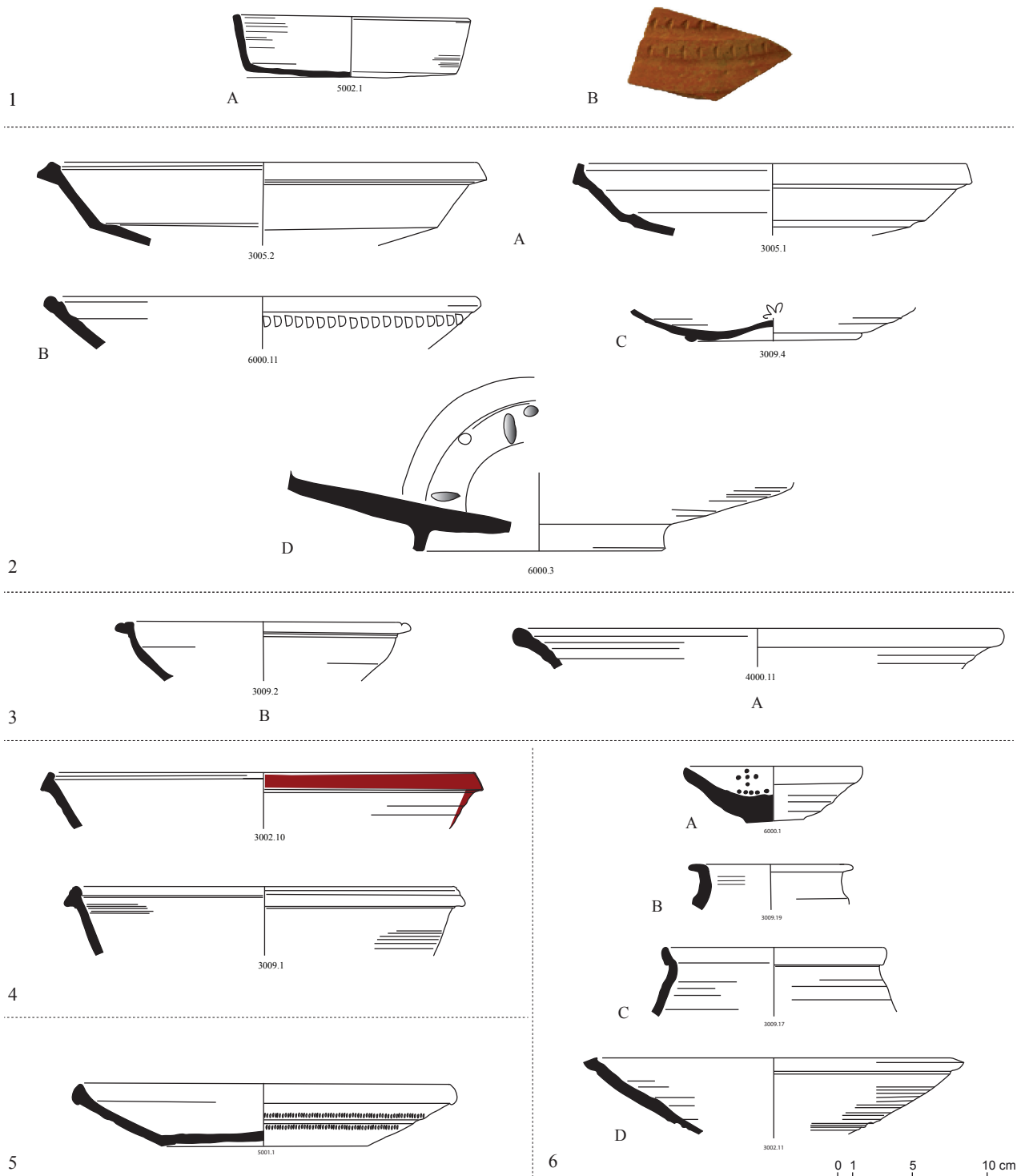


Fig. 9. Table ware illustrated from Marea B. 1) ARSW; 2) Group O; 3) LRB; 4) LRC; 5) LRD; 6) Undetermined tableware (© Amany Shabaan)

This group is represented by two beaded rims of plates (**Fig. 9,4**), with incised decorations, the diameters are between 27-30 cm. They are light red in colour and fabric, covered with an orange slip, and the slip on the rim is darker than on the body. These are parallel to Hayes form 3, Egloff 18 from Kellia (Ballet and Marguerite 2003: 36, Fig. 5), Tanis (Bavay et al 2000: fig 16, no.4), and Kom El Dika at Alexandria, dating to the 5th until the beginning of the 6th century AD (Rodziewicz 1976: 39-41).

Late Roman D ware (LRDW)

Late Roman D ware, also known as Cypriot red slipware according to Hayes (Hayes 1972; Ballet and Picon 1987: 38, 92), is notably abundant in Kellia, Alexandria, and Marea (Ballet and Picon 1987: 26). These vessels are characterized by an orange slip, usually with rouletting decoration, which may have originated as an imitation of African Red Slip Ware (Hayes 1972: 372).

A plate with a rim (**Fig. 9,5**), undercut by a groove on the inside, and decorated with a roulette pattern of double triangular stamps on the outside. The rim the diameter is 26 cm, and the plate is made of pink clay, covered with red polished slip. Similar forms have been found in Abu Mena at Alexandria (Hayes 2000: 296, Fig.31, 1,2), Kellia (Ballet and Picon 1987: 22, Fig. 2,2), Tanis (Bavay et al 2000: 48, fig 12, no.14), and Deir El Nuqlan (DanysLasek 2014: 557, Fig.5, Nd. 11495), dates to the mid- 5th to 6th centuries AD (Hayes, 2008: 250-253; BonnetBorel 2013: 151).

Undetermined tableware

Some plates found in Marea B are undetermined. One such example is a complete dish decorated with impressed dots forming a cross pattern in the four corners of the dish (**Fig. 9,6A**).

This dish was found in Room F and is made of marl clay, with a beige colour, containing very small sand inclusions, with very small vacuoles. The rim diameter is 12 cm, and the base is approximately 4 cm. The use and function of this dish remain unclear.

Two forms of bowls have been undetermined. The first bowl has a diameter of 11 cm and is of a light brown colour and fabric (**Fig. 9,6B**). The second has a diameter of 15 cm, also in a light brown colour and fabric (**Fig. 9,6C**). Additionally, there is a plate similar to those found in Kellia, with a diameter of 26 cm, made of brown and gray fabric with very small white inclusions (**Fig. 9,6D**).

8. Kitchenware

Deep dishes - Carinated bowls

Carinated bowls are the most prevalent type among kitchenware of the Late Roman period. These bowls were typically made from marl clay fabrics, with some examples made with alluvial clay.

These carinated bowls are notable for their uniform shape and ornamentation, forming a diverse set based on the shape of the rim, the wall, and the decoration motifs.

These bowls have been found in large quantity at sites like Marea, Deir El-Naqlun, and the south church in El Ashmunein, dating to the 4th and 5th centuries AD (Bailey 1998: plate 31, 32). They are characterized by a wide shape and often feature a flat base.

The forms vary, including those with a thickened incurved rim and a sloping rim. Some are decorated with black bands adorned with red dots and grooves on the rim. These specific decorations place them between the third quarter of the 6th and the 7th centuries AD (Danys-Lasek 2014: 459).

Numerous examples of carinated bowls have been identified in Marea B, both plain and decorated. The decoration includes painted motives with brown/red and black colours, featuring elements such as black or red painted rim with white spots, banded decoration, and a body featuring black arcades and white dots (**Fig. 10,5-8**).

Two carinated bowls (Danys-Lasek 2014: 565, Fig. 9A, Nd. 11.446) is illustrated in **Fig. 10,1-2**.

Additionally, a carinated plain bowl with sloping rim (**Fig. 10,4**), also bear resemblance to examples from Deir El-Naqlun (Danys-Lasek 2014: 562-563, Fig. 8, Nd.11.312; Bailey 1996: Fig. 36, 8).

Bowls and plates with black spots on a white band on the rim and arcades are similar (DanysLasek 2014: 575, nd.11.353) (**Fig. 10,7-8**). One rim made from marl clay with beige colour and fabric, with a diameter of 20 cm, features red lines on the edge of the rim. This piece parallels a bowl (Nd.08. 206) from Deir El-Naqlun (Danys-Lasek 2012: 223, Fig.1) and is illustrated in **Fig. 10,9**.

Saqiyah pots

These pots feature a wide mouth, a distinct rim, and a base with a knob, designed to attached to the Saqiyah (water wheel) using cords (Adams 1991: 492). Although rare in Kellia, and Marea B (Egloff 1977: type 256), only one fragment of the Saqiyah pot was identified in Room F. It exhibits a brown colour, and black fabric (medium texture) with a few very small vacuoles, and is characterized by grooves on the exterior.

Painted Ware/ Coptic pottery

The painted ware, characteristic of the Byzantine period, was produced to contain liquids between the 4th and 8th centuries AD, as evidenced by the examples found at the old Monastery of Baramūs (Konstantinidou 2013: 59).

Gargoulette/ Pitchers

Closed vessels like gargoulettes and pitchers are typically made from marl clay, featuring two handles and a spout. They are adorned with painted decorations in black and red colour, applied on a layer of yellowish or pinkish slip. These decorations often consist of simple geometric patterns, including

concentric lines and bands, wavy lines, dots, cross-hatching, leaves, flowers. Produced in Egypt using Nile silt fabric and marl clay, these vessels are beautifully decorated (Konstantinidou 2013: 58).

Pitchers with excised vertical fluting, possibly originating Abu Mîna (Egloff 1977: types 227-228), are dated from the 7th to the beginning of the 8th century AD (Ballet and Picon 1987: 31).

Some fragments of gargoulette from Marea B have been identified, painted with geometric motives with a red and brown colour similar to Egloff type 204.

A painted pitcher with two handles from marl clay and with a diameter of 5 cm, features small holes for functions, and a broken spout. Its surface is adorned with brown circles; resembling examples possibly originating from Abu Mîna (Egloff 1977: 227-281). Similar pieces have been found in Kellia and Alexandria in Gabbari.

Additionally, a fragment of a spout formed from alluvial clay, and a base of a gargoulette with a diameter of 5 cm, featuring gray fabric, with a brown colour and limestone inclusions, was decorated with grooves inside, and characterized by a hole in the base.

Jugs

Jugs, typically made of calcareous clay (marl clay) (Adams 1991: 480), were used to serve liquids during meals.

Examples from the 5th century at Kellia (Egloff 1977: Types 198-202) are notable. They often feature a single handle and a pouring lip, sometimes with narrow rim for pouring or drinking. Some are characterized by a trefoil mouth (Konstantinidou 2013: 59).

Examples of such vessels represented in the site date from the late 4th century to the 8th century AD. For instance, a plain jug with one handle, found in Room B, features a rim diameter of 7 cm, a light brown inner surface, and contains a hole on the body it could be for pouring.

In Room F, a fragment of the jug neck with one handle, adorned with on the neck and with a diameter of 9 cm, was identified. It exhibits a ribbing interior surface, with a kick-up base made from marl clay with a diameter of 6 cm.

Another find is a trefoil-rim jug identified in Room F, with a rim diameter of approximately 7 cm, similar to an example from Smoha at Alexandria (Monchamp 2014: 72).

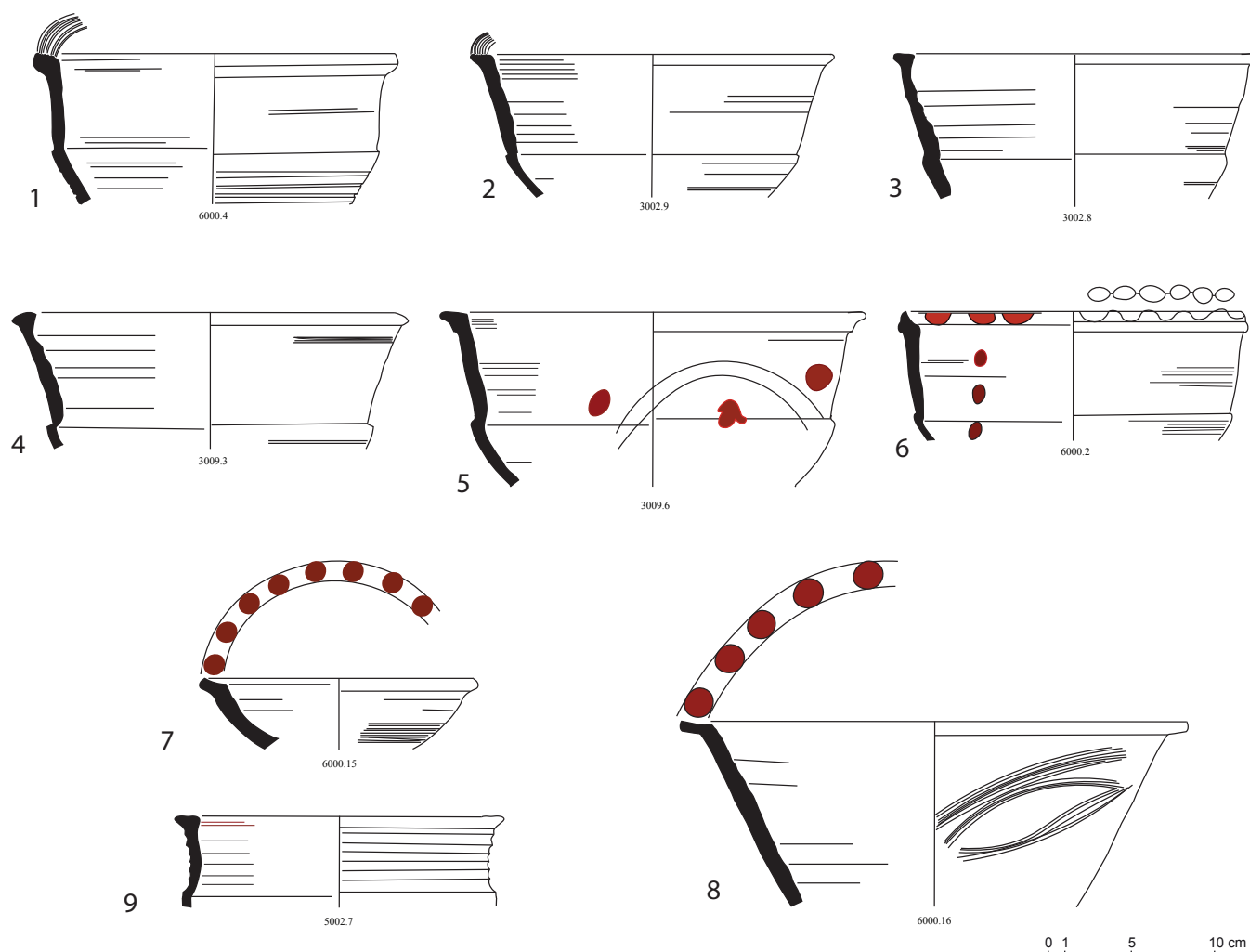


Fig. 10. Deep dishes/ carinated bowls (*Jattes*) (© Amany Shabaan)

9. Final remarks

The site yielded a diverse array of pottery forms and wares of Late Roman period, each adapted to very specific functions. The analysis of this pottery, has given us evidence of daily use of tableware, cooking pots, amphorae, water jugs, and painted ware. Additionally, the study of pottery from the Late Roman context provides valuable information about the economy and culture of this region.

The majority of the pottery was common wares from the Late Roman and early Byzantine periods, and a Late Roman Amphora 5/6 was also found complete *in situ* as well as fragments, dating from the 4th to the 8th centuries AD. The second most common category of pottery was cooking ware. These include several types of vessels such as cooking pots, marmites, casseroles, and bowls, and would have been essential for food preparation.

Tableware such as plates and dishes, played a crucial role in the presentation and consumption of food. The variety of wares identified suggests a degree of sophistication in dining habits during this period. Additionally, the identification of locally produced fine tableware is presented, mainly through small bowls. An important group of painted wares was identified, such as some of the common Byzantine Jugs and Pitchers in Marea, and Abu Mîna.

Overall, the pottery assemblage indicates a single phase of occupation at the site, likely serving as a rest stop for pilgrims travelling to Abu Mîna during the Late Roman and early Byzantine periods. Through the study of pottery, we can better understand the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of this ancient community.

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