ABSTRACT: The Marina el-Alamein Archaeological Project concentrated on excavating the area in the northern part of the harbor town, where a street (S1) existed, running north–south toward the harbor, lined by buildings on both sides. A test trench was dug across it to study the stratigraphy. It helped to identify several street levels and at least two major building phases in this area. One of the structures (H39) contained a hypocaust furnace that led to the building interpreted as a bathhouse. A pebble mosaic was uncovered immediately west of the furnace. Opposite Building H39 and across street S1, there was a large and richly furnished residential house (H42). It encompassed two paved courtyards, which were in use in the first half of the 2nd century AD. Three seasons of excavations (2012, 2013 and 2014) were followed by a season devoted in its entirety to documentation of the pottery and other small finds from the excavations and to check the documentation from earlier seasons.

KEYWORDS: Marina el-Alamein, residential/domestic architecture, bathhouse, Roman, architectural decoration, mosaic, Roman pottery, oil lamps, ostraka
تقرير ميدني عن حفائر البعثة الأثرية البولندية في موقع مارينا الألعاب (بمصر)

مواسم حفائر 2012-2013

Krzysztof Jakubiak

الملخص:
قد تركز العمل في مشروع مارينا الأثري على منطقة الواقعة في الجزء الشمالي من ميناء المدينة، حيث كان يتواجد الشارع رقم (S1)، والذي كان جزءًا من الشارع الجنوبي في إتجاه المدينة، محفوفًا بمباني على جانبيه. وقد قامت البعثة بعمل حفائر استكشافية في هذه المنطقة (ربما في الشارع السابق ذكره) وذلك لدراسة ترتيب طبقات التربة. وقد ساعد هفر هذا الخندق في التعرف على العديد من مستويات التربة (الطبقات) لهذا الشارع وعلى الأقل مرحلتين أساسيتين للبناء في هذه المنطقة تحديداً. أحد هذه المنشآت رقم (H39) قد احتوى على فرن لتسخين المياه تحت الأرض (متعلق نفس الشكل من الحمامات الرومانية التقليدية التي تتكون من ثلاث مراحل تحت الأرض لتسخين مياه الحمامات) والذي يقودنا بدوره إلى ما يمكن أن نطلق عليه أو ننوه به حمام.
وتجدر الإشارة إلى أنه قد تم الكشف عن فسيفساء من الحصى الأمسية مباشرة غرب موقع هذا الحمام. أما في الجهة المقابلة للمبنى رقم (S1)، وعبر الشارع رقم (H39) كان هناك مبنى مدني كبير يميز بآلهته ذو القيمة العالية وهو رقم (H42). وتشمل هذه المبنى الأخرى صالة زراعية والمتين كانتا قد الاستخدام في النصف الأول من القرن الثاني الميلادي. استمر العمل في الموقع لمدة ثلاثة مواسم (2012-2013). أعقيب موسم حفائر تم تكريسه بشكل كامل لتوثيق الفخار والباقي اللقي الأثري الصغير المستخرج من الحفائر وكذلك للتحقق من عمليات التوثيق الأخرى الخاصة بالمواقع السابقة.

الكلمات الدالة: مارينا الألعاب، العمارة السكنية/المدنية، الحمام، الرومان، الزخرفة المعمارية، الفسيفساء، الفخار الرومان، مصابيح الزيت، الأوستراكا (شفق الفخار).
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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................... 10
Abbreviations........................................................................................................... 11

PAM REPORTS

PCMA field missions and projects in 2014 and 2015 (with map) .............. 15

EGYPT

ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka. Seasons 2014–2015
Grzegorz Majcherek ................................................................................................. 33

Appendix: Islamic cemetery at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria: research in the 2014 and 2015 excavation seasons
Emanuela Kulicka ........................................................................................................ 53

Kom el-Dikka 2014: human bones from Area U
Robert Mahler and Urszula Okularczyk .................................................................... 64

Glass finds from Areas U and G at the Kom el-Dikka site in Alexandria (excavations in 2012 and 2013)
Renata Kucharczyk .................................................................................................... 87

Glazed Ifriqiyyan ceramics from the Hafsid period from the site of Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria
Anna Zawadzińska .................................................................................................. 104

MAREA

Marea season 2014: excavation in House H1
Dagnara Wielgosz-Rondolino and Mariusz Gwiazda .................................................. 115

MARINA EL-ALAMEIN

Preliminary report on Polish excavations at Marina el-Alamein in the 2012–2015 seasons
Krzysztof Jakubiak ..................................................................................................... 127

Rafał Czerner, Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner, Wiesław Grzegorek and Grzegorz Majcherek ........................................................................................................ 145
Rafał Czerner, Grażyna Bąkowska-Czerner, Wiesław Grzegorek and Grzegorz Majcherek...

Selected conservation projects in Marina el-Alamein in the 2014 and 2015 seasons
Marlena Koczorowska, Wojciech Osiak and Piotr Zambrzycki...

Tell el-Retaba
Tell el-Retaba 2014–2015
Sławomir Rzepka, Józef Hudec, Łukasz Jarmużek, Veronika Dubcová, Lucia Hulková, Martin Odler, Alena Šefčáková and Piotr Sójka...

Tell el-Farkha
Tell el-Farkha: archaeological fieldwork 2014–2015
Marek Chłodnicki and Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz...

Saqqara
Saqqara 2012 and 2015: inscriptions
Kamil O. Kuraszkiewicz...

Naqlun
Włodzimierz Godlewski, Katarzyna Danys and Szymon Maślak...

West Thebes: Asasif and Deir el-Bahari
Middle Kingdom tombs of Asasif: archaeological activities in 2015
Patryk Chudzik...

Four seasons of documentation in the Main Sanctuary of Amun-Re in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari
Franciszek Pawlicki...

Berenike
Archaeological fieldwork in Berenike in 2014 and 2015: from Hellenistic rock-cut installations to abandoned temple ruins
Iwona Zych, Steven E. Sidebotham, Martin Hense, Joanna K. Rądkowska and Marek Woźniak...

Sudan
Banganarti and Selib
Banganarti and Selib in the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 seasons
Bogdan Żurawski...

Aneta Cedro...
APPENDIX 2: Osteoarchaeological analyses of skeletal material from Selib 1 and Banganarti (2013/2014 and 2014/2015 seasons)
Magdalena Bury

EL-DETTI
Early Makuria Research Project: Interim report on the excavation at el-Detti in 2014 and 2015
Mahmoud El-Tayeb, Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska, Zofia Kowarska and Szymon Lenarczyk

APPENDIX: Metal objects from the el-Detti cemetery
Łukasz Zieliński

Animals from the tumuli in el-Detti in Sudan: from bone remains to studying ritual
Urszula Iwaszczuk

KHOR SHAMBAT
Khor Shambat I: new Neolithic site and cemetery in Omdurman (Sudan)
Przemysław Bobrowski, Maciej Jórdeczka, Iwona Sobkowiak-Tabaka and Michaela Binder

LEBANON
JIYEH
Conservation and restoration of a votive mask from Jiyeh in Lebanon
Anna Tomkowska

Plant remains from Jiyeh/Porphyreon, Lebanon (seasons 2009–2014): preliminary results of archaeobotanical analysis and implications for future research
Monika Badura, Ewelina Rzeźnicka, Urszula Wicenciak and Tomaś Walszewski

IRAQI KURDISTAN
Dorota Ławecka

GEORGIA
GONIO
Gonio (Apsaros) in Adjara: excavation of a Roman fort. Interim report on the first season of the Polish–Georgian archaeological expedition
Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski and Shota Mamuladze with Piotr Jaworski and Marcin Wagner
**CONTENTS**

**Interim report on the Polish–Georgian excavation of a Roman fort in Gonio (Apsaros) in 2014**  
Shota Mamuladze and Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski  
with Tamar Shalikadze, Nargiz Surmanidze and Emzar Kakhidze .......................... 533

**ARMENIA**

**METSAMOR**

Krzysztof Jakubiak, Ashot Piliposyan, Mateusz Iskra and Artavazd Zaqtyan ........ 553

*Appendix:* Anthropological examination of burials from Metsamor in seasons 2013–2015  
Rusanna Mkrtchyan and Hasmik Simonyan .......................................................... 566

**STUDIES**

**From circle to rectangle. Evolution of the architectural plan in the early Neolithic in the Near East**  
Marcin Białowarczuk ............................................................................................... 575

**Local and imported pottery in the Neolithic Gulf: a new perspective from the site of Bahra 1 in Kuwait**  
Anna Smogorzewska ............................................................................................... 595

**Ceramic patchwork in Hellenistic to Byzantine Phoenicia: regionalization and specialization of vessel production**  
Urszula Wicenciak ................................................................................................. 619

**Meroitic beadwork: an overview based on finds from Sâi in ancient Nubia**  
Joanna Then-Obłuska .............................................................................................. 691

**Remarks on pottery production, technology and vessel usage in el-Zuma**  
Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska ...................................................................................... 725

**Trade and faith in Nubian Early Makuria (AD 450–550): macroscopic examination of personal adornments from el-Zuma in Nubia**  
Joanna Then-Obłuska .............................................................................................. 741

**Pottery from Dongola: a stratigraphic assemblage from unit B.I.41**  
Katarzyna Danyś ................................................................................................. 761

**Painted decoration of water jars from Byzantine Athribis in the Egyptian Delta**  
Anna Południkiewicz .............................................................................................. 781
CONTENTS

Remarks on stone vessels from Islamic layers on Bijan Island
Marta Mierzejewska ........................................................................................................ 799

In search of Nubian master-builders: an architectural drawing from the Cathedral in Faras
Piotr Makowski ............................................................................................................. 809

Appendix: Prayer of a young woman
Vincent W.J van Gerven Oei ................................................................................... 826

Index of sites ............................................................................................................. 833
Guidelines for authors ............................................................................................. 834
Guide to PCMA Publications ................................................................................... 835
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Archäologischer Anzeiger; Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte</td>
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<td>Cairo</td>
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<td>Chronique d’Égypte</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRIPEL</td>
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<td>Lille</td>
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<td>DBMNT</td>
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<td>EtTrav</td>
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<td>Warsaw</td>
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<td>Cairo</td>
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<td>Gdańsk Archaeological Museum African Reports</td>
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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON POLISH EXCAVATIONS AT MARINA EL-ALAMEIN IN THE 2012–2015 SEASONS

Krzysztof Jakubiak
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Abstract: The Marina el-Alamein Archaeological Project concentrated on excavating the area in the northern part of the harbor town, where a street (S1) existed, running north–south toward the harbor, lined by buildings on both sides. A test trench was dug across it to study the stratigraphy. It helped to identify several street levels and at least two major building phases in this area. One of the structures (H39) contained a hypocaust furnace that led to the building interpreted as a bathhouse. A pebble mosaic was uncovered immediately west of the furnace. Opposite Building H39 and across street S1, there was a large and richly furnished residential house (H42). It encompassed two paved courtyards, which were in use in the first half of the 2nd century AD. Three seasons of excavations (2012, 2013 and 2014) were followed by a season devoted in its entirety to documentation of the pottery and other small finds from the excavations and checking of the documentation from earlier seasons.

Keywords: Marina el-Alamein, residential/domestic architecture, bathhouse, Roman, architectural decoration, mosaic, Roman pottery, oil lamps, ostraka

The Marina el-Alamein Archaeological Project conducted two successive seasons of explorations (2013 and 2014) followed by a season in 2015 devoted to the study of the finds. The main emphasis was on site stratigraphy and building development phases in the northern residential district of the town. The Project continues the investigations of an archaeological mission from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw, directed from 1986 to 2007 by Prof. Wiktor Andrzej Daszewski. The current project, beside examining the evidence for site chronology, focuses on understanding the role of the Roman harbor in the commercial trade on this part of Egypt’s Mediterranean coast.
ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

STREET S1

A test trench (2.50 m by 6.20 m), dug in 2014, cut across the street (designated S1) running north–south toward the putative harbor [Fig. 1]. The street follows the eastern facade of House H21, which had been cleaned and restored earlier by a Polish conservation team (Medeksza 2003; 2010; Medeksza et al. 2004; Daszewski 2007; 2011; Czeriner and Medeksza 2010). Other buildings: H39, H40, and H41, lined this street on both sides as well. At least seven different street levels were identified, the surfaces of each being discernible thanks to layers of ash strewn with ordinary street refuse. A stratified collection of pottery was recorded, illustrating a chronological sequence from the 2nd century to the 4th century AD. Most of the collection was represented by cooking vessels and tableware, supplemented by amphorae, which were dated mainly to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. The lowermost excavated layers of the street may have been from the 1st century AD judging by the ceramic evidence. Other categories of finds included pieces of Roman glasses and two fragments of Greek ostraka written on amphora body sherds [see Fig. 11:a–b].

Apart from examining the street stratigraphy and its dating, the test trench uncovered the foundations of the buildings standing along it. At least two different building phases were identified [Fig. 2]. Walls of regularly cut middle-sized ashlers bonded in lime mortar were found side by side with a structure of ashlers and broken stone bonded in clay mortar. The


Director: Dr. Krzysztof Jakubiak (Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw; 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015)


Archaeologists: Szymon Maślak (PCMA UW; 2012, 2013, 2014), Klaudia Szajkowska, PhD candidate (Faculty of History, University of Warsaw; 2012, 2013, 2014)

Documentalist: Agnieszka Dzwonek (independent; 2015)


Acknowledgments

The team is grateful to Dr. Halid Abol Hamd and Dr. Nama Samaelm Yakoub, successive Directors of the SCA branch office for the Mediterranean coast, for their support and assistance in making the fieldwork possible and efficient. We would also like to thank Dr. Baasit Ali, who was our good spirit and offered the greatest support in overcoming daily problems at the archaeological site of Marina el-Alamein. The present author would like to thank Iwona Zych and Szymon Maślak for help in editing this report.
foundation courses consisted of broken stone bedded in clay mortar.

**BUILDING H40**

Building H40, located in the southeastern corner of the examined area, is limited by Street S1 to the west and a secondary street to the north. Another test trench was dug to clarify the stratigraphy at the entrance to the building. The walls were built of small standardized ashlers. Inside, a sequence of floors was preserved and two major phases of development were recognized. A lateral chamber (H40.1), with the only entrance opening to the south, was located directly north of the main entrance to H40 from the west [Fig. 3]. The function of this lateral chamber is obscure, but its use as a doorkeeper’s dwelling should be taken into consideration. The function of the building as a whole was not established.

**BUILDING H39**

The northernmost unit, H39.1, was rectangular in plan and was entered directly from Street S1. A test trench

![Fig. 1. Plan of excavations in 2012–2014](Drawing S. Maślak, PCMA archives)
dug along its east wall provided material consisting of mostly kitchen ware and some tableware fragments, mainly Cypriot sigillata. The whole group dated to the 2nd and 3rd century AD; the latest objects with a more or less certain date were from the 4th century AD. Glass artifacts from a similar time horizon and a bone pin were found here as well. The dietary habits of the local population were highlighted by an abundance of animal bones, identified as sheep/goat, cattle, poultry and fish. A fireplace, its border set off with small stones, was found in the southwestern corner of the room; it appears to have functioned as a kitchen installation.

Unit H39.1 was built onto another unit to the south, H39.2, similarly rectangular in plan and also accessed directly from Street S1. A few stone steps led down from the street inside it, suggesting a more rapid accumulation of layers in the street. Two building phases were recognized. The later phase, associated with the later run of steps, was associated with a compacted clay surface serving as a floor. A small oven made of a big pottery jar was installed in the northeastern corner of this unit and it may be indicative of the room’s function as a kitchen. This phase corresponded to the 2nd–3rd century AD phase in the adjacent room described above.

Continued excavation in room H39.2 uncovered an earlier occupational phase. Under the upper flight of steps there was another one which, similarly, led down
Preliminary report on Polish excavations at Marina el-Alamein in the 2012–2015 seasons

EGYPT

Fig. 3. Building H40.1: threshold

Fig. 4. Remains of a furnace in Building H39, view from the east
from the street level, this time to the paved surface in front of it. On the northern side, a thin stone wall coated with lime plaster separated the stairs from the furnace area where part of a probable water boiler (miliarium) was found [Fig. 4]. This relatively large installation, certainly part of a water-heating system, was built of limestone ashlars and baked bricks. The interior of the furnace was irregular in shape, resembling a clover leaf in plan. A similar furnace or water boiler was found in the neighboring House H21, already excavated and reconstructed several years ago (Daszewski 2011: 423–429; Medeksza et al. 2011: 116–125; 2012: 84–99; Zambrzycki, Skoczylas, and Tałuć 2014: 82–84; Czerner et al. 2014: 67–75). A doorway north of the furnace led to the next room or to an open courtyard. Traces of a lintel and a jamb can be seen in the stone wall. Just behind the furnace to the west, a pebble mosaic floor was discovered. The geometric pattern consisted of triangles, squares and rhomboidal motifs [Fig. 5]. The mosaic floor was constructed over a hypocaust system, which has survived in poor condition. Clay tubuli and baked-brick installations from the heating system were found at the edge of the floor and inside the walls. The floor collapsed into the hypocaust cellar when the house was destroyed and/or abandoned. The fragility of the structure made further archaeological excavation inside this room impossible at the time. The fill overlying the furnace and the mosaic floor contained a substantial number of fragmented ceramic pipes as well as air flues. At least three types of pipes were distinguished, all with more or less the same diameter. Their abundance in this spot can be explained only by their role in the said heating system. These finds suggest that at least a part of unit H39.2 was used as a bathhouse.

Coarse wares from the fill overlying the heating structures in unit H39.2 constituted a substantial part of the pottery finds from this place. They can be dated to the mid 1st and early 2nd century AD, shedding light on the issue of the date when this bathhouse fell into disuse. Public bathhouses are known from the site (Daszewski 2011: 423–429; Medeksza et al. 2011: 116–125; 2012: 84–99; Zambrzycki, Skoczylas, and Tałuć 2014: 82–84; Czerner et al. 2014: 67–75),

Fig. 5. Pebble mosaic from unit 2 of Building H39
but this is the first time that a bathing installation has been found inside a structure which seems to be a private house.

The southernmost unit of Building H39 currently uncovered lies just behind the south wall of unit H39.2. It was rectangular in plan, and was entered from the east. Its walls were built mainly of ashlars and it was intended most probably as storage. Some Middle Roman amphorae were discovered inside it, in its northeastern corner. Another unit, located to the west of the previous one, had an entrance from the south. The walls of these structures show heavy, most probably quake-related damages.

The bathhouse facility and the building phase associated with it in H39 can be dated to the late 1st or 2nd century AD, similarly as Building H41 on the opposite side of Street S1 (see below). The stratigraphy shows clearly that Building H39 in its bathhouse phase was older than House H21 located further to the north.

**HOUSE H41**
The structure designated as Building H41 extends along the eastern side of Street S1, immediately opposite Buildings H39 and H21 [see Fig. 1]. Its layout seems to vary from other structures identified on the site. A test trench along its north wall revealed the uppermost street level existing in this part of the site. The pottery assemblage found on its surface dated to the 2nd–3rd century AD, and included an ostrakon [see Fig. 11:c]. A relatively small quantity of diagnostic sherds consisting of Cypriot sigillata and some cooking ware from

---

**Fig. 6. Building H41, unit 4, view from the southeast**
inside Building H41 dated it to the late 1st and the 2nd or even 3rd century AD. No other artifacts were discovered save for a few fragments of glass and some animal bones (mainly fish).

A rectangular unit in the northwestern corner of the building, unit H41.3, was entered through the doorway in its north wall directly from the secondary street (S2). The floor consisted of tamped earth mixed with ashes and crushed pottery. It was not a household courtyard however. The relatively narrow stone wall, 0.18 m thick, seems to have been a partition wall, separating this unit from another one, H41.2, located further to the south.

East of unit H41.3, an authentic courtyard, unit H41.4, was excavated. It was surrounded by walls 0.70–0.72 m thick and paved with rectangular slabs of irregular dimensions. In the central part of the unit, the pavement is significantly lower compared to its corners, which could suggest the presence of a collapsed water cistern below it [Fig. 6]. The rubble overlying the pavement of the unit included several pieces of good quality architectural decoration, i.e., fragments of niches or aedicules of types usually found in houses in Marina el-Alamein (Medeksza et al. 2004; Czerner 2005; Czerner and Medeksza 2010) [see Fig. 10].

Double stone doorways in the east wall of unit H41.4 were found intentionally blocked. Between these passages a circular base for an altar or the lower part of a massive thymatherion was found, with ash spread east of it. The coating of lime
Fig. 8. Eastern part of Building H41

Fig. 9. Southern part of Building H41
plaster on the adjacent wall just behind the base bore traces of burning. A kind of stone steps on the pavement directly in front of the base may have facilitated access to the altar.

A small square unit, H41.5, was entered from courtyard H41.4 through an entrance located in the southeastern corner. The floor here was about 0.20 m higher than the flagging of the courtyard. Both pavements were made of local limestone slabs. Nothing but some fragments of marble statuary and pottery were found in the deposits from unit H41.5.

Another courtyard, H41.10, was located east of unit H41.4. There was a small stone structure on the original pavement in the northern part of this unit. This structure was constructed of most probably reused blocks, standing about 0.40 m above the original floor. It may be evidence of the final rearrangement of the courtyard following a huge conflagration. Traces of burning were found all over the building. In the northwestern corner of unit H41.10 there was a small oven. The pavement of the courtyard was found badly damaged, not only by fire, but also by a quake-related dislocation. A few slabs were discovered lying in their original position elsewhere than in the western and southern parts of the unit. Squatter-like structures, similar to the walls of unit H41.8, survived in the western part of the courtyard. Massive square structure with an opening to the underground cistern, built of ashlar against the west wall of unit H41.10, bore also some evidence of post-destruction building activities. The structure is coated with waterproof plaster. Its opening was found blocked.

Fig. 10. Two examples of cornices from unit 4 in Building H41
Two column bases in their original positions survived in the southern part of unit H41.10 (courtyard) [Fig. 9]. They emphasized the monumental character of the architectural decoration. In some places, remains of a wall separating and blocking a part of the structure can still be seen. This and other walls...
The documentation season in 2015 was devoted to cleaning, documenting and studying the excavated pottery assemblage as well as small finds. The pottery material was repacked in safe storage.

The assemblage studied in detail in 2015 came from the test trench opened in Street S1 and Building H39. The earliest finds were dated to the 1st century AD, whereas the main phases of occupation referred to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD with trace occupation in the 4th century AD. The material included a superior number of Cypriot sigillata to the exclusion of local tablewares, some coarse ware and an abundance of cooking wares and finally storage and transport containers. An analysis of the imported vessels confirmed the known range of contacts: Cyprus, Cilicia, Crete, Asia Minor, Lebanon and Syria [Table 1; Figs 12–14]. Imitations of early Roman amphorae produced in Egypt in the 1st century AD were noted as well [see Fig. 14]. Cypriot sigillata constituted...
Fig. 12. Cypriot sigillata tableware, presented by stratigraphic units (for details, see Table 1) (Drawing K. Szajkowska; digitizing S. Maślak)
Fig. 13. Coarse and plain wares from the 2012–2013 seasons, presented by stratigraphic units (for details, see Table 1) (Drawing K. Szajkowska; digitizing S. Maślak)
Fig. 14. Amphorae and storage jars from the 2012–2013 seasons, presented by stratigraphic units (for details, see Table 1): amphora rim with stopper, Mau XXVII/XXVIII, from Cilicia, 2nd–3rd century AD; Dressel 43 (Cretoise 4) amphora handle, from Crete, 1st–mid 3rd century AD; Dressel 2–4 amphora handle from the Mareotis, local make, mid 1st–mid 3rd century AD (Drawing K. Szajkowska; digitizing S. Maślak; photos A. Dzwonek)
Table 1. Pottery from stratigraphic units in Houses H39, H40, H41, as well as Streets S1 and S2 [Figs 12–14]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Inv. No.</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building H39</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.12.113</td>
<td>Eastern sigillata B (Asia Minor: Ephesos?), form 60</td>
<td>2nd century AD (first half?)</td>
<td>Locus 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.12.117</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P41</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.12.024</td>
<td>Small jug, local production</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.049</td>
<td>Amphora base</td>
<td></td>
<td>Locus 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.037</td>
<td>Amphora AE3</td>
<td>2nd/3rd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.12.002</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P41</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.12.017</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P117</td>
<td>1st century AD</td>
<td>Locus 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.12.112</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P22B</td>
<td>1st/2nd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.009</td>
<td>Storage jar/big jug(?)</td>
<td>2nd century AD(?)</td>
<td>Locus 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.12.071</td>
<td>Frying pan</td>
<td>Late 1st–beginning of 2nd century AD</td>
<td>Locus 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.13.027</td>
<td>Big bowl</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H39.2, layer 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.13.017</td>
<td>Cooking pot</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H39.2, layer 1</td>
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<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.13.026</td>
<td>Cooking pot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.13.016</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P11</td>
<td>Second half of 1st–first half of 2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H39.2, layer 2</td>
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<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.13.038</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P22B</td>
<td>1st/2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H39.2, layer 2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Building H40</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Fig. 12</td>
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<td>1st century AD</td>
<td>Unit H40.1, layer 2</td>
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<td>M.12.074</td>
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<td>2nd century AD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.13.034</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P40</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.13.039</td>
<td>Tripolitanian amphora</td>
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<td>Unit H41.3 (paved courtyard), layer 1</td>
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<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.13.040</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, bowl</td>
<td>Fist half of 2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H41.4, paved courtyard (floor level)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Fig. 12</td>
<td>M.13.042</td>
<td>Cypriot sigillata, form P40</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H41.4, paved courtyard (floor level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.13.049</td>
<td>Basin or small mortarium</td>
<td>Late 1st–beginning of 2nd century AD</td>
<td>Unit H41.4, paved courtyard (floor level)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
most of the tableware recorded from the street as well as from the buildings on either side. This tableware was dated mainly to the 1st and 2nd century AD. Copies of Cypriot sigillata manufactured in Egypt were dated to at least half a century later.

Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
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<td>Fig. 13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.12.110</td>
<td>Deep dish/frying pan?</td>
<td>2nd century AD(?)</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.027</td>
<td>Pinched-handle amphora</td>
<td>2nd century AD (contextual date)</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.12.068</td>
<td>Cooking pot</td>
<td>1st century AD</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
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<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.12.052</td>
<td>Frying pan or deep dish</td>
<td>Late 1st–beginning of 2nd century AD</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
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<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.067</td>
<td>Amphora rim</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.12.080</td>
<td>Pseudo-Coan amphora</td>
<td>1st century BC–1st century AD</td>
<td>Level 8</td>
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Street S2

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<th>Form</th>
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<th>Context</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 13</td>
<td>M.13.009</td>
<td>Basin</td>
<td>2nd–3rd century AD</td>
<td>Layer 1 (along north facade of Building H41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig. 14</td>
<td>M.13.012</td>
<td>Amphora base</td>
<td>2nd century AD</td>
<td>Layer 1 (along north facade of Building H41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assoc. Prof. Krzysztof Jakubiak  
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw  
00-927 Warsaw, Poland, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28  
jakubiakk@interia.pl

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