



## IMPORTED VESSELS FOUND IN TELL EL RETABA - SIGNS OF EGYPT INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

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Tell el Retaba is a site located in the eastern Delta in the middle of Wadi Tumilat. It has been excavated by the Polish Slovak Archaeological Mission since 2007. The area was settled during the Hyksos period and later used at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. After a break, it was occupied again at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and continuously used to the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period.<sup>1</sup> The pottery found at the site is mostly of Egyptian origin but many imported vessels have also been identified, mostly from layers dated to the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and Late Period.

In 2011, Hyksos period material was discovered associated with tombs, while in 2012 Hyksos occupation was identified in domestic layers.<sup>2</sup> The tombs contained only local pottery. The analysis of pottery from the 2012 excavation season is still in progress; however, it seems that ten pots can be considered of Levantine origin.

The early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, dated probably to Hatshepsut/Thutmose III, material comprises a few imported vessels. Most of them are Cypriot Red Lustrous and Black Lustrous ware vessels. The Red Lustrous Ware is represented by spindle bottles – a bottle with missing rim and handle; one neck fragment, and two bases. One of the bases bears a pre-firing potmark. The Black Lustrous Ware vessels comprise fragments of juglets. A unique vessel of the ware, a cup with flaring rim, was discovered. One pot with missing rim made of a creamy fabric represents a Levantine “Shöpfung” juglet. It has an ovoid body, narrow neck, round base and one handle.<sup>3</sup>

In the layers located just above structures dated to the Hatshepsut/Thutmose III period two fragments of Cypriot juglets were found. These sherds, covered with a brown polished slip and later white painted, represent ‘Base Ring II ware’ which can be dated to the later phase of Thutmose III’s reign, maybe even to Amenhotep II.<sup>4</sup> Also in this phase, although the stratigraphy of this find is not clear, was a large fragment of a Levantine amphora.<sup>5</sup> Two small fragments made of very homogenous pink fabric with red painted stripes on the external surface might have been parts of Mycenaean stirrup jars, but their identification is not certain.<sup>6</sup>

The Ramesside, as well as Third Intermediate Period layers, contained probably only Egyptian pottery. A few small jar fragments could be Levantine imports; however, additional fabric analyses need to be done.

Among the Late Period pottery are fragments of some imported vessels. Several rims and handle fragments were parts of Levantine torpedo jars of homogenous pink fabric. Another vessel was a base of a Greek crater with very badly eroded external surface, although it is clear that the pot was covered with a black slip and polished. Traces of two red bands are also visible. Some handles of imported amphora from the Greek islands were also identified. Fragments of Chian amphorae were found, including one with a ‘swollen-neck’ and red painted rim and handles which can be dated to 500-480 BC.<sup>7</sup>

The discovered imports at Tell el Retaba will provide new insight into interconnections during many important periods of Egyptian history.

### NOTES

1 Slawomir Rzepka, Anna Wodzińska, Tomasz Herbich, and Jozef Hudec, “Tell el Retaba 2007-2008,” *Ägypten und Levante* 19 (2009): 241-280; Slawomir Rzepka, Anna Wodzińska, Claire Malleon, Jozef Hudec, Łukasz Jarmużek, Krzysztof Misiewicz, Wiesław Małkowski, and Miron Bogacki, “New Kingdom and Third

Intermediate Period in Tell el-Retaba. Results of the Polish-Slovak Archaeological Mission, seasons 2009-2010,” *Ägypten und Levante* 21 (forthcoming a); Slawomir Rzepka, Mustafa Nour el-Din, Anna Wodzińska, and Łukasz Jarmużek, “Egyptian Mission Rescue Excavations in Tell el-Retaba. Part 1: New

Kingdom Remains,” *Ägypten und Levante* 22 (forthcoming b); Anna Wodzińska (a), “Pottery and Chronology. Preliminary Remarks on Ceramic Material from Tell el Retaba,” in David Aston, Bettina Bader, Carla Gallorini, Paul Nicholson, and Sarah Buckingham (eds), *Under the Potter’s Tree. Studies on Ancient Egypt Presented to Janine Bourriau on the Occasion of her 70th Birthday*, (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 204. Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 1015-1036.

- 2 Rzepka et al, forthcoming (b); Jozef Hudec, personal communication.
- 3 Rzepka, forthcoming (b).
- 4 Rzepka et al. 2009.
- 5 Rzepka et al. 2009.
- 6 Anna Wodzińska (b), “Tell el-Retaba – Ceramic Survey, 2007,” *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 19 (2011b): 152-159.
- 7 Wodzińska 2011 (a).