



MEDITERRANEAN INFLUENCE IN THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE OF THE SMALL-SCALE SETTLEMENT OF AL-QĀRAH AL-ḤAMRĀ

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the ceramic repertoire of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, a small settlement in the Fayyūm on the north shore of Lake Qārūn, dating from the Hellenistic to Early Roman period. A selection of wares discovered is discussed and broadens the picture of activities occurring at the site. The paper further contributes to the understanding of the infiltration of Greek ceramic shapes and influences, the impact this had on a local community, and the transition to Early Roman wares. The ceramics also evince the trade connections between the Fayyūm, and the rest of Egypt and the Mediterranean, indicating the extent of exchange and communication outside the Fayyūm. Comparisons with Karanis, Tebtynis, and other larger sites point to a similarly diverse repertoire of materials and further stress the interconnectedness of this region. Such analysis is particularly relevant considering the paucity of archaeological data from small-scale Fayyūm settlements.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Owing to the development of the Fayyūm under the early Ptolemaic rulers, the number and size of settlements increased throughout the region. As an area of well-documented social organization and activity, the multilevel record expanded during the second quarter of the 3rd century BCE, when Ptolemy II introduced a set of reforms to encourage Greek movement to the Egyptian countryside, especially in the Delta and Fayyūm.¹ The Greek settlers likely consisted of a small portion of the overall population and often integrated into the local communities.² This intermingling of cultural traditions manifests in the material culture, and the ceramics reveal an amalgamation of shapes known throughout the Greek world, such as on mainland Greece in Athens and Corinth, and other Egyptian typologies. Such ceramic repertoires in turn become

mostly standardized across the Fayyūm and present a useful look into daily activities such as drinking, dining, and trading.

Archaeological excavation in the Fayyūm has understandably focused on sites that have visible surface architecture and have yielded finds in an exceptional state of preservation. Less attention has been paid to the broad range of smaller villages, which no doubt proliferated throughout the countryside, owing to the continuous occupation and poor levels of preservation within the cultivated Fayyūm depression. Work by the Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project at the small-scale settlement of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā therefore provides an important opportunity to contribute to the understanding of the material culture of the ancient Fayyūm at a hyper-local scale.³ Analysis of the ceramics reveals that Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā actively participated in



FIGURE 1: Map of Egypt and the Fayyūm region (Google Earth ver. 7.1.8.3036 (December 13, 2015). Egypt. 30°06'36.16" N 31°08'47.84" E, Elevation 601.24 km < <http://www.earth.google.com> >, accessed 20 May 2019).

creating connections with settlements within and outside the Fayyūm, while still pursuing local production.

The site of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā is located on the north shore of Lake Qārūn on the outskirts of the Fayyūm, in a semi-arid landscape (FIG. 1). The site was excavated during two field seasons: in 2004 by a team from UCLA and again in 2016, as part of the Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project under the direction of Emily Cole and Bethany Simpson.⁴ A magnetometric survey conducted in 2004 by Tomasz Herbich revealed that the settlement followed a well-

defined orthogonal street plan, similar to most known sites in the Fayyūm.⁵ However, unlike some Fayyūm settlements, work at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā has not revealed extensive layers of overlapping structures, preliminarily suggesting a limited time frame for occupation (FIG. 2). In 2004, Trenches 1 and 2 were excavated in order to test the site's subsurface preservation (TABLE 1). Trench 1 consisted of three rooms in a courtyard area; excavated mud-brick walls corresponded to visible structures on the survey map. Based on the zooarchaeological remains, it is likely that this area was used for food-

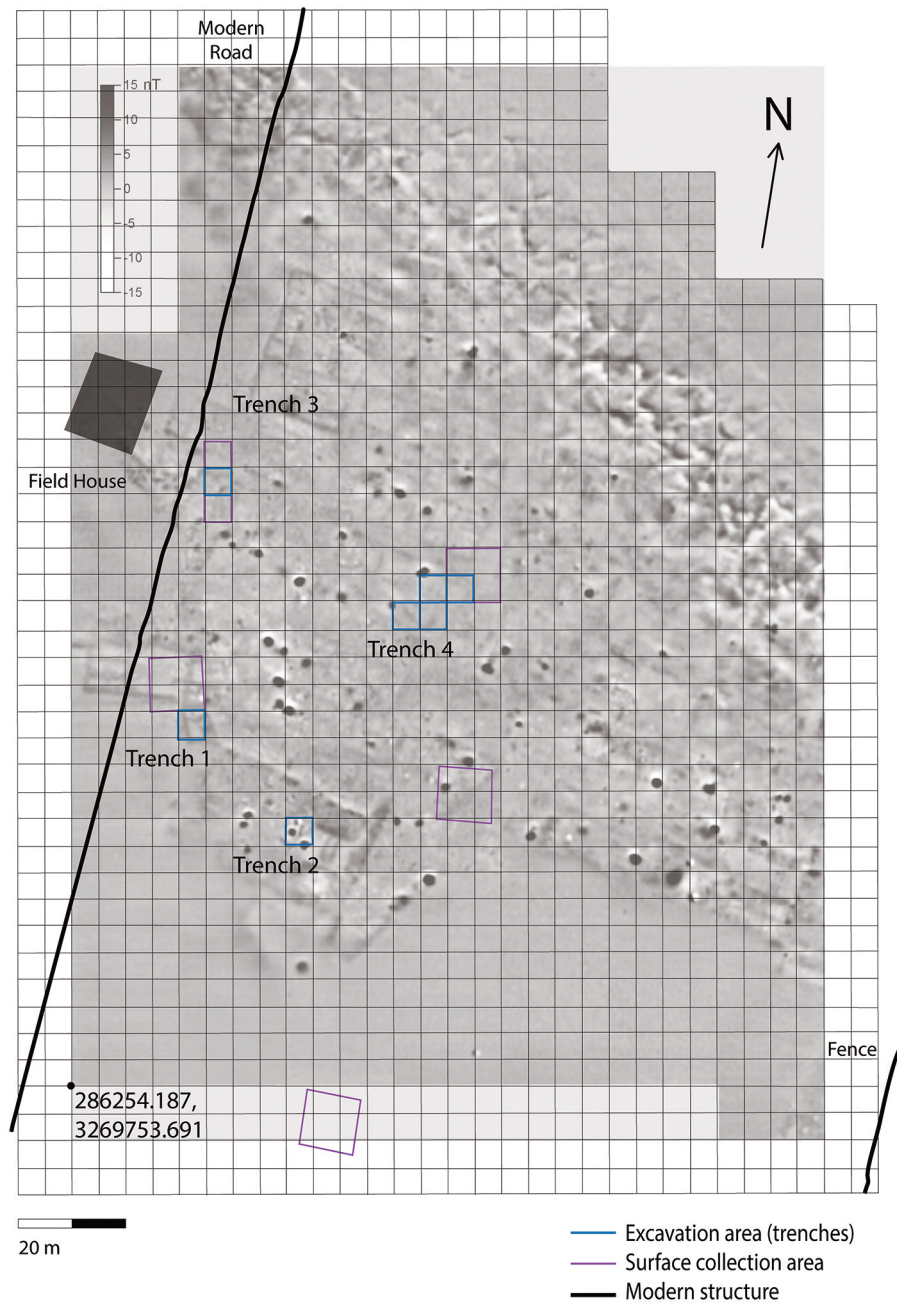


FIGURE 2: Map of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā with locations of 2004 and 2016 excavated trenches. Magnetometry map created by Tomasz Herbich. Southwest coordinate projected in WGS_1984_UTM_zone_36N, Transverse Mercator (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

TABLE 1: Loci numbers assigned to excavated trenches at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā.

TRENCH	DESIGNATION	LOCUS NUMBERS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1	FY04-QH01	1–90	Courtyard rooms attached to a mud-brick structure in northwest corner of the site
2	FY04-QH02	91–147	Open area on the southern edge of the site with several hearth placements for production
3	FY16-QH03	150–200, 301–317	Western edge of a dirt road running through the site from east to west
4	FY16-QH04	201–272	Large domestic mud-brick structure at center of the site where two roads cross running north-south and east-west
99	FY04/16-QH99	9999	Placeholder given to finds without recorded context (e.g., non-survey surface collection, trench-clean objects, etc.)

processing before transportation.⁶ Trench 2 included an area with dark features in the magnetometric record, which happened to be a concentration of fire activity. These hearth installations were likely used for some form of production on the southern edge of town, closest to the lake and downwind from the typical north wind. To explore the structural development of the town, Trenches 3 and 4 were investigated in 2016. Trench 3 consisted of street deposits and the edge of the structures lining the throughway. Trench 4 exposed a large domestic building with an underground storage area on the southwest corner of two main streets, likely from the earliest phases of the settlement. The ceramics coming from this particular structure are intriguing, as they potentially posit early occupation strata at the site.

This paper focuses on the qualitative nature of the ceramics from these four trenches and currently identifies the main timeframe of occupation as the mid-Hellenistic to Early Roman period. The study sheds light on the types of vessels employed to carry out a range of day-to-day activities, as well as establishes a perspective on the imported wares, which contribute to the overall chronology of the site. In addition, the paper highlights the evidence for trade networks and movement of goods between

settlements within the Fayyūm and from outside the region, briefly addressing how such avenues of communication fit within the wider historical and cultural framework.

METHODOLOGY

The main objectives of the ceramic analysis in the field were to categorize and classify pottery from each locus excavated at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā as a starting point for constructing a relative chronology of the site and a typo-chronological catalog for local and imported wares.⁷ The approach for this work included quantification, in which all pottery was weighed and counted, including diagnostics and body sherds (TABLE 2). Diagnostics were then selected for drawing and photography, whereas a sample of body sherds from each locus was chosen as representative of the variation in fabrics.⁸ As part of the preliminary study, fabrics were categorized using published classification systems from excavations at nearby sites, for example, Tebtynis or Soknopaiou Nesos.⁹ In addition, shapes, profiles, and fabrics that indicated stylistic and production variations as well as possible imports were noted.

This article focuses on the local and imported dining and consumption wares that are an attestation of external—largely Mediterranean—

TABLE 2: Weight of pottery excavated from each locus. Loci including imported sherds (Egyptian and foreign) are highlighted in bold red.

TRENCH	LOCUS	TOTAL WEIGHT OF POTTERY (KG)	TRENCH	LOCUS	TOTAL WEIGHT OF POTTERY (KG)	TRENCH	LOCUS	TOTAL WEIGHT OF POTTERY (KG)
1	1	1.000	2	136	8.830	3	190	11.262
1	2	3.500	2	140	43.100	3	191	0.158
1	3	1.000	3	150	1.000	3	192	0.210
1	4	62.110	3	151	15.000	3	193	0.059
1	5	25.200	3	153	2.000	3	195	0.642
1	7	45.410	3	154	0.160	4	201	0.915
1	9	0.700	3	155	0.708	4	202	2.500
1	11	0.140	3	156	44.100	4	204	1.000
1	13	5.000	3	157	4.000	4	206	6.000
1	14	0.100	3	159	4.503	4	207	2.800
1	18	0.042	3	161	2.000	4	210	10.000
1	19	4.270	3	163	0.017	4	221	1.000
1	20	0.980	3	164	0.645	4	223	0.800
1	23	15.003	3	165	0.239	4	224	0.400
1	33	15.020	3	168	14.950	4	225	0.074
1	37	0.650	3	170	4.312	4	226	0.800
1	38	1.900	3	171	7.000	4	227	0.096
1	42	5.262	3	172	15.503	4	228	0.175
1	52	0.120	3	173	2.000	4	233	0.032
1	55	1.200	3	174	0.200	4	236	0.900
2	91	3.564	3	175	1.000	4	237	0.096
2	92	5.830	3	176	1.180	4	238	0.036
2	94	16.110	3	177	0.400	4	244	1.000
2	95	5.000	3	178	6.000	4	250	10.600
2	98	2.842	3	179	2.000	4	251	4.000
2	99	0.600	3	180	0.400	4	252	3.000
2	101	44.990	3	181	0.227	4	254	8.200
2	103	0.832	3	183	0.138	4	255	0.190
2	104	0.139	3	184	1.380	4	256	1.000
2	118	0.043	3	185	0.400	4	257	0.400
2	119	0.015	3	186	8.000	4	258	0.220
2	122	0.096	3	188	0.700	4	261	0.500
2	133	0.130	3	189	0.160	4	264	0.120

influence. It is significant to note that *imported* refers here to pottery produced outside of the Fayyūm and thus includes wares produced elsewhere in Egypt, as well as farther afield. This paper outlines a selection of significant wares that emerged from this preliminary study, grouped first by function and then by type. These pieces represent an important, if

limited, portion of the entire corpus. It should be made clear that the vast majority of the ceramics excavated from the site are of Egyptian Nile silt production.

NOTE: Figure labels throughout the article refer to the year of excavation (FY##) and trench (QH##). The

six-digit number below refers to the find (e.g., pottery from locus 7 was recorded as find 2205) and the specialist (e.g., this bowl is number 26 of that group of sorted pottery). See also TABLE 2.

DISHES AND BOWLS

A selection of the most frequent forms for consumption with Mediterranean influence is represented below, including various open-shapes, such as bowls, cups, and plates. The presence of these dining vessels within a domestic context is unsurprising for the Hellenistic period, when analogous vases are found in houses throughout mainland Greece and in the extended Greek world.¹⁰ The ubiquity of such shapes in the domestic structures at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, therefore, elucidates the Mediterranean influences that reached the everyday life of the Fayyūm population by at least the middle of the Hellenistic period.

The shape most typical of utilitarian consumption activities that was discovered at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā in a variety of fabrics was the bowl. The shape has various terminologies, including the convex or Echinus bowl, or more generally the hemispherical bowl. It was disseminated across numerous Mediterranean sites and was common in Greece, notably at Athens and Corinth.¹¹ The profile is typically convex with a pointed rim curving slightly

inwards and a shallow ring-base. The earliest known examples of hemispherical bowl shapes in Egypt appear at the end of the Late Period at Elephantine, dating to the mid-4th century BCE, though it was indeed a novelty at that time.¹² By at least the beginning of the 3rd century BCE, the hemispherical bowl circulates at other Fayyūm sites, including Tebtynis, Philoteris, Hawara, and Bakchias, suggesting new avenues of consumption in Hellenistic Egypt.¹³ Although the shape is long-lasting in the material culture of the Fayyūm, the fabric and surface treatment suggest some local variations before such bowls become overtaken by the Red Slip wares of the Early Roman period, from the 1st to 2nd century CE onward.¹⁴

EGYPTIAN NILE SILT PRODUCTION

The fabric and surface treatment of the Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā bowls point to varying levels of imitation of and influence from the Greek hemispherical bowl. The local production that is discussed here consists of at least two different types; the first (FIG. 3) has a rough exterior and a dull red matte slip covering the entire body, usually with tool scraping marks across the surface. The surface on both the interior and exterior is slightly rough with some evidence of burnishing by the potter. It is made of a fine Nile fabric that varies between orange, red, and pink

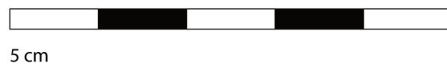


FIGURE 3: Type 1 of the hemispherical Nile silt bowl (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

coloration, occasionally with a gray-black core from firing and some evident white grain and mica inclusions.¹⁵ The pointed rim shape varies in its convex profile, but generally exhibits the typical convex shape. This type of hemispherical bowl was found in all four trenches at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, though it predominantly came from the street area (Trench 3) and the large house (Trench 4).¹⁶ The ubiquity in these two trenches indicate the extent to which such bowls were produced on a local scale for daily consumption by the end of the 3rd century BCE until at least the 1st to 2nd centuries CE. They lack smoother, polished finishing that is indicative of more direct Greek imitations and the Egyptian Red Slip (ERS) wares.¹⁷

The second type of hemispherical bowl is the local production also in Nile silt, with clear attempts to reproduce the Greek shape with varying local characterization. FIGURE 4a illustrates an example of this production with a completed ring base of a hemispherical bowl and a retracting rim. The fabric is Nile silt, a light brown to orange soft-fired clay, with painted dark red bands on the interior; direct parallels come from Tebtynis, dating to the 3rd century BCE, and from Soknopaiou Nesos.¹⁸ In comparison, a second Nile silt bowl (FIG. 4b) reveals a finer, polished version: the fabric is brown and compact, with numerous white grain inclusions and voids, and the surface treatment on the interior consists of a smooth, polished dark reddish-brown

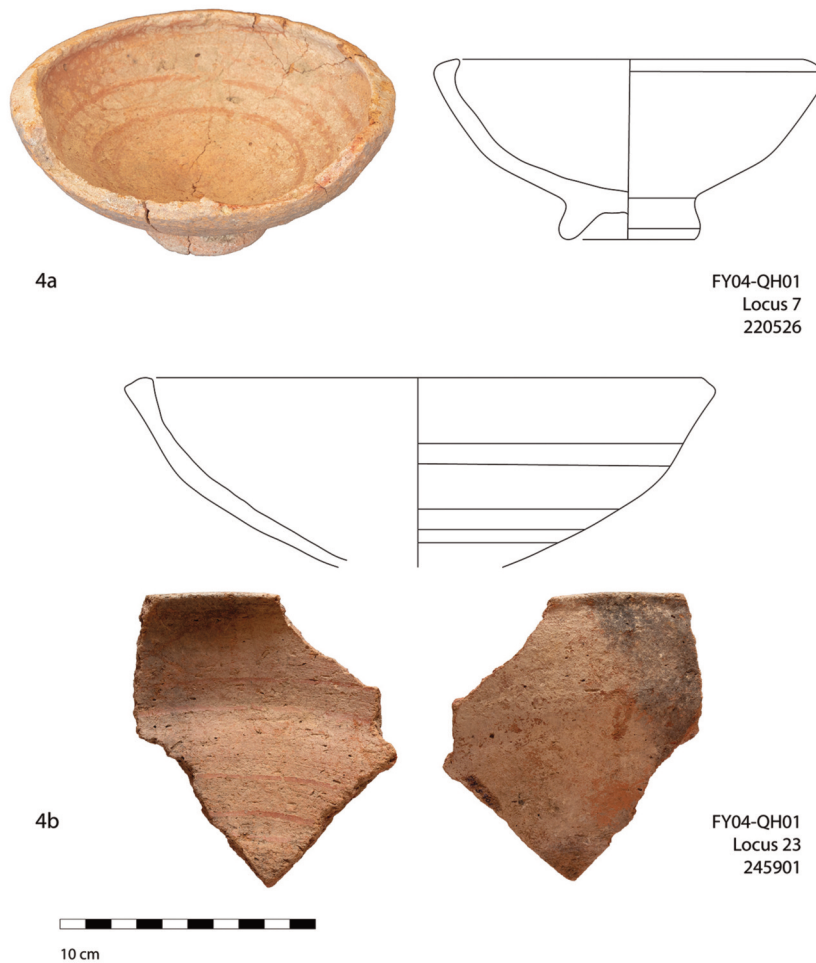


FIGURE 4: Type 2 of the hemispherical Nile silt bowls. a) 220526 and b) 245901 (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).



FIGURE 5: Nile silt convex cups (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

slip, with circular bands of dark red. The exterior is unpainted with clear marks of scraping with tools.

A few drinking cups with convex profiles and ring bases were also uncovered from the site and are locally produced in fine Nile alluvial fabric. Such shapes can likewise be identified as convex bowls;

however, in this case the profile is narrower and more vertical, and the fabric and decoration differ from that of the hemispherical bowl at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, so they are presented separately. Two examples come from Trenches 1 and 4 (FIG. 5); both have fine dark reddish-brown fabric with notable

mica and are polished with no slip. These local drinking cups were not found with other types of surface treatment, including red glaze or imported fabrics. This is closest in fabric and profile to an example from Tebtynis, which dates between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE.¹⁹ This shape is long lasting and stems from the hemispherical bowl shape. Other identifiable parallels that date generally to the Ptolemaic period come from Karanis and Karnak.²⁰

EGYPTIAN LATE HELLENISTIC SIGILLATA A

The most telling of the imitations of the Greek hemispherical bowl and the transition to Egyptian production of such fine wares are what is known as the Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A. The Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A bowl was highly popular in the eastern Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period, and local production has been identified throughout North Africa, the Levant, and Cyprus by the 3rd century BCE.²¹ The form is linked

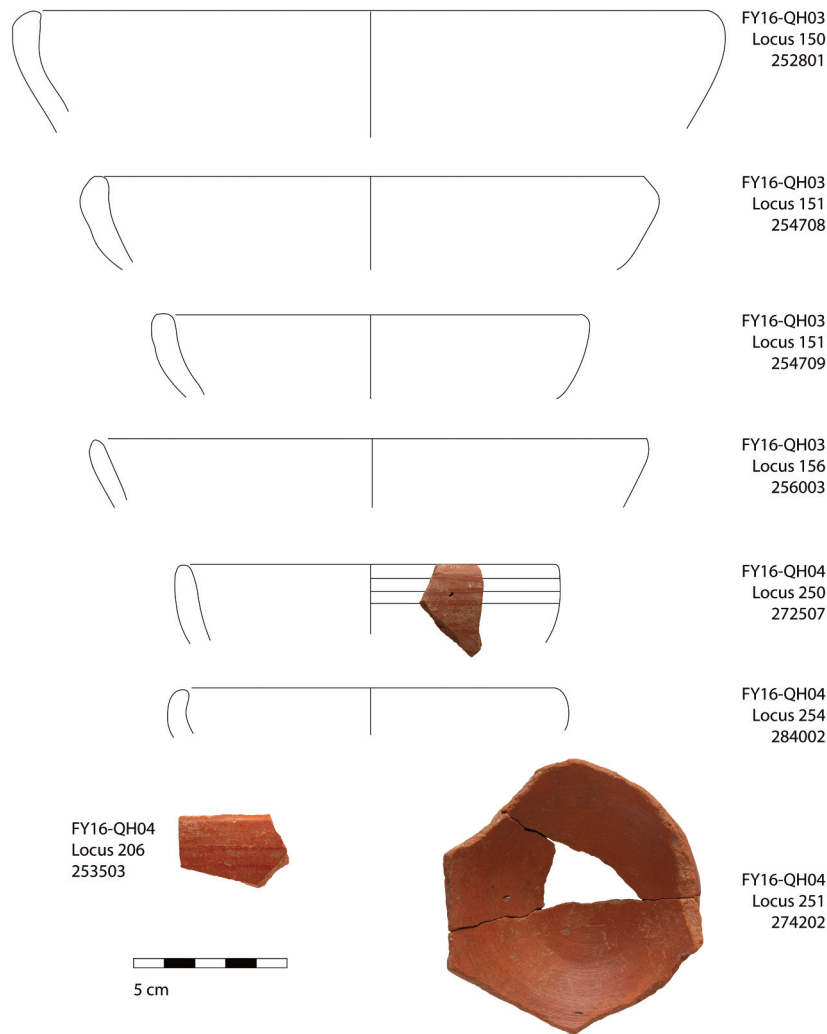


FIGURE 6: Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A bowls. 256003, 272507, and 284002 are examples of Mareotis production (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

to the Ptolemaic Black Ware (discussed below) in that it has the same common shapes, i.e. the Echinus bowl, cup, and the lipped dish. Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A is fired in an oxidizing atmosphere and appears in the Fayyūm only from the 2nd century BCE until the Early Roman period.²²

Numerous bowl fragments were found in Trench 4 (loci 250, 251, 254, 257) in the levels of the domestic structure's ground floor. The presence of this particular type of consumption ware in the earlier-dated loci of the Trench 4 rooms indicates occupation coinciding with the widespread dissemination of the Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A bowls from the 2nd century BCE onward. Additionally, examples of the bowl fragments from Trench 4 point to a possible import connection from

Alexandria or the Lake Mareotis region, as indicated by examples in FIGURE 6; the fabric is red to orange with a grey core, with a slip that is slightly darker than the clay.²³ The fabric is also typically sandy silt with quartz, notable limestone voids and red inclusions.²⁴ Examples of this ware come from Tell al-Haraby, west of Alexandria, which produced such bowls between the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. Similar wares are also found at Naukratis between the 1st and 2nd centuries CE.²⁵ The similarities in fabric, shape, and chronology point to a possible trade connection between this area of the Fayyūm and the settlements at Lake Mareotis.

In addition, some of the lipped dishes and plates from Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā also suggest a connection with the Mareotis region (FIG. 7), with fabric and

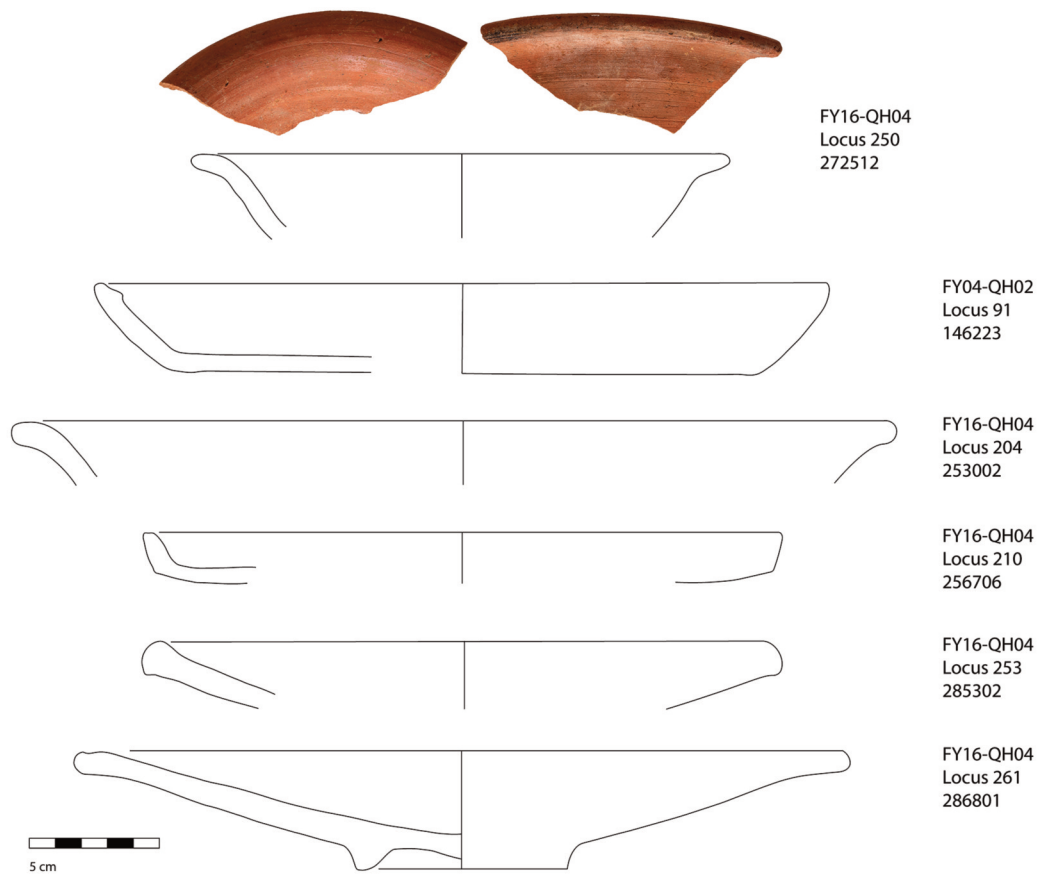


FIGURE 7: Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A dishes. 272512 is a Mareotis import (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).



FIGURE 8: Painted Ptolemaic pithos (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

inclusions identical to those of Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A. Perhaps the dishes were transported to Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā alongside the bowls. The growing production of these plates corresponds with the burgeoning transitional phase, in which there is a movement towards local sigillata tableware, a predecessor to the sigillata wares of the Roman period.

Although the Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A production in Egypt continues into the Early Roman period, the context from Trench 4 narrows this scope at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā: the undisturbed loci of occupation for a ground-floor room in Trench 4 (Loci 250, 251, and 254) yield Egyptian Late Hellenistic

Sigillata A bowls and plates, alongside consumption ware in typical Ptolemaic decoration, including large vessels with white-washed surface treatment and red painted bands or drips, such as the large pithos in FIGURE 8.²⁶ This type of surface treatment fell out of use by the end of the 1st century BCE. The presence of such Ptolemaic decoration within the same context as the Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A further reinforces the Hellenistic dating (2nd to 1st century BCE) of the structure in Trench 4.

Finally, a few fragments of red slipped bowls from the Western Oases are found at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā.²⁷ These fragments, as exemplified in FIGURE 9, are



FIGURE 9: Fragment of red-slipped Western Oasis type (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

characterized by a dark red gloss on a granular, light yellow-cream body, or a dull light red to brownish red fabric, with a similar matte slip and traces of brush finishing. At least three body fragments of this ware were discovered in the main occupation strata of Trench 4 (loci 250, 254, 257), with one fragment in an abandonment layer (locus 223 in Trench 4). Trade connections linking the western desert, especially al-Baḥariyah, and the Fayyūm are attested archaeologically and the presence of this ware deserves further attention, as it may help to define the nature of this relationship.²⁸

PTOLEMAIC BLACK WARE BOWLS AND PLATES

Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā produces evidence for the use of Ptolemaic Black Ware (PBW), with at least six fragments discovered at the site. The examples are characteristic of PBW, including a black or grey-fired fabric, a polish or burnished surface treatment, local Egyptian fabric such as Nile silt or oasis clay, and the standard form of small hemispherical and shallow bowls and plates.²⁹ An example of a PBW hemispherical bowl was found in Trench 1 and has an exact parallel at Karanis (FIG. 10a).³⁰ The production of PBW is a form of imitation of the Hellenistic Greek tradition, as high quality imports of Greek black ware have been discovered alongside local Egyptian imitations, suggesting that indeed the same groups of people were using both. James Gill identified these wares at Mut al-Kharab in the al-

Dākhla Oasis, where there is also evidence for PBW production.³¹ His comprehensive analysis indicates that at least 41 other sites in Egypt have yielded PBW, reflecting its wide distribution, though in small quantities at many of the sites. Interestingly, the sites in Upper Egypt and in the Oases have the highest quantities, as well as some evidence for production. In addition, other Fayyūm settlements, Philoteris and Tebtynis, include 25 to 26 individual sherds of this ware each.³² The dating for PBW is generally limited to the Ptolemaic period; it has been suggested that the earlier vessels are smaller and finer, with later ones becoming coarse, but more precise dating solely based on the fabric is difficult.³³

Trench 3 produced four PBW plate fragments, whereas Trench 4 yielded only one well-preserved PBW hemispherical bowl (FIG. 10a). Although the other examples from Trench 3 are of Egyptian production due to the coarse black fabric, a single bowl (FIG. 10b) is likely a fine ware import from the Mediterranean; the fabric is a fired pale orange to light brown, with remnants of a highly polished surface, typical of the PBW Greek imports found in Egypt.³⁴ It is interesting that this Greek import was the only black ware found in Trench 4, alongside the numerous ERS imports from the Mareotis region and Alexandria. Perhaps the bowl arrived at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā in the same repertoire of vessels traded from closer to the north coast. The specific context (locus 250) fits with the early dating, where

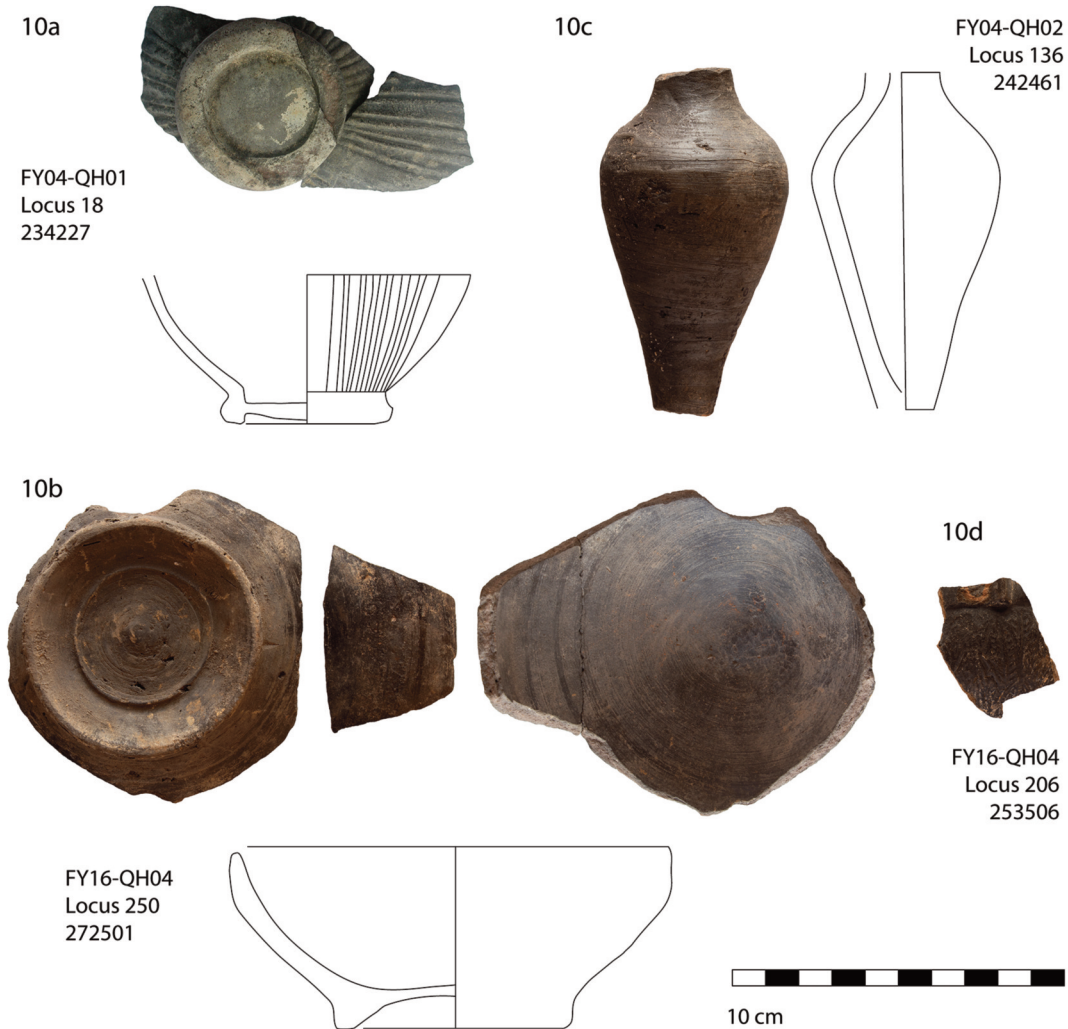


FIGURE 10: Ptolemaic Black Ware and Imported Ware: **a)** Hemispherical bowl 234227, **b)** imported Greek vessel 272501, and **c)** unguentarium 242461. Memphis Black Ware: **d)** 253506 (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

the Ptolemaic whitewashed ware and ERS bowls discussed above were discovered.

Trench 2 also produced one plate fragment and a complete miniature unguentarium in Egyptian fabric (FIG. 10c). The typical vessels in PBW consisted of bowls and plates, and closed shapes like unguentaria and perfume vases were rare.³⁵ A few contemporaneous examples of PBW unguentaria

and amphoriskoi originate from Karanis.³⁶ Lastly, there was a single fragment of Memphis Black Ware (FIG. 10d) from Trench 2, which is similar in fabric to the PBW ware, and has a lustrous black slip and mold-made decoration.³⁷

From observing a selection of the consumption wares from Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, one part of the narrative of the ceramics from the site emerges. Al-

Qārah al-Ḥamrā is emblematic of a Hellenistic to Early Roman site in the Fayyūm, where the settlement is drawn into external socio-economic and political changes, and its material culture evinces such developments. The proliferation of Greek shapes dated to at least the 2nd century BCE in the ceramic repertoire provides a date by which settlement must have been established at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā. Local wares, which are ubiquitous in every loci at the site, are produced in forms that persist through time and might of course extend the period of occupation beyond what can be established in this study. The influences from Greek shapes and styles are indicated by the hemispherical bowl, the Ptolemaic Black Ware, and the Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A (the latter arrives by the 2nd century BCE). Such vessels were integrated into local production and were replicated in Egyptian

Nile silt to be used alongside imports. The Egyptian Late Hellenistic Sigillata A reveals identifiable fabric from production in the Lake Mareotis area, thus indicating trade connections with the Delta in specifically open-shaped pieces from approximately the 2nd century BCE onwards. Lastly, the examples of red slip surface treatment on a local production of lipped dishes points to the transition to the red slip on plates of the Early Roman period.

JARS, KRATERS, AND COOKING POTS

In addition to the non-local typologies found in the repertoire of consumption wares at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, it is important to mention some of the local utilitarian ware shapes. Some of the identifiable forms include various jars, such as globular jars with everted rims and long-neck jars with a wide shoulder, kraters for banqueting, and local cooking

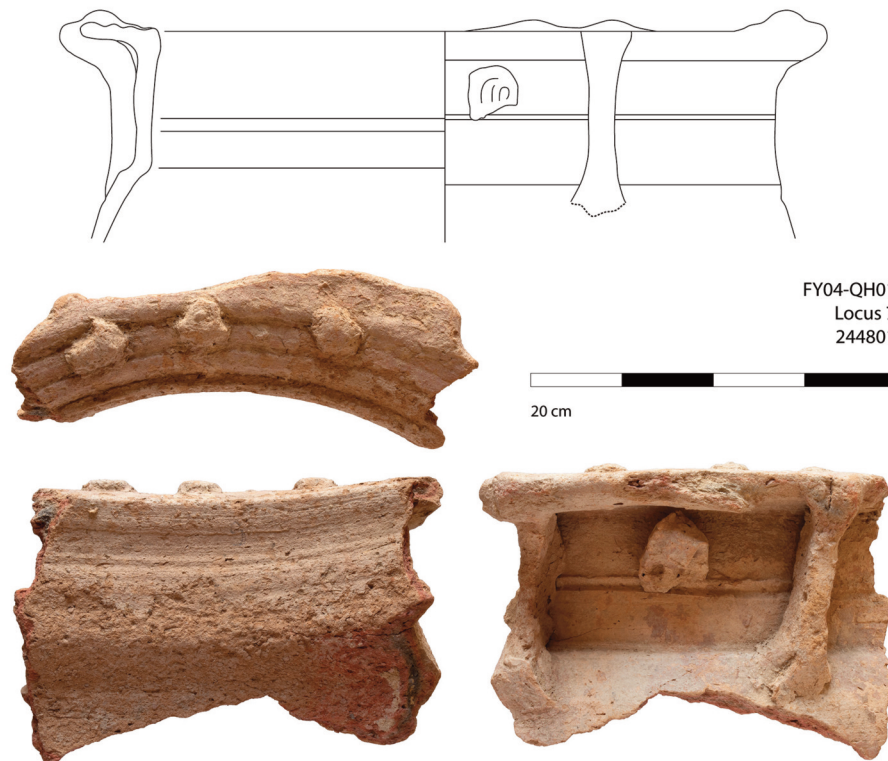


FIGURE 11: Large krater with appliques (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

pots. The wide variety of storage and cooking jars are common shapes throughout the Fayyūm and they represent the crossroads of medium and large-sized containers.³⁸ Few external influences transcend the local production, such as the pithos (FIG. 8), the krater, and cooking pots, but for the most part, local profiles of jars predominate at the site. FIGURES 11–13 represent a krater, a selection of jars, and cooking pot diagnostics, all produced in local Fayyūm fabric. These coarse fabrics include a dark to light red clay (no slip or surface treatment), with a pink and grey

core and many white grain and vegetal voids.³⁹

A notable vessel is the krater, which has a different fabric and decoration compared to the rest of the repertoire from Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā (FIG. 11). Such shapes are conventionally used for banqueting and dining in the Greek world, as well as in Hellenistic Egypt. A direct parallel comes from Tebtynis and dates from the end of the 2nd century to early 1st century BCE.⁴⁰ The large krater with appliqué decoration is made of an orange to light brown fabric with a beige slip and some faint residue of red paint.

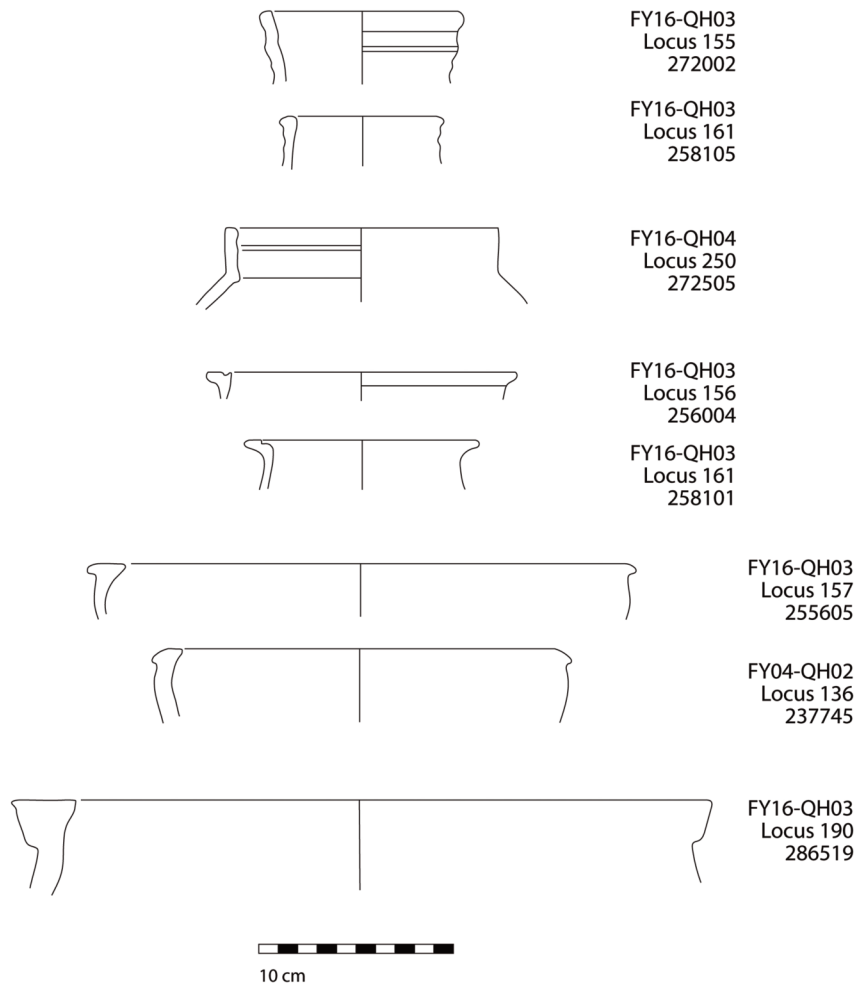


FIGURE 12: Examples of jars found at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā. Long neck with wide shoulder (272002, 258105), caccabé (272505), long-necked cooking pots (256004, 258101), local bowls (255605, 237745), and pithos rim (286519) (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).



FIGURE 13: Wide-mouthed globular pots with evidence of burning on the base. **a)** 247764 and **b)** 263307 (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

This krater from locus 7 of Trench 1 was found alongside one of the complete Nile silt bowls discussed earlier (FIG. 4a), as well as imported aryballoi and red slipped bowls, and Ptolemaic whitewashed ring bases. The assemblage highlights the Hellenistic influences in decoration and shapes of this context. Furthermore, it raises the possibility of trade connections with the Delta based on the red glaze bowls, all of which point to a 2nd to 1st century BCE date.

The local cooking pots further evince Mediterranean influences in culinary practices. The caccabai pots are similar in shape to chytra forms used throughout the Greek world and reproduced in local Egyptian contexts, such as at Tebtynis and Alexandria.⁴¹ A typical example of this type of vase is in FIGURE 12 (No. 272505), with a direct parallel coming from Tebtynis and dating to the 1st century BCE.⁴² The long-necked cooking pots, known as

“marmites à collerette,” are likewise attested at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā (FIG. 12, nos. 256004, 258101). This latter shape shows a movement away from the Greek style of cooking pots; the rim is everted with a marked groove, likely for a pot lid. Similar long-necked cooking pots from Tebtynis suggest an initial date of the second half of the 3rd century to the end of the 2nd century BCE.⁴³

Traces of burning are found on many of the jars, suggesting that in addition to simple storage, they were used for cooking over a fire as well. A complete profile of a jar with such traces comes from Trench 1. The jar has a wide mouth, globular body and a flattened round base (FIG. 13b). The fabric is coarse dark reddish-brown Nile silt, with a burnt exterior, and the rim is flat and everted. Parallels come from, among others, Karanis and Mons Claudianus in the Eastern Desert, and the shape is typical for the transition to the Early Roman period.⁴⁴

AMPHORAE

Amphora fragments were discovered in many loci from all four trenches.⁴⁵ Two of the best-preserved amphorae come from loci 38 and 42 in Trench 1, which are both layers of mixed architectural debris from a post-occupation phase. Their context suggests that the amphorae remained behind after the building was largely deserted, resulting in their being incorporated into the collapsed mud brick and other debris. The preservation and typological characteristics of these objects make it useful to mention them here briefly. The first amphora (FIG. 14) represents the transitional phase between Egyptian Amphora (EA) 2 and EA 3, with an alluvial brown fine fabric and a white slip, with some quartz, minimal amounts of mica, and vegetal voids.⁴⁶ Contemporary parallels of this form come from Tebtynis, Soknopaiou Nesos, Bakhias, and Hawara,

and date to the last quarter of the 1st century BCE.⁴⁷ Contemporaneous examples from further afield come from Tell al-Haraby⁴⁸ and Alexandria.⁴⁹

The second amphora (FIG. 15) is similar in shape and fabric to a type found at Tell el-Haraby, also a transitional form between EA 2 and 3.⁵⁰ The lip is banded and the handles connect from under the lip to the lower part of the neck; the body is long and narrow. The fabric is similar to Dixneuf's A7 typology in that it has a reddish-brown surface and grey core with a pink slip, and some noticeable vegetal voids and mica.⁵¹ This amphora type in the Fayyūm typically dates from the end of the 1st century BCE to the beginning of the 1st century CE; the form is indeed emblematic of the transitional phase in amphorae typologies from the Ptolemaic to Early Roman period.



FIGURE 14: Amphora of transitional type between Egyptian Amphora (EA) 2 and EA 3 (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

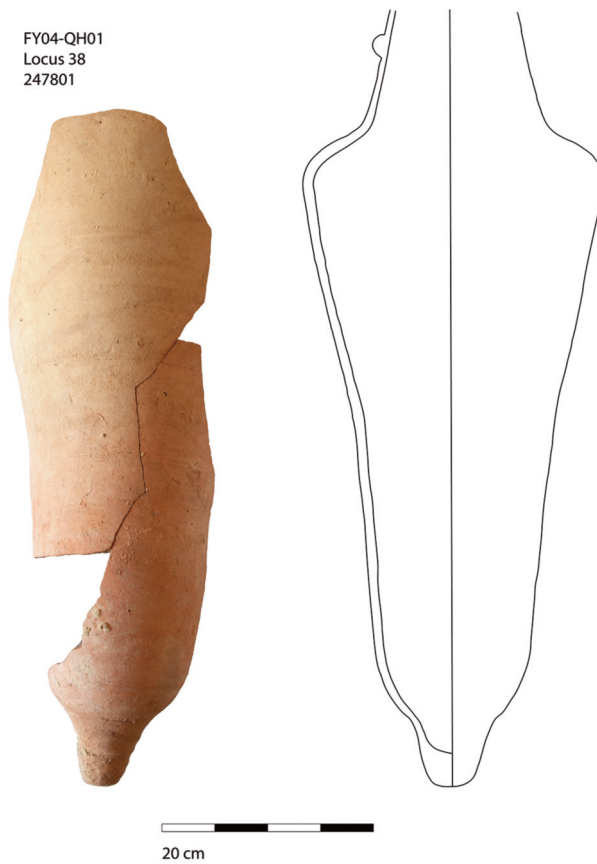


FIGURE 15: Amphora of transitional type between EA 2 and EA 3 (© Northeast Fayyūm Lakeshore Project).

CONCLUSIONS

The small settlement of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā reveals analogous ceramic repertoires to other larger sites in the Fayyūm, attesting to the extent of continuity in material culture in the region, even at a remote location. The connection between Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā and areas outside of the Fayyūm is significant; the types of imports, such as the Mareotis bowls and dishes, suggest a notable connection with Delta sites, or trade through larger Fayyūm sites, as do the two well-preserved amphorae with parallels from the Delta. Finally, the PBW and the Memphis Ware fragment further point to a possible network with Upper Egypt or the Oases, especially since the

main workshops for these wares are in the South. The evidence for these relationships can be juxtaposed with the local Egyptian production of similar wares. The local demand for drinking and dining vessels that were typical of the Mediterranean certainly extended beyond the coastal cities in Egypt, and consumption activities were replicated locally at a site like Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā.

Looking at distribution across the site, Trenches 1 and 2 have less Ptolemaic material, suggesting that the excavated contexts date later; the types of ceramics found, such as the two Egyptian amphorae (FIGS. 14–15) and the Nile silt hemispherical bowls (FIGS. 3–4) with parallels from Tebtynis, date

between to the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. The increase in Early Roman wares and Egyptian Red Slip dishes from these trenches further attest to this dating. Owing to their placement at the edge of the settlement, the later date for Trenches 1 and 2 may be due to the expansion of the site. However, datable ceramics from the Ptolemaic period may also be lacking as the contexts were ones of production rather than domestic contexts where Hellenizing ceramics, often dining wares, are found. Trench 4 in contrast reveals the earliest structure excavated thus far at the site and the ceramics indicate occupation from at least the 2nd century BCE, though possibly earlier in the late 3rd century BCE, due to the predominately Ptolemaic wares. This chronology is particularly interesting as known architectural parallels for such a domestic structure, for example at Karanis, have previously been dated to the Roman period, as late even as the 2nd century CE.⁵²

Overall, sites in the Fayyūm with longer occupation periods are characterized by adaptations to the built environment, with new construction frequently altering and obscuring the original plans. For example, houses were built over existing structures. At Karanis and Tebtynis, secondary phases of construction eliminated entire public street systems.⁵³ At Philadelphia, major street systems were retained over hundreds of years,⁵⁴ but the blocks of buildings between the streets show a complex and continuous reorganization of space. When scaled down to this level, nearly all excavated Fayyūm sites have been revealed as architectural palimpsests. In contrast, the magnetometric survey at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā shows defined floor plans and the only alteration to the house in Trench 4 was a blocked doorway. This lack of phased development suggests a shorter period of occupation, as the attested pattern of long-term occupation at Fayyūm settlements is towards substantive structural change to pre-existing properties.⁵⁵

From the selection of ceramics from Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā, a notable image of a small-scale settlement in the Fayyūm materializes. There is currently little evidence for wares that date later than the Early Roman period, suggesting a substantial abandonment of the site by the end of the 2nd century CE. High levels of calcification on surface ceramics as well as the complete lack of architectural remains above the sand at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā indicate that

the site was submerged beneath Lake Qārūn for some length of time. Although further excavation and geological survey is required to establish when this submersion event (or series of events) took place, the present assessment of the ceramic corpus dates the occupation of the site from approximately the 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE.

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NOTES

- ¹ Gorre 2013, 1.
- ² Fischer-Bovet 2013, 1.
- ³ The site of Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā occupies an area of roughly 1,300 sq. meters. In contrast, the visible surface remains at Karanis cover approximately 526,000 sq. meters. Even when the loss of architecture at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā and the gradual expansion of Karanis are considered, Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā represents settlement on a significantly smaller scale.
- ⁴ Publication by Emily Cole and Bethany Simpson forthcoming; Cappers et al. 2013, 45; Barnard et al. 2015, 51–67.
- ⁵ Herbich 2019, 239–242.
- ⁶ Publication by Friedrich Heinrich, Mauro Rizzetto, and Nami Shin forthcoming.
- ⁷ An overview of the excavations published by Emily Cole and Bethany Simpson will include a full report by the author on the ceramic data outlined here as well as a discussion of other local forms found at Al-Qārah al-Ḥamrā.
- ⁸ For fabric classification, a geology lens was used in the field and macro photos of the main fabrics were taken. The fabric analysis from the site will be included as part of the future excavation publications.
- ⁹ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012; Dixneuf 2012.
- ¹⁰ See Rotroff 2006 for a complete volume on Hellenistic plain wares from the Athenian Agora; Edwards 1975 for the Hellenistic pottery from Corinth; Stewart 2010 examined the Hellenistic utilitarian wares at Gordion, which provides a useful corpus of Hellenistic shapes in Asia Minor.

- ¹¹ Rotroff 1997, 115, nos. 307–308.
- ¹² Defernez 2001, 281–288, no. 174–175.
- ¹³ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 25; Römer et al. 2004, 301; Dixneuf 2012, 348, nos. 118–132; Marchand 2009; Gasperini 2014, 243–367.
- ¹⁴ Hayes 1972, 8.
- ¹⁵ Similar to Tebtynis Fabric F II and F III in Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 12.
- ¹⁶ Trench 3, loci 150, 151, 155, 156, 157, 161, 170, 171, 173, 178, 186, 190, 192. Trench 4, loci 202, 204, 206, 210, 223, 244, 250, 251, 253, 254, 257, 261.
- ¹⁷ Parallels from Alexandria: Elaigne 2002, 171, fig. 9; Harlaut 2002, 285, figs. 8 and 9.
- ¹⁸ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, no. 23; the fabric is similar to Fabric V in Dixneuf 2012, 350, no. 160.
- ¹⁹ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, no. 53.
- ²⁰ Wodzinska 2010, 65, no. 95; Lauffray 1995, 100, fig. 49: 133; Johnson 1981, 72, no. 472, pl. 62.
- ²¹ Poludnikiewicz 1992, pls. 10–13: 3rd century BCE production kilns were found at Athribis.
- ²² Römer et al. 2004, 301.
- ²³ Similar to Tebtynis Fabric I in Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 12.
- ²⁴ Tomber and Thomas 2011, 47, no. 60, fig. 4.8.
- ²⁵ Piekarski 2001, 57, pl. 27.1.
- ²⁶ Wodzinska 2010, 29.
- ²⁷ We thank the article’s anonymous reviewer for identifying this sherd as part of production from the Western Oases. Her/his observations are drawn from her/his experiences working with Sylvie Marchand (personal communication). In general, there is limited literature on these wares.
- ²⁸ Gasperini and Pethen 2018, 181.
- ²⁹ Gill 2012, 16; similar to Tebtynis Fabric IV in Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 12.
- ³⁰ Johnson 1981, pl. 77.
- ³¹ Gill 2012, 17–18.
- ³² Gill 2012, 21–22, table 1.
- ³³ Gill 2012, 16; Charlesworth 1969, 29.
- ³⁴ Gill 2012, 16, 18; no. 14 is a Greek import from Mut el-Kharab.
- ³⁵ Gill 2012, 16.
- ³⁶ Johnson 1981, 267A and 268, pl. 42.
- ³⁷ Johnson 1981, 8; Karanis had 5 fragments.
- ³⁸ Cf. *supra*.
- ³⁹ Similar to Tebtynis Fabric IX in Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 14.
- ⁴⁰ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, pl. 42, no. 378, “craters a décor plastique.”
- ⁴¹ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 76.
- ⁴² Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, pl. 23, no. 250.
- ⁴³ Ballet and Poludnikiewicz 2012, 78; pl. 26, nos. 273–277.
- ⁴⁴ Wodzinska 2010, 123, no. 148; Tomber 2006, 81, 83; Johnson 1981, 11, no. 350.
- ⁴⁵ Amphora sherds were found in loci 2, 7, 19, 37, 38, 55, 95, 151, 156, 173, 178, 190, 202, 204, 206, 207, 210, 221, 223, 224, 250, 251, 254, and 257.
- ⁴⁶ Similar to Fabric A4–A5 in Dixneuf 2011, 93.
- ⁴⁷ Marancou and Marchand 2007, 290, figs. 140–141; Dixneuf 2011, 314, fig. 70.
- ⁴⁸ Marancou and Marchand 2007, 290, figs. 140–141.
- ⁴⁹ Senol 2010, 170, fig. 6.
- ⁵⁰ Dixneuf 2011, 93, fig. 62b; Majcherex and Shennawi 1991, 6, fig. 1.
- ⁵¹ Dixneuf 2011, 33.
- ⁵² Husselman 1979, 11.
- ⁵³ Davoli 2011; Davoli 2005, 218–219.
- ⁵⁴ Davoli 2011; Davoli 1998, 143.
- ⁵⁵ Simpson 2014, 164–166.