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**A PRELIMINARY REPORT
ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS CARRIED OUT
ON A HELLENISTIC SITE AT KOM EL DIKKA**

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In 1989, foundation shafts for some residential blocks were being laid in an open area which lies in the eastern part of the old police barracks at Kom El Dikka (Pl. X, fig. 1). This site was referred to in the (Nouveau Plan General de la Ville d'Alexandrie) as “terrains vagues” by E. Nicottosoff, the civil engineer. The work was commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior. This area (about 9,699 m. square) lies adjacent to the western side of the neat first-aid building, and is bordered by Soliman Yousri st. from the north, Husein Fahmy st. (previously the Stadium) from the south, and the police offices from the west (Pl. X, fig. 1). Its ground level is about 8.5 m. higher than the platforms' level of the neighboring Alexandria/Cairo railway station. The topographical importance of this site lies in the fact that it is situated in the middle of the ancient Ptolemaic city, and to the south of the course of the Canopic road which was, according to Strabo: “... in the way between the Western Necropolis and the Canopic Gate”(1). The studies and research of Mahmoud El Falaky and Botti have confirmed this opinion. According to the “Falaky” plan of Alexandria, the site lay between R. 2 and R. 3 streets. Another aspect of the site's importance, in addition to that, is that it occupies the south-eastern part of the enormous hill of the present Kom El Dikka (The ancient Panium of Kom El Dikka, which Strabo has spoken about as “the man-made Panium which resembles a rocky hill, and is ascended by a spiral road; and from the summit one can see the whole of the city lying below it on all sides”(2). This description and our study of the contour features of the site led us to believe that this site was situated on one of the Panium's graduated levels.

Moreover, the site lies about 200m. to the east of the border of the

(1) Strabo XVII, 10, ed. Loeb, 1982.

(2) Op. Cit., 10.

archaeological zone revealed at Kom el Dikka which includes the Roman auditorium, baths, villa and houses. It also overlooks Kom El Gell at Moharram Bey in the south.

Owing to the importance of this site which has never been excavated before and which represents part of the city of Alexandria that is still unknown to us, we started our foundation - digging control. Soon after, we realized the difficulty of carrying out any excavations on this site due to the fact that the ground was rocky and very hard. It was also dangerous to dig deeply into the circular cistern shafts which came to light, being deep and narrow in some places. Therefore, the archaeological work had to be limited down to the digging control and to the most possible degree of clearance of the rock-cut cistern shafts and also of the foundation shafts.

Our study of the architectural remains, the headless statue and the objects discovered on the site indicate that it belongs to the Hellenistic period and that it might represent one of the structures mentioned by Strabo when he described the main sights of the city: "in short, the city is full of public and sacred structures"⁽³⁾. The nearest famous ancient building to this site was the Gymnasium of Alexandria which lay a few hundred metres from its north-western side and which was mentioned by Strabo in his book. A Greek inscription mentioning the "gymnasiarch" was discovered close to the Rosetta Gate and is believed to have a connection with the location of the Gymnasium which is very near to this site⁽⁴⁾. This monument, according to Bell⁵, was "the centre of higher education alike physical and intellectual".

Architectural Remains

In the course of digging and clearance processes, some architectural remains come to light. They consisted of some deep underground rock-cut cisterns, in addition to portions of walls, column shafts and capitals,

(3) Op. Cit., 10.

(4) Botti, Plan de la Ville a'Alexandrie, PP. 105 - 106

(5) Bell, H. I., Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1948, p. 71.

the latter were found on a level higher than that of the cisterns. Two fragments of a Hellenistic fountain were also found.

a. The Cisterns:

The cisterns are mainly situated at the western side of the site, within a limited area of land. They are considerably well preserved due to their being buried under ground far from destructive factors. As it was dangerous for the workers to go deep down and carry out works of clearance, we could not completely clear away all the debris and sand that filled them, neither could we be certain whether they were all connected together to form a fresh water system in the area. Some of them were circular in shape with rock-cut holes for descending on the two opposite sides of the cistern shaft (Pl. XI, Fig. 2 a & 2 b). The others consisted of a flight of stairs which led to an entrance connected to aqueducts and their walls were covered with plaster large part of which has now flaked off (Pl. XII, Fig. 2 c). These Ptolemaic cisterns are to be considered an addition to similar rock-cut Ptolemaic cisterns that have been discovered in Alexandria already. In 1989, a few hundred metres to the north-east of this site on the "Cotarelli" ground, similar Ptolemaic cisterns came to light. According to Alan Row, some cisterns of the Serapeum date back to the Ptolemaic period(6). Recently, some Ptolemaic cisterns have been also revealed on both what previously was the cricket pitch of the Faculty of Medicine, and on the garden of the British Consulate.

The remains of cisterns discovered on our site at Kom El Dikka can be enlisted as follows:

1. Remains of a rock-cut flight of stairs directed from west to east. Its highest point is at a depth of about 4.5m. from the ground level of Soliman Yousri st. The stairs lead to two sloping aqueducts, one of them slopes sharply southwards and has a height of 60 - 80 cm, and a width of about 60 cm, but we could not penetrate deeply into this

(6) Alan Rowe, The Excavation Report, in Bulletin de la Societe Royale d'Archeologie d'Alexandrie, No. 35, 1924, P. 141.

aqueduct. The other runs parallel to Husein Fahmy st. (railway lines), then deviates westwards. The walls of the flight of stairs and the aqueducts were covered with plaster, a large part of which has now flaked off.

2. An opening or door, with a height of 2.5m., and a width of 1m., closed with irregular blocks of white limestone and leading to a flight of stairs directed from west to east which in its turn leads to an aqueduct also closed with irregular blocks of limestone and then it deviated southwards.
3. Two adjacent rock-cut cistern shafts with a diam. of 80 cm each lead to an aqueduct full of debris and runs from north to south.
4. Circular cistern shaft built of blocks of white limestone. Works of clearance could only extend to a depth of about 10m. below the level of Soliman Yousri st. The bottom could not be reached. On both sides are rock-cut holes for descending.
5. Circular cistern shaft built of regular blocks of limestone with a depth of about 8m. and has holes for descending with remains of grey plaster on its walls.
6. East to the previous shaft is a rock-cut cistern, unplastered, about 140 cm deep, only part of which has been cleared. It has holes on the sides for descending.

b. Remains of Walls:

1. At the eastern side of the area, remains of a wall built of regular blocks of limestone were discovered. Black and red lines are painted directly on the limestone rocks. It could not be determined whether or not it was part of the wall of Alexandria during the Islamic age which used to pass somewhere around this area.
2. In the north-western corner of the site, remains of a semi-circular wall composed of three courses of limestone blocks came to light. The wall rests directly on the natural rocks. It is 30 cm thick.

c. Columns and Capitals:

1. Portion of a pink granite column, 60 cm in diam., found at a depth of 3.5m. below the level of Soliman Yousri st.
2. Two portions of granite column shafts, found in another foundation shaft at the same depth as the above mentioned portion. All three portions were difficult to remove as they extended under Soliman Yousri st.
3. Portion of an Ionic Capital (register no. 1247), (found with the draped female statue which we shall talk about later); it has faint traces of ashes on the spirals; numelitic limestone. Dimentions: l. 35 cm, h. 24 cm.
4. Upper portion of a pillar (capital and part of shaft); few traces of red colour on the capital and a blue colour on the shaft. Dimentions: h. 21cm, upper dimensions: 29 cm × 24 cm lower dimensions 18 cm × 17 cm.

d. Tow Fragments of a Hellenistic Fountain (register No. 1246),:

The archaeological significance of these two fragments is due to the fact that they give an indication as to the nature of the place in which they were found⁽⁷⁾ which was probably a peristyle or an atrium or, least probably, a fregidarium. The fountain is made of extremely hard Egyptian black basalt. The interior (Pl. XII, Fig. 3) carries Greek geometric decoration which comprises egg and dart pattern, and elaborate floral ornaments which give the overall effect of a beautiful ancient Alexandria garden, despite the limited space given to the decoration. Below, is an underlying decoration derived from wheat pattern. The decoration is executed by means of scratching, thus using the contrast between the black hard stone and the white scratches made by hammering in order to give the desired effect in a brilliant artistic way.

(7) W. Deonna, Le Mobilier de Lien, Exploration Archeologique de Delos.

This fountain is one of many others made of the same material of which we have some examples in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria such as No. g.179 (50 × 15 cm) and g.160 (42 × 15 cm), and both of them are cylindrical in shape. The fountain's base was a fluted column like the fountain base enlisted in the Graeco-Roman Museum under No. 12164. It belongs to the type of fountains discovered on the island of Delos and used to have plain, decorated or inscribed bases and were made of various kinds of stones such as marble and volcanic stones, and served purification purposes as well as domestic and industrial purposes. They are usually situated in peristyles and atriums close to water wells and cisterns.⁸ Both the basin and base of the fountain were made in one piece. Dimensions of the first piece with egg and dart pattern: l. 12 cm, thickness 2.3 cm, Dimensions of the second piece with floral decoration: l. 10.9 cm, thickness 2.1 cm.

Greek Lamps, Pots, Drinking Cups, and other Finds

A number of lamps, pots and drinking cups were found together in the sand at the bottom of the foundation shaft of block no 5. It was curious and uncommon to find such objects together in a foundation shaft in Alexandria, with nothing to connect them to each other except being all Hellenistic and dating back to the same period. The drinking cups are of the sort known as "Kylix" which resembles the two other types of Greek drinking cups: the Skyphos and the Kantharos, as far as use is concerned, but they are rarer to be found in the Greek archaeological sites of Alexandria. The most important examples of this type that have already been discovered in Alexandria were found in the Hellenistic cemetery of El Shatby⁽⁹⁾. They vary in form, size and material as we see in the newly found pieces: only two of them have handles, four are made of Nilotic clay, and one only - which is the finest and most elaborate - is made of clay covered with a glossy varnish (Pl. XIII, figs. 4a &b). These finds can be enlisted as follows:

1. Lamp no.1212

(8) W. Deonna, *Le Mobilier de Lien*, PP. 75 - 77

(9) Breccia E., *La Necropoli Di Sciatbi*, Le Caire, 1913, P. 68, No. 183, "Tav. Lv 1, 121".

L. 9, D. 6.5, H. 3.2, D. of filling hole 1.3 cm.

Brown clay, traces of orange slip. Traces of ash on the discus.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by groove; tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; slightly concave discus with relatively large filling hole; no handle; raised and slightly concave base(10).

2. Lamp no.1213.

L. 7.5, W. 5.4, H. 3.5

Light brown clay, surface worn but traces of orange slip.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by groove; tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; perforated lug added on the right side; no handle; slightly concave base; rough work.

3. Lamp no.1214.

L. 8.5, W. 6, H. 3.2

Light brown clay, surface worn but traces of orange slip.

Portion of body and nozzle blackened with smoke.

Rounding body set off from rim by groove; gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; raised disc base slightly concave.

4. Lamp no.1215, (Pl. XIV, Fig. 5)

L. 8.3, W. 6.3, H. 3.2

Brown clay, worn surface but traces of buff slip.

Tip of nozzle and parts of body damaged.

Round body; discus set off from rim by circular groove; tapering nozzle has round tip and flat top; raised disc base, slightly concave.

5. Lamp no.1216 (Pl. XIV, Fig. 6)

L. 9.5, W. 7, H. 3.8

D. of filling hole 1.8 cm.

Brown clay, traces of buff slip.

Deep rounding body; discus set off from rim by circular groove; slightly concave discus with relatively large filling hole; parts of body missing; gently tapering nozzle has round tip; raised base slightly concave; no handle.

(10) Louise A. Shier, 1978. Terracotta Lamps from Karanis, Egypt, The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Studies, University of Michigan, passim.

6. Lamp no. 1217 (Pl. XV, Fig. 7)
L. 6.7, W. 6.6, H. 4.4
Light brown clay, traces of orange slip, nozzle and parts of body missing.
Deep rounding body set off from rim by two circular grooves which do not interrupt nozzle; perforated lug on the right side; slightly concave case.
7. Lamp no. 1218 (Pl. XV, Fig. 8)
L. 8.7, W. 6.3, H. 4
Light brown clay, worn surface but traces of orange slip.
Traces of mixed burnt oil and ashes cover tip of nozzle and part of body.
Deep rounding body set off from rim by groove; gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; raised disc base slightly concave.
8. Lamp no.1219 (Pl., XVI, Fig. 9)
L. 7.6, W. 5.5, H. 3.5
Light brown clay, worn surface but traces of orange slip.
Whole body blackened with smoke.
Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; perforated lug on the right side; no handle; slightly concave disc base; rough work.
9. Lamp no. 1220 (Pl. XVI, Fig. 10)
L. 7.6, W. 6.4, H. 4
Light brown clay, traces of orange slip.
Nozzle broken off.
Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove which doesn't interrupt nozzle; no handle; slightly concave bas; rough work.
10. Lamp no.1221
Light brown clay; worn surface but traces of orange slip; tip and base of nozzle blackened with smoke.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove which doesn't interrupt base of nozzle; nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; slightly concave base; rough work.

11. Lamp no. 1222

L. 9.3, W. 7, H. 4

Light brown clay; worn surface but faint traces of buff slip.

Nozzle cracked and blackened with smoke.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; short gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; slightly concave ring base.

12. Lamp no. 1223

L. 7.5, W. 5.2, H. 3.5

Light brown clay; worn surface but traces of orange slip.

Nozzle mostly missing.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove which doesn't interrupt base of nozzle; no handle; slightly concave base; projection in the bottom.

13. Lamp no. 1224

L. 7, W. 6.8, H. 4.3

Light brown clay; traces of buff slip

Body blackened with smoke

Deep rounding body set off from rim by three irregular concentric circular grooves; nozzle broken off; base of nozzle interrupts the two outer concentric grooves; slightly concave disc base.

14. Lamp no. 1225

L. 7.5, W. 5.7, H. 3.5

Light brown clay; traces of orange slip.

Worn surface covered with an adhering dusty material.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; short tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; slightly concave base.

15. Lamp no. 1226

L. 7.5, W. 5.9, H. 3.5

Buff clay, traces of orange slip.

Body and nozzle blackened with smoke.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; fairly long tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; perforated lug added on the right side; no handle; slightly concave base.

16. Lamp no. 1227

L. 9.1, W. 6.3, H. 4.1

Light brown clay, traces of orange slip; worn surface.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; slightly concave base.

17. Lamp no. 1228

L. 7.4, W. 5.5, H. 3.5

Light brown clay, traces of orange slip, worn surface

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; perforated lug added on the right side; no handle; slightly concave disc base.

18. Lamp no. 1229

L. 8.2, W. 6, H. 4.2, D. of filling hole 2.2 cm.

Light brown clay, worn surface.

Body blackened with smoke; recently restored.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; sunken disc with relatively large filling hole; gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; raised base slightly concave; no handle; rough work.

19. Lamp no. 1230

L. 8, W. 5.6, H. 3.6

Brown clay, black metallic slip, worn surface.

Deep rounding body set off from rim by circular groove; gently tapering nozzle has rounding tip and flat top; no handle; slightly concave raised base.

20. Miniature Jar no. 1231 (Pl. XVII, Fig. 11)

H. 5.4, D. 4

Brown Nilotic clay.

Almost globular body.

21. Ink Pot no. 1232 (Pl. XVII, Fig. 12)
H. 3, D. 3.8
Light brown Nilotic clay.
Raised disc foot.
22. Ink Pot no. 1233
H. 3, D. 3.8
Similar to no. 1232.
23. Ink Pot no. 1234 (Pl. XVIII, Fig. 13)
H. 26, D. 3.8
Traces of orange slip.
Similar to nos. 1232 & 1233, but mouth chipped and small chip in base.
24. Juglet no. 1235 (Pl. XVIII, Fig. 14)
H. 6.3, D. 3.8
Light brown Nilotic clay.
Pear-shaped graceful body; disc foot; one handle; uneven base; rough work.
25. Kylix no. 1236 (Pl. XIX, Fig. 15).
L. 10.4, H. 2.6, D. 5.8
Clay covered with black glossy varnish.
Well preserved.
Slender body devoid of decoration; two handles; ring foot; chip in base. Resembles nos. 121 & 122 previously discovered at El Shatby Cemetery(11).
26. Table Vessel no. 1237
H. 11.5, D. of mouth 9.
Light brown Nilotic clay.
Almost spherical body; one handle connecting shoulder to rim; wide mouth.
27. Kylix no. 1238)

(11) Breccia, E., *La Necropoli Di Sċiatbi*, Le Caire, 1913, P. 68, No. 183, Tav. LV 1, 121.

Brown clay with traces of orange slip.
Fine work.

Outward flaring mouth; no handles; ring foot.

28. Kylix no. 1239 (Pl. XIX, Fig. 16)

Brown clay with traces of white paint.
Fine work.

Outward flaring mouth; disc foot; no handles.

29. Kylix no. 1240 (Pl. XIX, Fig. 17)

Brown clay.
Interior blackened with smoke.
Fine Work.

Outward flaring mouth; disc foot; no handles.

30. Kylix no. 1241

Brown clay.
Portion of body missing.
Fine work.

Diagonal triangular handler higher than mouth at outer edge; other handle missing, now only a stub.

31. Three amphora handles of wine jars which date back to about the third century B.C. They carry Greek stamps. According to Dr. J. Y. Empereur, the amphora handle no. 1244 is imported from Rhodos and no. 1243 is from El Fayoum, while no. 1242 (Pl. XX, fig. 18) is from Egypt.

32. Pipe no. 1245

Brown Nilotic clay.

Probably dates from the eighteenth century or later. Pipes are usually found in the debris of ancient sites of Alexandria. This pipe is made by mould and consists of a bowl, rim, stem-socket and keel; it is decorated with relatively wide vertical grooves, each divided into a number of small cavities by means of horizontal ridges.

A Headless Statue

It was found, together with the Ionic capital, in a layer of debris near the top of the foundation shaft of block no. 3, at a depth of about 65 cm. below the level of Soliman Yousri st. It is now kept Kom El Dikka archaeological area under no. 85. It represents a draped female figure standing frontal chiefly on the right leg (Pl. XX, fig. 19 a); the left leg is slightly advanced with a bent knee (Pl. XX, fig. 19 b). It rests on a triangular base, part of which is missing together with part of the right leg. The drapery consists of a long peplos and a himation wrapped around the upper part of the body (Pl. XX, fig. 19 c) and it falls in four graduated folds from the left shoulder over the left thigh. The folds of the peplos fall vertically over the feet, it take a fan-like shape towards the left foot and forms an oblique fold above the left foot showing a small portion of it (Pl. XXI, fig. 19 d). The statue reminds us with the "Muses" whose "Mouseion" in Alexandria was widely famous. The figure is also suggestive of the "Tanagra Statues" discovered inside the Shatby cemetery of Alexandria and of the statues that belong to the praxitelean School. However, a more thorough and detailed study is required for the treatment of the peplos and himation folds for which Margaret Bieber has dedicated a special study in her book on Hellenistic art(12). On the back of the statue there are three triangular cavities probably for fixing purposes, the highest of which is partly missing. The statue probably came from one of the Greek islands. It is made of white marble and has a height of 95 cm.

Conclusion

The remains that came to light in this area represent a site connected with the secular life of the ancient city, judging by the fact that no statues of deities that may indicate the presence of any temples in this place - apart from the marble statue - have been found. With the exception of the artistic properties of the statue, nothing else could be known for certain about it, especially the identification of the person it represents. No inscriptions or coins which could throw some light on the date or period which the remains belong to, have been found on this site.

(12) M. Bieber, *The Sculpture of the Hellenistic Age*, New York, 1955, P. 129 - 131. (Fig. 507).

However, all the objects and the architectural remains, in addition to the elaborate underground hydrolic complex, date back to the Hellenistic period. They also indicate that the site comprised one of the public buildings which had a cultural and intellectual nature. Nothing more could be said about the site in this preliminary report as a more detailed study has yet to be carried out.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2.a

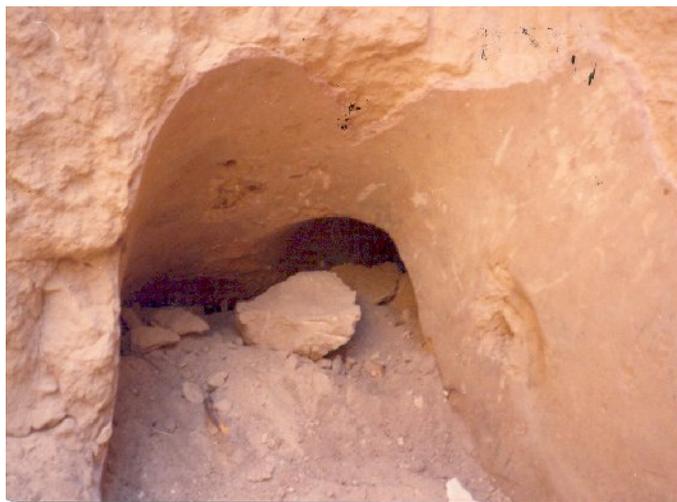


Fig. 2.b



Fig. 2.c



Fig. 3



Fig. 4.a



Fig. 4.b

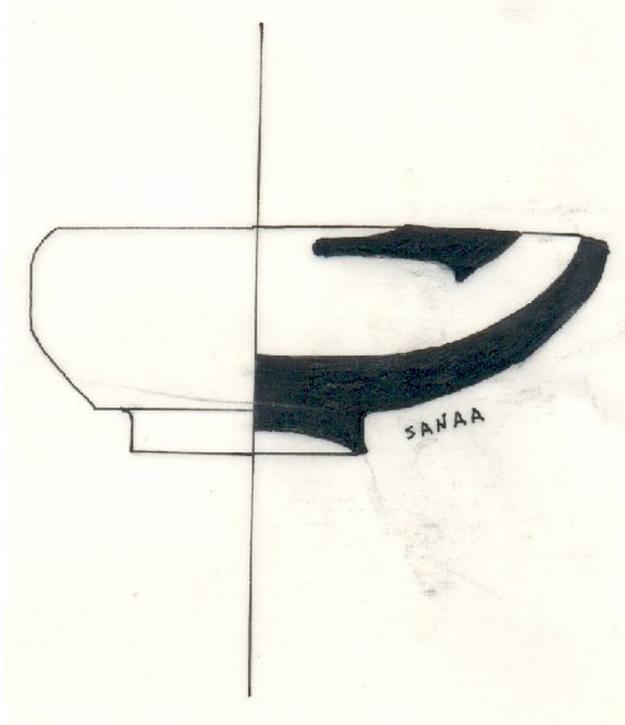


Fig. 5

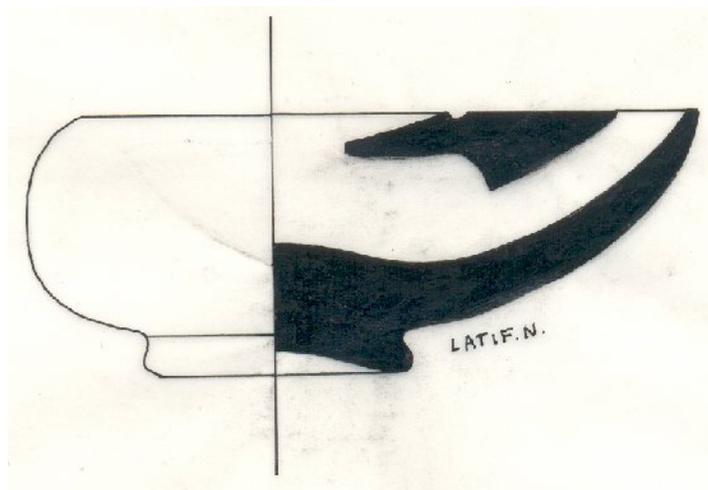


Fig. 6

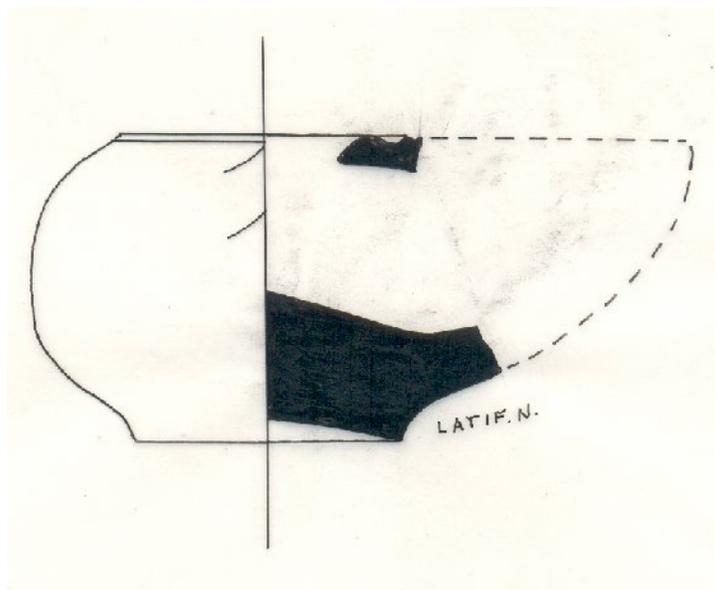


Fig. 7

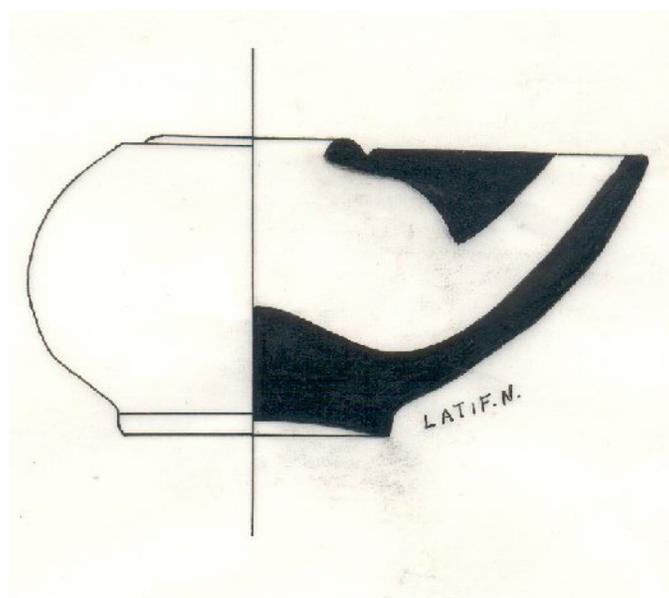


Fig. 8

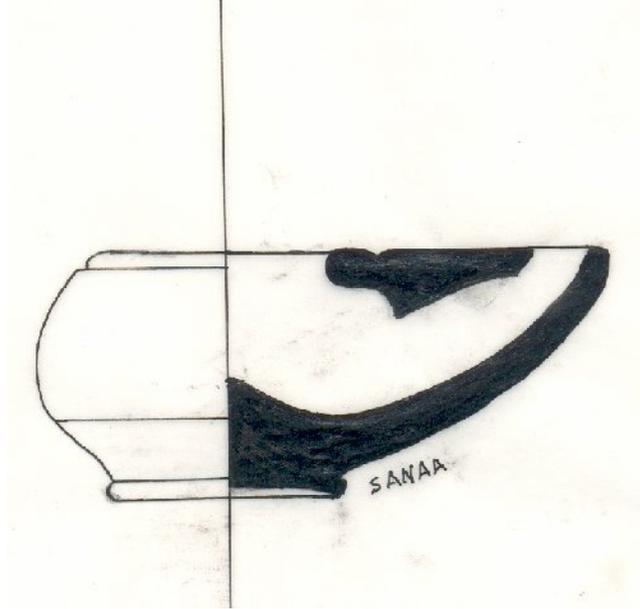


Fig. 9

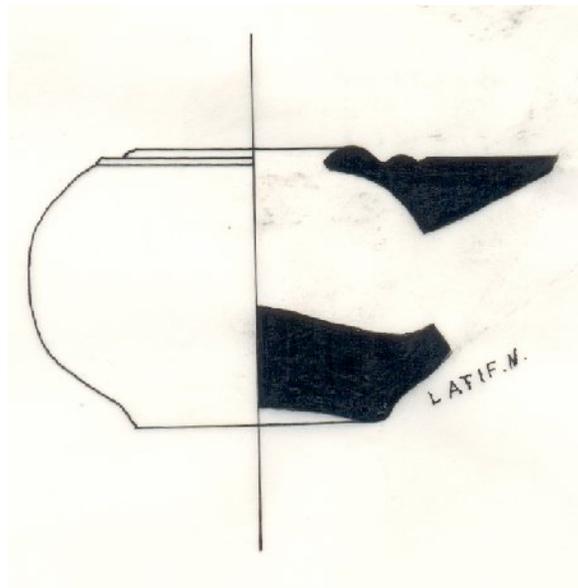


Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

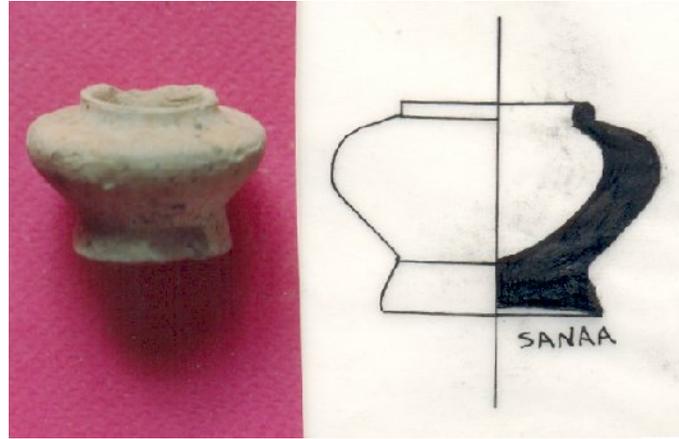


Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

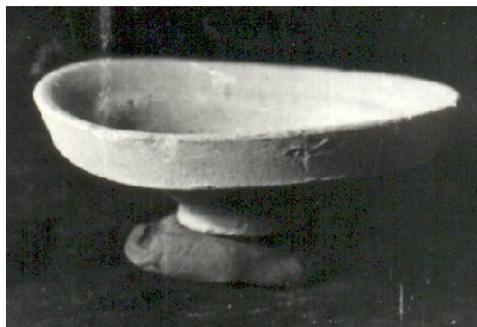


Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19.a



Fig. 19.b



Fig. 19.c



Fig. 19 d