



MYCENAEAN AND CYPRIOT POTTERY FROM GUROB IN THE MANCHESTER MUSEUM COLLECTION: A TEST OF TRADE NETWORK THEORIES FOR THE NEW KINGDOM FAYUM

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of Late Bronze Age Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery unearthed in Gurob (Fayum, Egypt) during the archaeological campaigns held at the site between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and currently housed in the Manchester Museum. This study investigates the physical characteristics of the materials and the discovery contexts, then further discusses the associations between traded pottery and indigenous Egyptian artefacts. This is the first of a series of papers that analyses imported New Kingdom pottery in the eastern Fayum with the further intention of exploring the area's apparent role as a hub for commerce during the Late Bronze Age. In particular, the function of the royal city of Gurob as guarantor and coordinator of the network within Egypt moving imported pottery between the beginning of the 18th Dynasty and the Ramesside Period (ca. 1548 – 1086 BC).

INTRODUCTION

The current study of Manchester Museum's collections of imported materials from Gurob (Fayum, Egypt) is part of an ongoing project dealing with the analysis of New Kingdom imported wares unearthed in this royal town and surrounding settlements including Haraga, Kahun and el-Lahun (Figure 1). Our stated aim is to study the extent to which the eastern portion of the Fayum region served as a crucial commercial hub during the Late Bronze Age, and also aims to determine the antiquity of this tradition.

Our foundation hypothesis is that Gurob acquired the role of a hub of commerce in the area as the entrance to the Fayum region became an inter/regional staging post during the Late Bronze Age. Despite the interregional vocation of these exchanges, the acquisition of traded items did not imply a direct contact between the Gurob area and the eastern Mediterranean but, more probably, the eastern Fayum settlement acted as one of the coordinators of this commercial network.

Gurob was ideally positioned with reference to the 'great canal' (and connected waterways – see below), which would have helped in the movement of people and goods as one of the main routes of commerce and trade for the economic exchanges between the rest of the Fayum and the Nile Valley. Moreover, the

position of the Fayum region, an ideal outpost for the Western Desert, might have helped in the development of economic relations with the Northern Oases of the Great Sand Sea. Gurob, the most important settlement of the area during the New Kingdom, might have represented one of the trading connections between the commercial routes from the Western Desert and the Nile Valley. The contexts of discovery of the imported pottery, mainly funerary and pertaining to middle class (or, in other words) sub-elite burials, may contribute to the hypothesis that the presence of imported items cannot be exclusively related to the royal vocation of the settlement, but, more likely, to the passage of a trade route in the area.

The extent to which this is true – and the scale of the trade networks for which Gurob appears to have been one of the focal points – can only be conclusively demonstrated through detailed analysis of imported materials.

The catalogue and discussion presented below therefore represents the first real step in testing the validity of long-held assumptions concerning Gurob's ancient trade role. The sample consists of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery from the Petrie and Loat excavations in Gurob, currently curated in the Manchester Museum.

It is the stated intention of the current project to expand this study to all imported materials from Gurob and other eastern

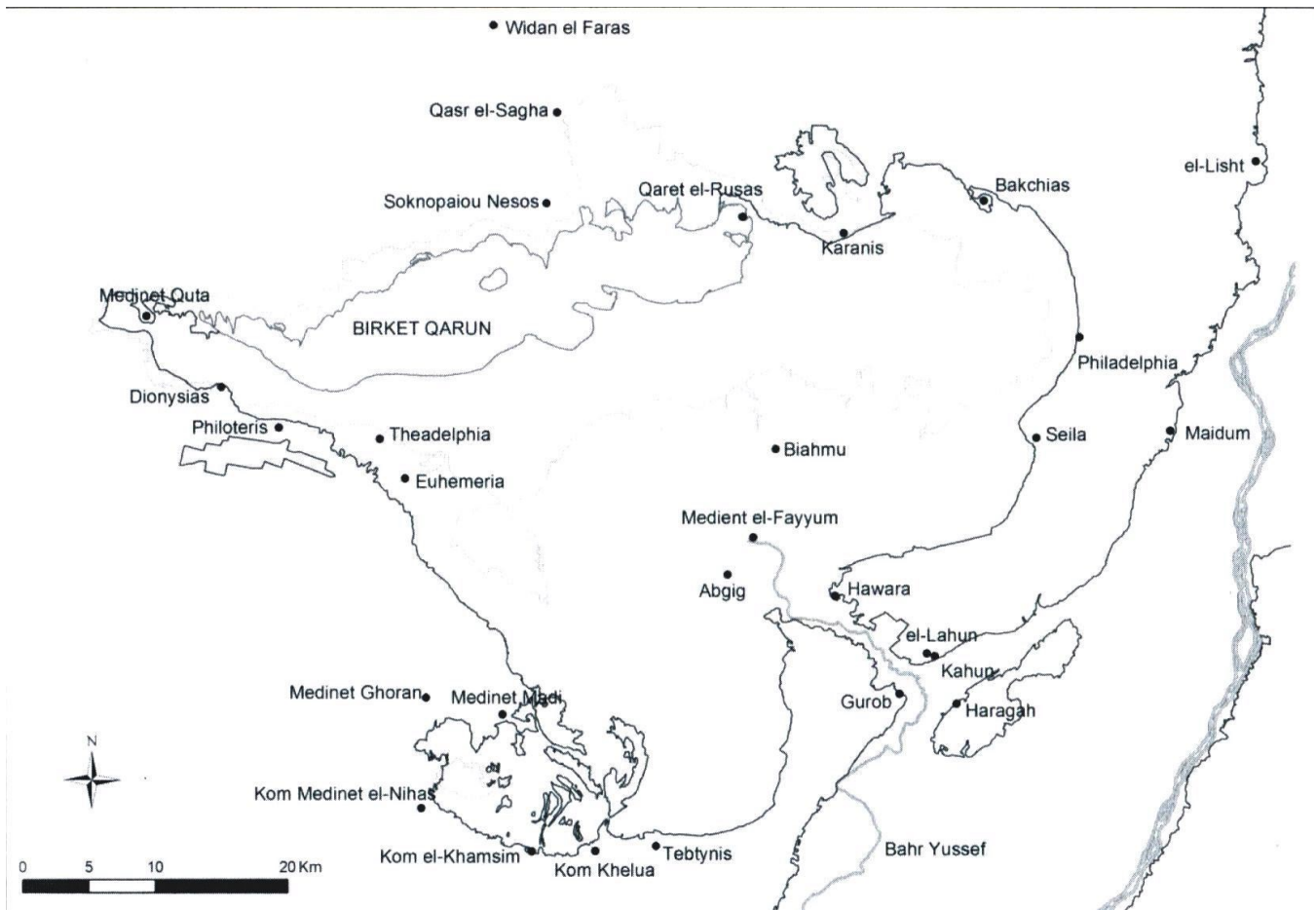


Figure 1: Map of the Fayum (by Anna Morini)

Fayum sites, currently stored in various international museum collections. The study of the imported materials and (where possible) associated Egyptian pottery will be crucial in ascertaining details of Egyptian material cultural chronologies, and also to contextualise Egypt within ancient interregional trade networks.

BACKGROUND

To understand Late Bronze Age (ca. 1570 – 1050 BC) trade networks, it is important to first summarize the general nature of Egyptian imports during the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2200 – 1570 BC). Minoan ceramics were imported into Egypt during the first half of the second millennium BC (Kemp and Merrillees 1980), and have been recovered at sites including Tell el Dab'a (several fragments of a Kamares MM IIB cup and one MM IIIA/B post-Kamares sherd) and Ezbet Rushdi (potsherds from one MM IIIA amphora), el-Lisht (4-6 classical, MM IB-II Kamares sherds), Haraga (<20 pieces of MM IIA Kamares ware), Kahun (17 pieces of MM II Kamares ware), Abydos (one MM II Kamares jar), Qubbet el-Hawa (one Kamares vase), and Wadi Gawasis (sherds from a Kamares ware cup); this list is based upon Barrett 2009: 214, table 2 (see also Kemp and Merrillees 1980; Hankey 1993: 110; Lambrou-Phillipson 1990: 57). Such finds were most

common at sites in Middle Egypt (Haraga, Kahun and el-Lisht), of which two – Haraga and Kahun – are situated at the entrance to the Fayum region. There are numerous Egyptian imitations of Kamares ware at the same sites (Barrett 2009: 214, table 2, with further refs.), implying widespread prevalence and desirability of the originals. These same sites also yielded evidence of pottery imports from other areas of the Mediterranean (Merrillees 1973: 51-59).

Working on the assumption that such imports were elite items, the nature of the sites where they are found should also be considered. El-Lisht and Kahun might be considered to have possessed special status during the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2060 – 1656 BC), the former being the capital of reunified Egypt, the latter specifically related to the funerary complex of Senusret II. However, it may not be an exclusively elite concern, and other reasons for the presence of imported Minoan materials should also be considered. For example, while Haraga – which reached the peak of its urban development during the Middle Kingdom – yielded the highest percentage of imported materials, this site had no royal connections. Social transformation and development of the region may have been equally important. By the Middle Kingdom the Fayum region had become a crucial area of economic activity, with notable land reclamation alongside a series of major

irrigation and urban development projects. This prosperity may have attracted trade routes to the area during the MBA, thus explaining the numerous finds of imported pottery in the region. This finding adds to extant research suggesting that the import of goods (particularly pottery) was a widespread phenomenon that crossed all social classes, and thus cannot be considered to be an indicator of elite commerce alone (Barrett 2009: 226-27; Merrillees 2003: 139; Walberg 2001: 17 - In my opinion, these considerations on the perceived social value of imported pottery can be also applied to the Gurob imports during the New Kingdom: the finding of Mycenaean and Cypriot pottery in the site cannot be exclusively linked to its status of royal town. The contexts of discovery of these imports – mainly funerary – pertain much more to middle class people rather than to the royal family, despite the presence of a royal harem in the settlement).

The eastern Fayum sites dominated the regional water management system (see Hassan 2005). Haraga stood at the very entrance to the region (Engelbach 1923), and may have stood on the edge of the Fayum's most important canal, the Bahr Yusef. It was thus in a particularly powerful position regarding not only the regional hydrographic system but also as a junction for all routes entering and leaving the region. By the first half of the second millennium BC, Haraga's regulation of regional and interregional trade routes had led it to become one of the key economic areas of Egypt.

The widespread effect of the political situation in the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1640 -1548 BC) probably had a major negative impact upon the control and management of the Fayum hydrological system (for an overview on the Fayum in the Second Intermediate Period, see Zecchi 2003: 23-39). Following the restoration of state unity at the beginning of the New Kingdom (ca. 1548 – 1086 BC), there was considerable social transformation of the sites near the entrance to the Fayum region (Gasperini 2007: 121-34). Kahun and Haraga continued to be influential, but never again attained their previous dominance. This elevated status appears to have been transferred to the new town of Gurob (probably founded during the reign of Thutmose III [ca. 1479-1425 BC]), which possessed notable administrative and economic roles as well as a royal palace (Shaw 2005-2012; 2007; 2008; 2011, with further refs.). The ancient name of the town – *mr-wr* ('the great canal' [Gardiner and Bell 1943: 37-50]) – is perhaps indicative. Recent geoarchaeological work in the Gurob area suggests the existence of a Late Bronze Age canal abutting the city near the southeast corner of the Royal Harem, the 'Fort' and the 'North City' (Bunbury 2012: 52-54). The reorganization of the area's water system may have permitted the diversion of a canal from the Bahr Yusef at Tima Fayum (Bunbury 2012: 52-54). This new canal – possibly the 'great canal' that gave its name to Gurob during the New Kingdom – represented one of the most important connections between the royal city, the Fayum region and the Nile Valley. This may explain the reason behind the city's foundation by Thutmose III, rather than redevelopment and reinforcement of one of the extant nearby towns such as Haraga or Kahun. It was here, therefore, that the royal harem palace was

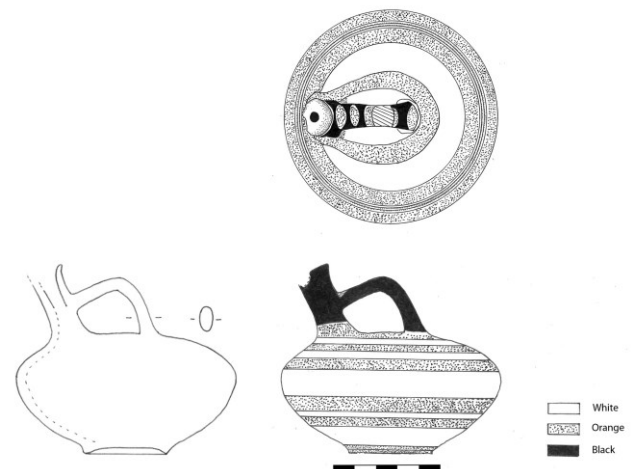
founded, as a symbol of the power presiding over the epicenter of hydrographic control across the entire Fayum. Finally, textual references to a so-called 'pharaonic harbor' in or near Gurob also provides another detail towards understanding the role played by the waterways in the urban life of the city (Grenfell *et al.* 1900: 12-14; P. Wilbour Text A, cap. 3, 2x + 15, cap. 37; P. Wilbour Text B, cap. 12, 15.8; Yoyotte 2012: 137-44). These issues being established primarily on architectural and textual histories; it remains to be seen whether they can also be conclusively demonstrated through material culture studies.

Archaeological work in Gurob from the late 19th to early 20th centuries (Petrie 1889, Petrie 1891, Loat 1905, Brunton and Engelbach 1927; Petrie Journal, 24 October 1888 – 23 May 1889; Journal 26 September 1889 - 27 June 1890), alongside data obtained from the new excavations (Shaw 2005-2012) makes it possible to confirm that the quantity of imported pottery — specifically, Mycenaean, Cypriot and Levantine — represents an unusually high percentage of the entire pottery corpus from Gurob. Despite the fact that the current analysis is largely based on objects - typically whole vessels - which were estimated important enough to be sent to European museum collections, through the study of the first excavation reports and recently acquired data, it is in any case possible to preliminary recognize that the amount of imported items in Gurob corresponds to 10-15% of the pottery corpus unearthed in the site.

CATALOGUE OF IMPORTED WARES AND THEIR EGYPTIAN IMITATIONS IN THE MANCHESTER MUSEUM

Mycenaean Ware

Catalogue n. 1 (Figure 2)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 13892

Dimensions: Height (H) 9 cm; Width (W) 10.5 cm; Thickness (T) 0.3 cm; T of handle: 0.7 cm; Diameter (D) of the rim 1.7 cm

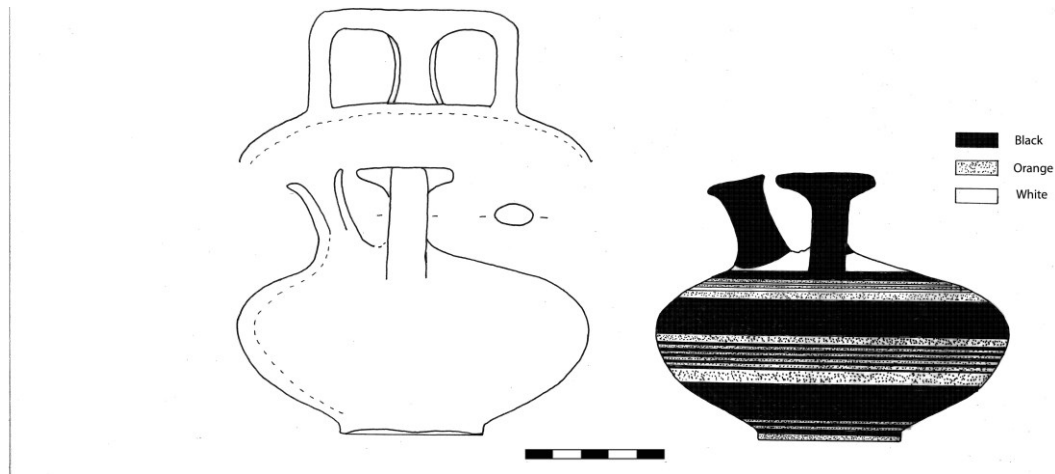


Figure 3: Catalogue n. 2, Manchester Museum 717

Fabric: Mycenaean gray clay; very fine; hard with occasional vegetal inclusions.

Technology: Wheel-thrown.

Description: Squat globular Mycenaean askos. Entirely intact, except for a small part of the rim. Slightly flared rim, narrow neck, and squat globular body. Horizontal handle, oval in section, from neck to shoulder. The outer surface is beige slipped with an orange-painted linear decoration. Handle, neck, and rim are painted black.

Notes: This is the only entirely intact askos found in Egypt to date. Its decoration on the outer surface is similar to Mountjoy 1999: 843, n.78. Probable area of production: Thessaly (regarding the area of production, see further below “Discussion of Mycenaean Pottery”).

Parallels: FS 195.

Date: LH III A2.

Bibliography: Petrie 1891: 19; pl. XX. 9.

Catalogue n. 2 (Figure 3)

Inventory number: Manchester Museum 717

Dimensions: H 9.5 cm; W 12.5 cm; T 0.3 cm; T of the handle 0.9 cm; D of the rim 2 cm

Fabric: Mycenaean light gray clay; very fine; hard with rare vegetal inclusions.

Technology: Wheel-thrown.

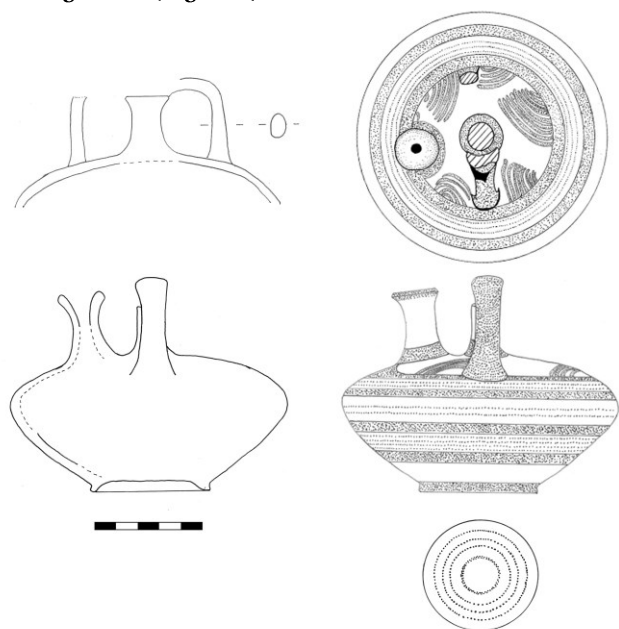
Description: Squat globular Mycenaean stirrup jar. Entirely intact, except for a small part close to the false neck, partly restored in modern times. Slightly flared rim, narrow neck, and squat globular body. Two vertical handles, oval in section, from the top of the false rim to shoulder. The outer surface is beige slipped with an orange and black painted linear decoration. Handles, false neck, and rim are painted black. Traces of burning on the outer surface.

Parallels: FS 178.

Date: LH III A2.

Bibliography: Petrie 1891: 19; pl. XX. 7.

Catalogue n. 3 (Figure 4)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 1389

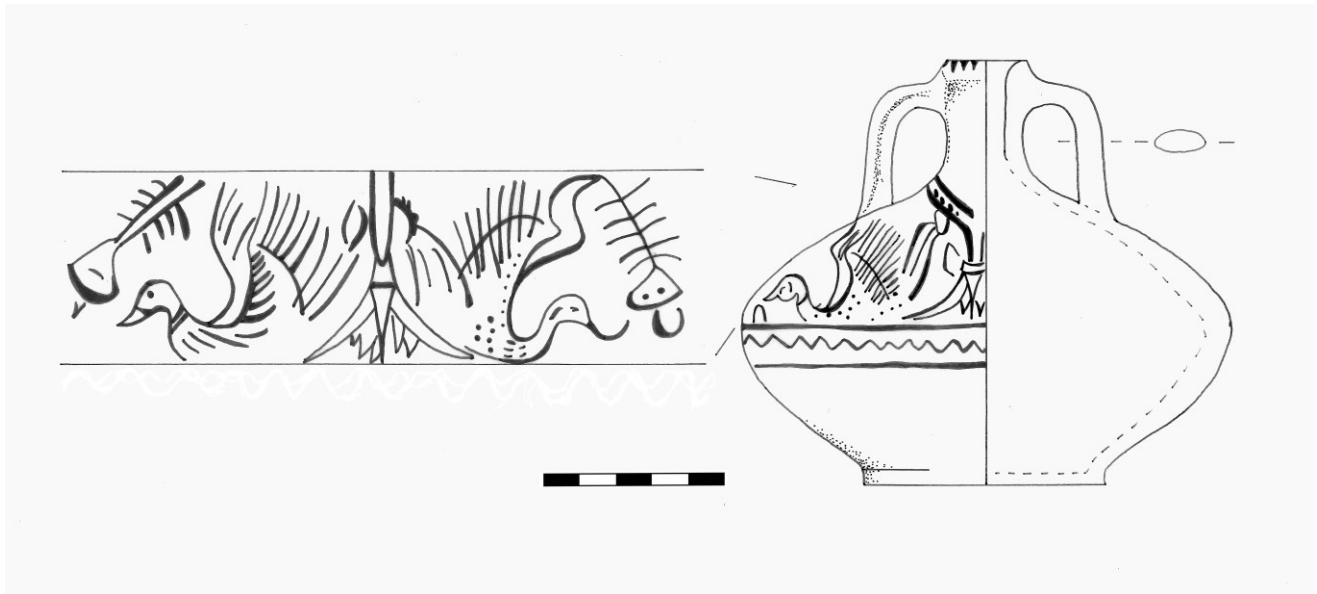


Figure 5: Catalogue n. 4, Manchester Museum 659

Dimensions: H 10.3 cm; W 13.2 cm; T 0.4 cm; T of the handle 0.8 cm; D of the rim 2 cm

Fabric: Mycenaean buff creamy clay; very fine; hard; rare traces of white grit inclusions.

Technology: Wheel-thrown.

Description: Squat globular Mycenaean stirrup jar lacking part of the neck, the false rim and the handles; it is also broken on one side of the body. Slightly flared rim, narrow neck, and squat globular body. Two vertical handles, oval in section, from the top of the false rim to the shoulder. The outer surface is beige slipped with a linear, orange-painted decoration. Handles, upper part and lower part of the rim, and lower part of the false neck are orange painted. The jar preserves five concentric half-circle decorations, orange painted around the shoulder on the upper part of the body, near the false neck and the real one. The base preserves another decoration of four concentric circles, orange painted. Traces of burning on the outer surface.

Note: The motif of the decoration around the shoulder is FM 19.

Parallels: FS 178.

Date: LH III B1.

Egyptian Imitation of Mycenaean Ware

Catalogue n. 4 (Figure 5)

Inventory number: Manchester Museum 659

Dimensions: H 10.5 cm; W 12.1 cm; T 0.4 cm; T of the handle 1.2 cm

Fabric: White faience; very fine; hard with light blue external glaze.

Technology: Molded.

Description: Egyptian imitation in faience of original Mycenaean flask. Slightly flared rim, narrow neck, and squat globular body. Two vertical handles, oval in section, from neck to shoulder.

The outer surface preserves a decoration characterized by two ducks, dispersing, facing verso, emanating from common origin, divided by a lotus flower. A zigzag decoration appears in the lower part of the main register.

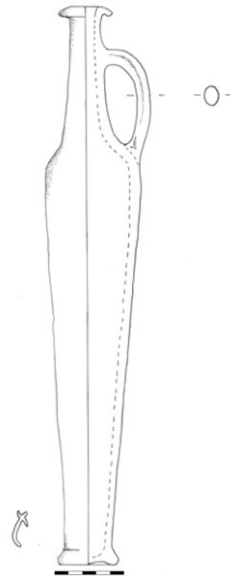
Parallels: Inspired by the model FS 190.

Date: First half of the 19th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Petrie 1891: pl. XX.1; Griffith 1910: 58; Bell 1983: 21.

Cypriot Ware

Catalogue n. 5 (Figure 6)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 2151

Dimensions: H 37.4 cm; W 6.3 cm; T 0.5 cm; T of the handle 1 cm; D of the rim 3.5 cm; D of the base 4 cm

Fabric: Cypriot red-orange clay; very fine; hard with white grit inclusions.

Technology: Wheel-thrown.

Description: Red Lustrous Wheel-Made Ware spindle bottle. Out-flared rim; narrow neck; piriform body; and round, slightly spreading base. One vertical handle: from neck to shoulder; circular in section. Outer surface is polished. Upper part is broken and has been restored in modern times. It preserves a potmark, in the middle of the base, made after firing.

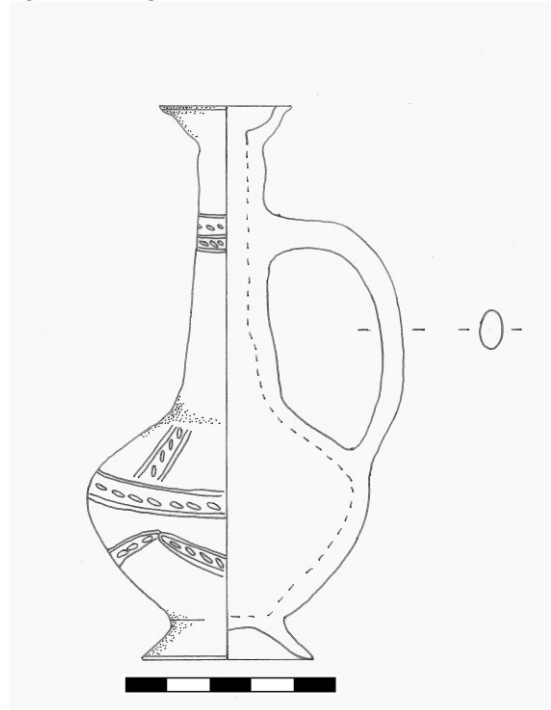
Notes: Potmark similar to Eriksson 1993: 146, n. 43; see also Petrie 1890, pl. XXVIII.87;

Parallels: Attributed to Eriksson type VIAb1, with numerous parallels; for example, see Arda *et al.* 2005, n. 134, p. 47, pl. IX (another example of the same type was found in Gurob).

Date: Late Cypriot I-II A. 18th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Probably Loat 1905, pl. III, n. 68.

Catalogue n. 6 (Figure 7)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 2145

Dimensions: H 12.6 cm; W 6.4 cm; T 0.4 cm; T of the handle 0.5 cm; D of the rim 3 cm; D of the base 4 cm

Fabric: Cypriot pink-orange clay with light gray core; very fine; hard with rare white grit inclusions.

Technology: Handmade.

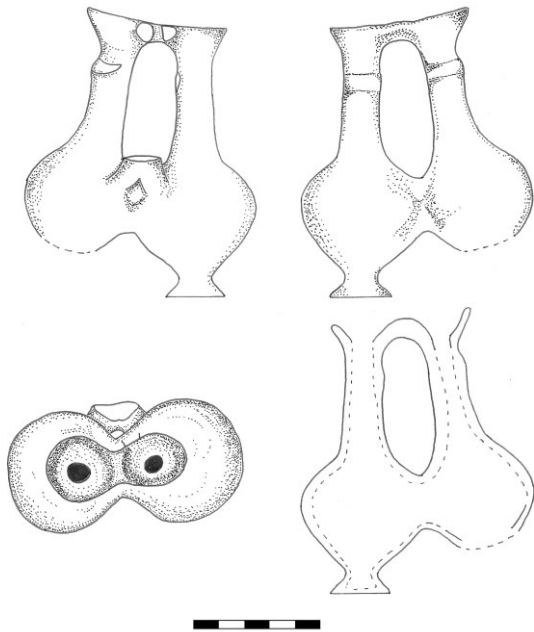
Description: Cypriot Base-ring I bil-bil juglet. Funnel mouth, tall and narrow neck, piriform body and large trumpet base. One vertical handle: from rim to shoulder; oval in section. The outer surface is black slipped with traces of polish. The outer surface presents an incised-drop decoration on the upper part of the neck and on the belly. The drop decoration replaces the typical band on the neck; the base tends to be larger than in the other examples.

Parallels: Åstrom Type VI D1a3. Similar to Johnson 1980, n. 2, pl. VII.2.

Date: Late Cypriot I-II A. 18th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Loat 1905, pl. III. 80; Merrillees 1968: 53.

Catalogue n. 7 (Figure 8)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 2149

Dimensions: H 9.5 cm; W 8.2 cm; T 0.3 cm; D of the rim 2.2 cm; D of the base 2.2 cm

Fabric: Cypriot gray clay; medium-fine; hard with limestone inclusions.

Technology: Handmade.

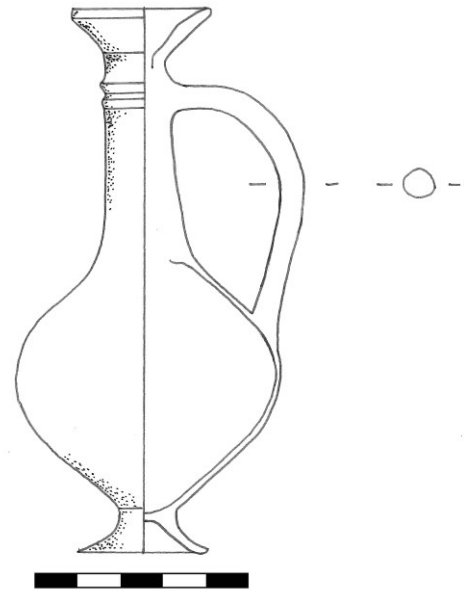
Description: Cypriot Base-ring I twin bil-bil juglet. A composite juglet formed by the union of two distinct juglets with funnel rims, narrow necks, piriform bodies, and just one preserved trumpet base. One vertical handle, missing, rectangular in section, from rim to shoulder. Outer surface originally red slipped and polished.

Parallels: Åstrom Type XII Aa; Arda *et al.* 2005: 46, n. 130 (found in Meidum); Nys and Åstrom 2004: 20, pl. 5, n. 154.

Date: Late Cypriot I; first half of the 18th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Probably Loat 1905, pl. III. 100; Merrillees 1968: 53-54.

Catalogue n. 8 (Figure 9)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 2147

Dimensions: H 12.5 cm; W 6.1 cm; T 0.3 cm; T of the handle 0.7 cm; D of the rim 3.2 cm; D of the base 3 cm

Fabric: Cypriot pink-orange clay with light gray core; fine; hard with rare white grit inclusions.

Technology: Handmade.

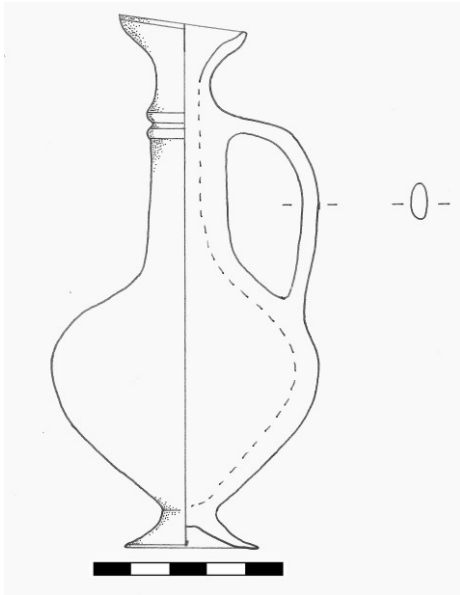
Description: Cypriot Base-ring I bil-bil juglet. Funnel mouth, tall and narrow neck, piriform body, and trumpet base. One vertical handle, from upper neck to shoulder; circular in section. Outer surface red slipped and polished; traces of burning.

Parallels: Åstrom Type VID1aa; with numerous parallels; for example, see Fortin 1996: 26, n. 94; 172; Nys and Åstrom 2004: 80; n. 899, pl. 30.

Date: Late Cypriot I-IIA; 18th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Probably Loat 1905, pl. III. 86; Merrillees 1968: 49.

Catalogue n. 9 (Figure 10)



Inventory number: Manchester Museum 2146

Dimensions: H 14 cm; W 7 cm; T 0.4 cm; T of the handle 0.5 cm; D of the rim 3.4 cm; D of the base 3.5 cm

Fabric: Cypriot pink-orange clay with light gray core; fine; hard with rare white grit inclusions, limestone inclusions more prevalent.

Technology: Handmade.

Description: Cypriot Base-ring I bil-bil juglet. Funnel mouth, tall and narrow neck, piriform body, and trumpet base. One vertical handle, oval in section, from upper neck to shoulder. The outer surface does not preserve any decoration and its manufacture does not seem very accurate. Outer surface originally black slipped and polished.

Notes: Probably shown in Loat 1905, pl. III, n. 89.

Parallels: Åstrom Type VID1aa with numerous parallels; for example, see Arda *et al.* 2005: 47, n. 132.

Date: Late Cypriot I-IIA; 18th Dynasty.

Bibliography: Probably Loat 1905, pl. III, n. 89; Merrillees 1968: 53.

DISCUSSION OF MYCENAEAN POTTERY AND ITS IMITATION

The Manchester Museum's collection of Mycenaean pottery from Gurob derives from Petrie's second archaeological campaign in 1889 (Petrie 1891). It has been possible to trace the provenances of three of these vessels (catalogue numbers 1, 2 and 4), but the fourth item (catalogue number 3) still lacks a proper archaeological context.

Both the askos and the stirrup jar (catalogue n.1-2) come from the same archaeological context (see Petrie 1891: 19; pl. XX), which is said to be 'group seven'. These are most probably connected to the so-called 'burnt groups' found during the same archaeological campaign (Petrie 1891: 16). The *askos* (n. 1) and the stirrup jar (n. 2) date to the later phase of Late Helladic (LH) IIIA2 (1375-1300 BC), contemporary with the very end of the 18th Dynasty in Egyptian terms. The *askos* has wavy band decoration on the outer surface, and diagonal barring across the handle. The vessel has various contemporary parallels in Thessaly (Mountjoy 1999: 843, n.78), while the wavy band/diagonal bars decoration may relate to a particular workshop in Thessaly, probably located near the city of Larissa (Mountjoy 1999: 842). It should also be noted that the low base ring foot *askos* was not a common shape in Mycenaean Greece (Mountjoy 1999: 842), and was generally not heavily traded in Egypt. It is quite rare to find this shape among goods imported from the Aegean area. The likely Thessalian-style decoration of the *askos* may indicate an origin in mainland Greece. Chemical analyses may be one way to suggest a possible provenance of fabric origin, which are unfortunately lacking for Gurob remains to date. Similar analysis on a limited number of imported Mycenaean materials from Amarna (Wijngaarden 2003: 19) suggests that the clay used was probably of Argolid origin.

The condition of the stirrup jar (n. 2) – in particular, its burnt surface – does not permit a detailed analysis of the decoration. Despite this, it is possible to date this vessel to the very end of the 18th Dynasty, on the basis of contextual association with the *askos* and also the dimensions of the spout and the false neck, which are consistent with the LH IIIA2 phase of production.

The following containers belong to the same archaeological context as the aforementioned two vessels (i.e. nos. 1-2): two polychrome glass vessels (production of which is well attested in Egypt between the second half of the 18th Dynasty and the Ramesside Period); a pottery hemispherical bowl (one of the most common types of bowls of the New Kingdom); a pottery jar and two alabaster vessels: a cup and a jar (Petrie 1891, pl. XX; p. 19). It has not been possible to examine or analyse these items, although Petrie's analysis of them (Petrie 1891: pl. XX; lower part: 'Group 7. End of the 18th Dynasty.') enable us to draw some preliminary conclusions concerning these associated wares (nos. 1-2). Although the fabric of the large mug n. 13 (Petrie 1891, pl. XX.13) is unknown, its shape is probably indicative of a date towards the end of the 18th Dynasty or even the beginning of the

19th Dynasty, based on parallels from Amarna (Rose 2007: Figure 562) and Kom Rabia (Bourriau 2010: 223.p.). The same type of vessel also seems to be represented in a context dated by Petrie to the time of Amenhotep III (Petrie 1891, pl. XVII.1), although a slightly later date would now probably be regarded as more appropriate for this particular type. It is also worth noting that the same type of alabaster dish (Petrie 1891, pl. XX.8) seems also to be present also in other burnt groups, in particular the one represented on plates XVII-XVIII (Petrie 1891, pl. XVII.10 & XVIII.23), which are also in the Manchester Museum collection (n. 730). This type of item could date to any time between the very end of the 18th Dynasty and the early Ramesside Period.

No contextual information is available for the stirrup jar (n. 3), nor any indication of the items that may have been associated with it. General appearance suggests a probable date of LH IIIB1 (1300-1225 BC), around the early Ramesside Period. The painted decoration might indicate Boeotia as the probable place of origin (Mountjoy 1999: 674-75, n. 133), the external decoration finding a parallel in Thebes, and dating to the same chronological range. This might suggest another import from central-eastern mainland Greece, particularly the Aegean coastline that could have been associated with a higher prevalence of exported goods.

The faience copy of a Mycenaean flask (n. 4) was recovered from another archaeological context, most probably another burnt group deposit (Petrie 1891: 19); a further faience vessel (Petrie 1891: 19, and pl. XX.2.) was recovered from the same context. The latter is also an imitation: a local rendering of a polychrome post-firing amphora with horizontal handles (Bell 1987: 49-76; pl. II-Vb) originally made from marl clay. On the basis of materials from 19th Dynasty Gurob and Deir el-Medina (Bell 1987: 57-59), polychrome post-firing amphorae made from marl clay date to the first Ramesside Period. The original Greek version of the Egyptian faience flask (FS 190) is known to have reached its peak of popularity during the LH IIIA2, at the end of the 18th Dynasty (Mountjoy 1999: 876), and this Egyptian faience copy (n. 4) must therefore at least slightly postdate this phase.

The polychrome post-firing amphorae made from marl clay are mainly related to funerary contexts. They are also decorated – and, specifically, coloured – in a manner comparable to tomb paintings in the Theban west bank (Hayes 1959: 406) and with possible reference (i.e. the lotus flower) to issues of resurrection and rebirth (Bell 1987: 56-57). This faience imitation of the polychrome post-firing amphora may therefore be connected with funerary ritual; in fact, this vessel presents the same shape and the same decorative characteristics as the marl ones.

As well as being decorated with a lotus flower, the faience flask (n. 4) bears the representation of two ducks with spread wings that are reminiscent of funeral paintings on Late 18th Dynasty and Early Ramesside private tomb walls. The zigzag decoration at the bottom of the main register is reminiscent of the hieroglyph for water, similarly associated with concepts of rebirth, resurrection and purification. There is thus an intriguing case of syncretism between the Mycenaean material culture (embodied in the shape of the vessel), and the Egyptian funerary-religious world

(symbolised in the decoration of the outer surface). This could be considered to be either an example of symbolic parity between Mycenaean and Egyptian worlds, or an indication of Egypt's enthusiasm for syncretic cultural fusion between foreign models and indigenous styles, materials and techniques.

Petrie's failure to record significant information about the contexts of these vessels means that we do not comprehend their relationships with 'non-dated burnt groups'. We are thus reduced to what Petrie himself (1891: 19) describes as '...the objects found without date.' It is therefore important to maximize the potential of informal field notes made at the time. Petrie states that 'There have been three or four finds of ornamental pottery in large ash holes in the floor of room; though how they come to be there is hard to understand. A large amount of blue glazed pottery has thus come to light, including the finest pieces I have ever seen found. There are bowls and vases, all painted with lotus and other designs in black' (Journal 26 September 1889 – 17 June 1890: 23-24). It is also worth noting that Petrie drew a sketch of a flask quite similar to that preserved in the Manchester Museum, on the same page that he refers to the 'blue glazed pottery'. It may therefore be that he is referring to this specific faience imitation of a Mycenaean flask (n. 4). Following this description, it is possible that the faience vessels published by Petrie in 1891 – and consequently also recorded in n. 4 – belonged to a burnt group (Petrie 1891: pl. XX).

The second passage of the diary provides further information on the finding of the burnt groups and associated pottery (Journal 26 September 1889 – 17 June 1890: 34-35). 'At Gurob more burnt bowls and glass bottles have been found, luckily when Hughes and I were both on the spot. I now see that these strange pits full of burnt valuables, blue bowls, glass flask, cornelian and blue-bead necklaces, woodwork, and stuffs, were purposely burnt in the holes, and in this case covered over with a layer of pot sherds carefully placed before covering with earth'.

While the notes are certainly not unambiguous, one may hypothesise that this work in Gurob focused primarily on these burnt groups; if so, the groups discussed (Petrie 1891) and the accompanying plates (XVII–XX) may all refer to the burnt samples.

A great deal depends upon accurately determining whether the vessels (1-4) belong to the burnt groups, as these deposits are among the very few non-funerary contexts in Egypt in which Mycenaean vessels have been found. Much has already been written on the Petrie burnt groups (e.g. Bell 1991; Hassler 2011: 124-26; 132-33), but a definitive interpretation of the deposits remains elusive: even if they could be related to funerary customs, the fact that they were buried beneath residential structures argues for a more domestic role. Analysis of the status groups with which they are associated yield only limited results. There is no evidence that there was any link to the presence of the court in Gurob: the items found in the deposits seem much more related to the needs of the upper-middle Egyptian class rather than to the royal family or the elite. The fact that some of the burnt groups have been found in the area of the royal harem could suggest that the people

who made them were linked in some ways to the harem social structure, although it is also possible that these individuals worked in the palace. It would be unwise to argue further on the basis of the limited information we currently have.

Historiographical approaches to the burnt groups have also been adopted. A particularly notable example is that provided by Politi (2001: 111), who speculated that there may have been a link between this archaeological ‘anomaly’ and a Hittite law stating that the personal belongings of any Hittite woman who died in a foreign land should be burned (Hoffner 1997: 36-37; 181-83). The close relationship between the Egyptians and the Hittites brought about by Ramesses II’s marriage to Maathorneferura in the 34th year of his reign may – she argues – have expressed itself through this rite owing to connections to the harem of Gurob (Gasperini 2008: 32). It is certainly true that women associated with the royal court were often hosted at the harem’s palace; there is some papyrological evidence to support this argument. For example, Petrie Museum papyrus number UC32795 declares that some of Maathorneferura’s clothes were produced by the harem of Gurob (Gardiner 1948: 22-24, pl. X-XI; Herbin 1979: 51, doc. 47; Politi 2001: 111). If these burnt artefactual associations can be positively connected with this particular Hittite law, something significant can be learned about Gurob society during the Ramesside Period.

If Politi’s interpretation is correct, the earliest date that the burnt groups could have been created would have been the second half of the reign of Ramesses II. This accords well with the date of the faience flask (n. 4) but not with the date of the *askos* (n. 1) or the stirrup jar (n. 2), both of which were probably traded at the end of the 18th Dynasty. However, some of the objects associated with the *askos* and the stirrup jar appear to have parallels with Ramesses II/Seti II burnt group artefacts (Petrie 1891: 17-18; pl. XVIII, XIX) notably including glass vessels, an alabaster dish and a pottery jar (Petrie 1891: pl. XX. 11-12 and Petrie 1891: pl. XVIII. 13, 15, 17; see, in particular, the parallel between pl. XX.11 and XVIII.17.) These items span the end of the 18th Dynasty and the first Ramesside Period, although we should be aware that the use-life of exotic/imported artefacts often went far beyond their period of production. Therefore, a vessel traded by the end of the 18th Dynasty could have been in use for a longer period, and thus only serves us as a *terminus post quem*. So both the *askos* and the stirrup jar could have been buried at some point in the early Ramesside Period. One further issue to be considered is that there was no specific connection between Hittite immigrants and Mycenaean pottery, beyond being an extant status object. In other words, Mycenaean imports were part of the daily economic life of the Gurob population, both indigenous and exotic. If all the items preserved in the burnt groups are considered together, the Egyptian portion of any given assemblage is far higher than the Mycenaean (although there was considerable variability in the percentage of imported goods). This is likely to be a reflection of the general economic trend in Gurob, reflected as differential proportions of imported/domestic wares in different contexts. This is an unsurprising finding for a site known to be a commercial

hub for the Fayum region in the Late Bronze Age.

DISCUSSION OF CYPRIOT POTTERY

The Manchester Museum record card states that catalogue piece n. 5 was donated in 1904. It is most probable, given the timing and the declared provenience from Gurob, that the piece comes from Loat’s excavations at the site (Loat 1905). The piece is immediately recognisable as a Cypriot Red Lustrous Wheel Made Ware (RLWM) spindle bottle (Loat 1905: pl. III, n. 68). According to Loat’s illustration plates, this is the only entirely intact RLWM spindle bottle recorded during the 1904 excavation campaign. This piece was found in tomb context n. 051, the only other piece from the same context being another Cypriot import: a Base-ring II juglet (Loat 1905: pl. III, n. 82). Attribution was facilitated by the drawing and description given by Loat and – specifically – thanks to the following detail concerning the surface treatment: ‘blackish with pale yellow lines’ (Loat 1905: 6). Moreover, Merrillees (1968: 51) suggests that this specimen is a Base-ring II juglet currently curated in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. As already pointed out by Eriksson (1993: 96), this is the only case of contextual association between a RLWM spindle bottle and a Base-ring II vessel. The chronological disjunction between the two items – RLWM spindle bottles predate Base-ring II ware, which lies between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th Dynasty – makes it most likely that the tomb hosted at least two different inhumations.

A post-firing potmark is preserved on the base of the spindle bottle. While a similar potmark was registered by Petrie (1890: pl. XXVIII.87) during his previous excavation campaign in Gurob in 1889, he failed to record what kind of vessel it was found on. This is doubly unfortunate given the importance of potmarks to the study of trade and commerce networks (Hirschfeld 1993: 311-18; Hirschfeld 2006: 83-96). It is nonetheless intriguing to note the parallel between the potmark recorded by Petrie and a similar example on an imported spindle bottle from the same archaeological site.

One final Cypriot piece (n. 8) was traced through the museum’s collection. The Base-ring I juglet was donated to the museum collection in 1904. Moreover, 1904 has been written twice in pencil on the vessel itself. This date almost certainly should be put in relation to the year of discovery and donation of this item. The number ‘six’, written in ink, may refer to the discovery context, perhaps tomb number six (for an analysis of this burial, see Merrillees 1968: 49-50). Two further Base-ring I juglets from tomb six are depicted in plate III of the Loat publication (1905: pl. III.86, pl. III.90). Despite the fact that the quality of Loat’s plate is not excellent, it is possible to tentatively identify Base-ring I juglet n. 8 (1905: pl. III.86). It is also possible to identify the following imported vessels from tomb six: another Base-ring I juglet (Loat 1905: pl. III.90); the upper part (rim, neck and handle) of a RLWM spindle bottle (Loat 1905: pl. III.92); the upper part (rim, neck and handles) of a probable Mycenaean pilgrim flask with painted decoration (Loat 1905: pl. III.98) and

the lower part of a probably Base-ring I spindle bottle (Loat 1905: pl. III.101). A high loop-handled juglet is also depicted (1905: pl. III. 107), and while it appears to be an imported vessel, provenance information is not provided.

With the exception of the Mycenaean pilgrim flask, all the imported materials – and associated local wares – from this tomb date to the first half of the 18th Dynasty. The Egyptian ceramics comprise two hemispherical bowls (Loat 1905, pl. III.43, 49), one subhemispherical bowl (Loat 1905, pl. III. 53) and two tall, slender jars (Loat 1905, pl. I.23 and 25). The rims, bodies and bases of two of the three bowls seem to be characteristic of the early-middle 18th Dynasty (Wodzinska 2010: 132, n. 128; 138, n. 148), while the two jars cannot postdate the reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1399-1389 BC). Given the span of materials, the first burial in tomb six may date to the first phase of urban life at the site, while the presence of a Mycenaean potsherd suggests tomb reuse by the end of the 18th Dynasty. This reutilization of tombs is a recurring theme throughout the necropolis.

The twin Base-ring I juglet (n. 7) was recovered in 1904 and is recognisable in Loat 1905 (pl. III.100). As Loat neglected to provide any relevant information concerning context, it is not possible to consider cultural associations. The 'X' marked in ink on the vessel's surface may indicate an unknown context (or perhaps denoting context 10?), given that vessel 8 was similarly marked. Comparative examples elsewhere suggest this was one of the earliest Base-ring I juglets traded to Egypt, which cannot postdate the reign of Thutmose III. It is unfortunate that early records do not allow us to ascertain associations between Egyptian and foreign vessels at Gurob.

The other Base-ring I (n. 9), possibly to be identified with Loat 1905, pl. III.89, lacks a tomb number so cannot be contextualised, or associations studied. Like the previous item, it was marked with an X. This may signify 'without context', although some other referential system may be possible (tomb/context 10?). Its form suggests a later date than n. 7; it may have been traded during the reign of Thutmose IV at the latest. In import terms, this would be consistent with terminal Late Cypriot I to early Late Cypriot IIA.

The last Cypriot import in the Manchester Museum Gurob collection is yet another Base-ring I juglet (n. 6) bearing incised drop-motif decoration. It would appear to be later than the aforementioned example, as the drop decoration – particularly the incised decoration that replaces the more common band in relief on the upper part of the neck – might be related to a more recent type. This may be the last incarnation of this juglet type, a transitional form between Base-ring I and II, which is characterised by linear painted decoration and the loss of the relief band on the upper part of the neck. Loat failed to record any relevant contextual information, although this piece is also marked with an 'X' (see above).

When considered en masse, the imported pottery published in the Loat report (1905: pl. III) all appears to have a Cypriot origin, with the greatest number of pieces seemingly attributable to Base-ring I ware. This implies a chronological range spanning

Late Cypriot I/IIA, contemporary with the Egyptian Second Intermediate Period and the early years of Amenhotep III's reign.

Despite the limited number of Cypriot wares curated in the Manchester Museum, the specimens seem to represent at least three different periods of exchange. The earliest is represented by the twin Base-ring I juglet (n. 7), probably imported during the reign of Thutmose III; it is worth remembering that the foundation date of the royal city is alleged to be the 22nd year of the reign of Thutmose III (Thomas 1981: 7). The middle group is the most heavily represented trading era, representing the period covering the reigns of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV (as also demonstrated by other objects illustrated by Loat [1905: pl. III]). The latest Cypriot imports appear to date from the end of the reign of Thutmose IV and – at the latest – the beginning of the reign of Amenhotep III, represented by a Base-ring I juglet with the drop-motif decoration (n. 6).

The general analysis of the Loat plate seems to indicate that this funerary area was utilised between the reign of Thutmose III and the very beginning of the reign of Amenhotep III, with the occurrence of at least two additional burials (dated by Base-ring II ware, RLWM and a Mycenaean sherd to the end of the 18th Dynasty and the beginning of the 19th). Two other Mycenaean imports (another fragment of a pilgrim flask and a complete jug [Loat 1905: pl. III. 97, 103]), are recognisable in Loat's plate, but the drawings are not sufficiently detailed for any further conclusions to be drawn. In any case, the presence of imported Mycenaean materials indicate that the necropolis was used to inter at least two other burials (tomb contexts 052, 015) between the Amarna Period and the first Ramesside Period. The Loat drawings also suggest that these Mycenaean imports were made following the chronological range of LH IIIA2. It is lamentable that Loat failed to record his excavation areas for the 1904 season, as we have thus been deprived of important information concerning the earliest area of inhumation at Gurob.

The current research therefore indicates that regional and interregional trade was flourishing very shortly after the foundation of the royal town of Gurob, the largest proportion of Cypriot items were imported during the reigns of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV. The preliminary analysis of these materials thus supports the notion that Gurob was a trade hub from the very earliest stages of its urbanization. There are also preliminary data from Loat's necropolis to hypothesise the presence of earlier trade in the area. The first is a Cypriot Black Lustrous Wheel Made Ware (BLWm) juglet (Loat 1905: pl. III.106), tentatively dated to between the second half of the Second Intermediate Period and the first phase of the New Kingdom (although there is no evidence of its trade during the reign of Thutmose III). The second is a fragment of probable Tell el-Yahudiya ware (Loat 1905: pl. III.108), which dates to a similar period. However, neither piece can be located, and these can only be studied on Loat's drawings. Any such traded materials would be of enormous importance in assessing the true antiquity of the area's utility as a regional/interregional trade hub, before the official foundation of the settlement of Gurob.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of imported pottery in the Manchester Museum collections has proven to be of considerable importance in assessing the nature of trade in the Gurob area during the Late Bronze Age. The Cypriot imports indicate the area was used as a trade hub from the very beginning of its urban life, in the first half of the 18th Dynasty. Moreover, their presence in what is known to be a middle-class necropolis – as suggested by the Egyptian pottery found there and by the tomb's architecture as described by Loat (1905: 2) – suggests that these goods tended to be owned and utilised by a prosperous (albeit not elite) social class in the area during the first phases of the settlement's development. Therefore, it seems pretty clear that the imports of Cypriot pottery should not be related exclusively to the presence of the royal harem palace and, most probably, the same considerations can be also applied to the imported items traded between the second half of the 18th dynasty and the Ramesside Period.

It would seem that Loat's excavation focused on one of Gurob's earliest necropolises, used from the reign of Thutmose III until the beginning of the Ramesside Period. Imported goods continued to be part of Gurob's material culture during the second half of the 18th Dynasty, as evidenced by the presence of BR II ware (described in the Loat plate), the LH III A2 *askos* and the stirrup jar, as well as other imports as published (and informally noted) by Petrie. The materials analysed during the current study enable us to identify that trading systems continued to operate until at least the first Ramesside Period (19th Dynasty). The presence of indigenous copies of Mycenaean flasks rendered in faience suggests that the appetite for imports may have exceeded supply, or that cheaper versions (perhaps for non-elite individuals) were required. Despite the unfortunately nebulous recording practice at the time, it is likely that the imported materials unearthed by Petrie pertain to the so-called burnt groups.

However, what is certainly true is that further analysis of these cultural phenomena is vital to a better understanding of social complexity and trading networks at Gurob during the New Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Ian Shaw (University of Liverpool) and Dr. Campbell Price (Manchester Museum) for their kindness, help and support during the time I spent in the United Kingdom. I would like to thank Prof. Stephen Quirke (Petrie Museum, UCL) who drew my attention both to modern pottery marks and Petrie's journals, and also permitted me to read the copies of Petrie's journals kept in the Petrie Museum.

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