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Preliminary report on fine ware pottery from Memphis (seasons 2014–2016, 2018)

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This paper presents some preliminary results of studying the fine ware pottery from Memphis that was conducted in seasons 2014–2016 and 2018. The basics of my research methodology are discussed first, the main results of the work following.

Keywords: pottery, Late Period, Ptolemaic period, Memphis, Bes-vessels, Kom Tuman, pottery studies, Ancient Egypt, Achaeminids.

Since 2001 the Centre for Egyptological Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (CES RAS) has been conducting archaeological excavations in the north-eastern part of Memphis. The Russian concession includes three ‘hills’ — Kom Tuman, Kom Dafbabi and the southern part of Tell Aziz¹. This area yields a lot of artifacts², and pottery belonging to different periods of Egyptian history is among the most frequent finds. The team includes two pottery analysts: Dr. S. Laemmel examines the main part of pottery material, while I focus on fine ware pottery made of marl or mixed clays.

During work on the site such features of vessels as shape, dimensions, clay type, surface treatments and decorations and (or) other elements on the surface are registered. The most part of the material is preserved in fragments, but occasionally a complete profile of a pot can be reconstructed from sherds.

Due to considerable quantity of fine ware pottery on Kom Tuman, the research is focused on vessels made of marl and mixed clays (not Nile silts). A fabric description is of par-

¹ Belova, Ivanov 2016: 23.

² The results of studying the Memphite finds were published in: Belova 2004; 2005a; 2005b; 2009; Belova,

Ivanov 2016; Ivanov 2007; 2015; 2017; Yarmolovich 2015; Белова 2009; Иванов 2003; 2009; 2018; Ярмолович 2017а; 2017б; 2017с.

ticular interest — it will let establish a classification of fabrics of Memphite fine ware pottery and compare results of the study with data from other sites. Marl clays are divided into three groups and their variants, while mixed ones — into two³.

It is possible to conclude that most of fine ware pottery found in Memphis can be dated to 5th–4th centuries BC with probable extension to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. The dating is based on study of the assemblages from archaeological excavations of the CES RAS mission⁴ as well as analogies from other sites⁵.

All data is recorded in the database of fine ware pottery from Memphis. It has columns for ID number of a vessel, type of its shape, type of its clay, surface treatment, decorations and (or) other elements on the surface, dimensions (diameter of the rim and base, maximum body diameter, height⁶), place of find, date of the assemblage, commentaries, an illustration. The same features are included in a database of analogies from other archaeological sites and museum collections. The number of catalogued objects (complete profiles or complete vessels, fragments with diagnostic features) now exceeds 600, and more that 200 body sherds without diagnostic features were described as a material for statistical data.

Now the work on drawing on a typology of the fine ware pottery is in process. All pottery material is divided into four broad classes — closed shapes, open shapes, bases and other shapes. Inside classes vessels are grouped according to their morphological features. Selection of morphological features directly depends on the pots' state of preservation.

So far the typology includes 15 types of closed shapes and 10 types of open shapes. Closed shapes present various jugs, juglets, small neckless vessels with/without lug handles, vessels with short neck, situlae, lekythoi and others (fig. 1). Open shapes present cups, goblets, dishes and others (fig. 2).

A large number of finds are bases of various shapes and state of preservation. Most often it is difficult to classify these fragments as belonging to a particular type of shape, so they have to be studied separately from other material.

Lids and sieves (class 'other shapes') are also studied separately from other material.

To sum up, though examination of the fine ware pottery from Memphis is continued, some preliminary results are already achieved. The considerable part of the vessels is dated to the Late Period, namely to 5th–4th centuries BC, when Egypt was conquered by the Achae-menids. The majority of shapes are typical for the Egyptian ceramic corpus of this period.

The fine ware pottery from Memphis allows us to study the problem of foreign influences on Egyptian ceramic tradition in the Late Period. The fact that such influences took place in the Late and Ptolemaic periods was mentioned by many researches⁷. It is well-known that Egyptian potters imitated Greek and Phoenician amphorae ('torpedo')⁸, black-glazed pottery ('Memphis black ware')⁹. Pottery studies conducted in last 15 years have yielded new data shedding light on this interesting practice. For example, there are vessels from Memphis¹⁰

³ Ярмолович 2017d: 166–168.

⁴ I am grateful to Dr. S. Laemmel for providing me with the dates of the pottery assemblages from Memphis and general advices on the fine ware pottery.

⁵ Ярмолович 2017: 58–61.

⁶ This column is used only when we have at least a complete profile of a vessel.

⁷ E. g., see: Defeinez, Marchand 2006; Ярмолович 2017b.

⁸ Defeinez, Marchand 2006.

⁹ Васильева, Малых 2016.

¹⁰ Ярмолович 2017b.

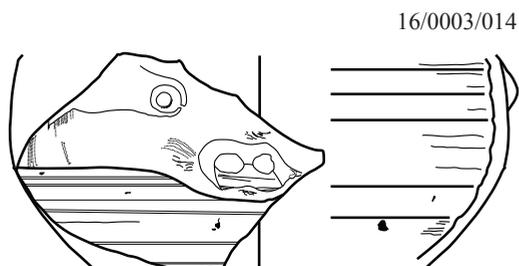
Type I.1.



Type I.3.



Type I.8.



Type I.13.

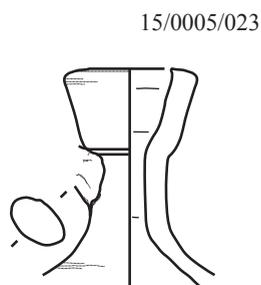


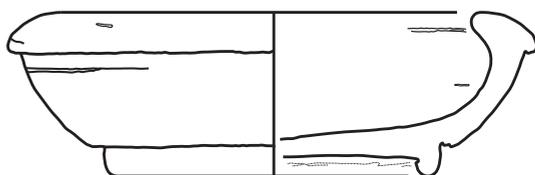
Fig. 1. Closed shapes of fine ware pottery from Memphis
(drawn by V. I. Yarmolovich, E. G. Tolmacheva, N. A. Sizova)

Type II.1.

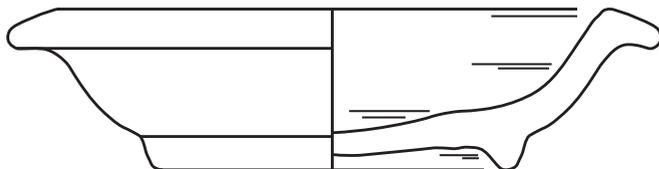
15/0022/016

**Type II.2.**

13/0001/037

**Type II.3.**

13/0040/101

**Type II.9.**

14bis/0001/002

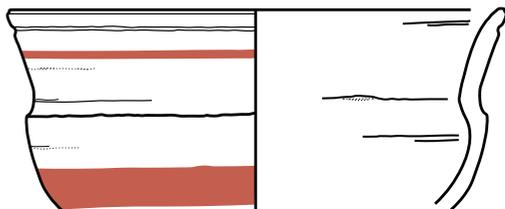


Fig. 2. Open shapes of fine ware pottery from Memphis
(drawn by V. I. Yarmolovich, S. Laemmel, N. A. Sizova)

and its necropolis (Saqqara), Delta (Thonis-Heracleion, Naukratis, Suwa, Tell el-Mukdam, Tell Timai and Saft el-Henna) and Sinai (Tell el-Herr) that could be imitations of either metal situlæ¹¹ or 'Palace ware' (Assyrian type of pottery) of 8th–7th centuries BC¹². This thesis was suggested by C. Defernez and C. Grataloup on basis of study of pottery material from Tell el-Herr and Thonis-Heracleion respectively.

Another shape that appeared as a result of a foreign influence on the Egyptian pottery is bowls with high neck, carinated shoulders, globular or ellipsoid body, round or flat base. These bowls were found in Memphis¹³ and its necropolis¹⁴, Delta (Suwa)¹⁵, Northern Sinai (Tell el-Herr)¹⁶ and even in some distant sites like Bahariya¹⁷ and Kharga¹⁸ oases. By their shape these bowls resemble metal and clay bowls that were spread on the territory of the Achaemenid Empire¹⁹.

The Memphite material found by the CES RAS mission corresponds with results of archaeological excavations on other Egyptian sites and increases our knowledge about Egyptian pottery of the Late Period. It also enables us to come closer to solving some interesting problems connected with sociocultural and economic life of the Ancient Egyptians during the Late and Ptolemaic periods.

Studying Bes-vessels is an important part of my work²⁰. Sufficient amount of these vessels on Kom Tuman lets me conduct their comprehensive research. At the moment the total number of the Bes-vessels exceeds 42²¹. The vessels, state of preservation of which allows studying their morphological features, were divided into nine types. Body sherds were studied in terms of their technological features. Visual examination of clay fabrics showed different properties of material used for production of Memphite Bes-vessels. Similar fabrics were found among pottery material of Thonis-Heracleion, Tell el-Herr and Saqqara. Memphite Bes-vessels were dated to the Late Period and New Kingdom.

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¹¹ Defernez 2011.

¹² Grataloup 2012.

¹³ The CES RAS excavations, unpublished material. I am studying these bowls at the moment.

¹⁴ S. E. Malykh (the Russian Archaeological Mission in Giza, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences), personal communication.

¹⁵ Now this bowl is in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian archaeology, inv. no. UC19279. See: Petrie 1906: pl. XXXIX F (143).

¹⁶ Defernez 2001: pl. LXXII (208).

¹⁷ Musil, Tomasek 2013: 89, 92.

¹⁸ Wuttman 1996: 418.

¹⁹ As an example of this type of bowls see: Lehmann 1996: Taf. 91 (488/1-2, 492/1-2).

²⁰ Ярмолович 2017d.

²¹ This number includes vessels destroyed by robbers during the revolution in 2011.

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Предварительные результаты исследования светлоглиняных сосудов из Мемфиса (сезоны 2014–2016, 2018 гг.)

В. И. Ярмолович

В статье представлены предварительные результаты исследования светлоглиняных сосудов, обнаруженных в ходе работы археологической экспедиции ЦЕИ РАН в Мемфисе. Исследование проводилось во время сезонов 2014–2016 и 2018 гг. Первая часть статьи посвящена краткому описанию методологии изучения сосудов. Во второй части даны предварительные выводы об этой категории сосудов.

Ключевые слова: керамика, Поздний период, птолемеевский период, Мемфис, сосуды с Бэсом, Ком-Туман, исследование керамики, Древний Египет, ахемениды.