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LATE ANTIQUE AND BYZANTINE POTTERY OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY IN EPHEOS. AN INTRODUCTION

The city of Ephesos, situated on the western coast of Asia Minor opposite of the island of Samos, was an important religious center because of the famous temple of Artemis, a political center being the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor and a center of trade and economy because of its port.

The main part of the imported ceramics originated from the coastal area of the Mediterranean. There is substantial evidence for local productions, such as amphoras of the type Peacock – Williams class 45¹ and imitations of LRC ware².

Historical setting and excavations

The results of our recent research suggest that the famous council of AD 431, which officially affirmed the title “*theotokos*” for the Virgin Mary and which condemned Nestorius, could not have taken place in the Church of St. Mary, as the monumental church was not yet in existence at the time of the council³. While the first excavations took place in the 1920ies⁴, modern archaeological excavations were conducted in the 1980ies and 1990ies⁵. At the present time being a comprehensive final publication which will contain the ceramic evidence as well is in preparation⁶.

The Church of St. Mary and the adjacent Bishop palace were built into the three-aisled south Stoa of the Olympieion. The strata associated with this construction yielded large amounts of pottery of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.⁷

The deposits belonging to the different phases of building and of the use of the church⁸ are subject of this paper. Only an overview can be given here, of the most characteristic pottery types and some of those deserving special attention because of the rarity of published comparanda.

Chronological termini applied here:

Late antique–early Byzantine period:

4th century–mid 7th century AD

middle Byzantine period:

mid 7th century–AD 1204

late Byzantine period (overlaps with the Seljukian period):

13th–14th century AD

Building activities at the time of the Council

In late antiquity the middle aisle of the Stoa was first expanded, but this construction did not have an apse. Strata of this phase contained coins with a date range of 364 to 426 AD⁹. This means that the first building activities started around the time of the Council. In the deposits associated with this phase we found ARS bowls form 50 (fig. 1,2–4), especially in the late variant of 50A and 50B and one fragment of ARS 45 (fig. 1,1). As there were only 13 pottery

fragments which are clearly of later origin than the Hadrianic residuals, the absence of LRC in these deposits is of little meaning for dating.

We also found sherds of Aegean coarse gray cooking-ware, which is typical for the late antique or early Byzantine period. In the late 4th and the early 5th century AD these cooking wares had a ribbed surface. The carinated rim of the cooking pots (fig. 1,5) is also very characteristic for this time¹⁰.

Rim fragments of North African amphorae Keay type XXVII with *prae cocturam* graffiti on the straight high rim (fig. 1,6–7), generally dated to the 4th to 5th century AD¹¹, are represented. Peacock – Williams class 49 amphorae from the Gaza region and Peacock – Williams class 45 amphorae with convex bases (LRA 3) (fig. 1,8) complete the spectrum. Bases of single-handled Peacock – Williams class 45 amphorae attributed to the end of the 4th/beginning of the 5th century AD from Caesarea show the same feature¹².

Strata of the Column Church

In the following phase the building was altered to become the Column Church. The great apse in the east was newly

¹ U. OUTSCHAR, Produkte aus Ephesos in alle Welt? BerMatÖAI 5, 1993, 46–52, esp. 51–52.

² S. LADSTÄTTER/R. SAUER, Late Roman C Ware in Ephesos. The significance of imported and local production by petrological and mineralogical methods. In: V. KILIKOGLU/A. HEIN/Y. MANIATIS, Modern trends in scientific studies on ancient ceramics, BAR Int.Ser. 1011 (Oxford 2002) 323–333 (esp. fabrics C–E: 324–325). — A local production of LRC was already assumed by U. OUTSCHAR, Exportorientierte Keramikproduktion auch noch im spätantiken Ephesos? RCRF Acta 29/30, 1991, 317–327.

³ The council of Ephesos is the first, of which an ample collection of documents and protocol entries were handed down up to our time.

⁴ Forschungen in Ephesos IV/1 (Wien 1932).

⁵ St. KARWIESE, Die Marienkirche in Ephesos. Erster vorläufiger Gesamtbericht über die Wiederaufnahme der archäologischen Untersuchung 1984–1986. Denkschr. Österr. Akad. Wiss. 200 (Wien 1989).

⁶ This project directed by the excavator St. Karwiese was financed by the FWF (Austrian Science Fund).

⁷ D. BEYLL, Terra sigillata aus der Marienkirche in Ephesos, 1. Zwischenbericht. BerMatÖAI 5, 1993, 5–45.

⁸ For the various building phases and alterations see the preliminary report: St. KARWIESE, Jahresh. Österr. Arch. Inst. 66, 1997, Beibl. 12–18.

⁹ The coins were identified by St. Karwiese.

¹⁰ TURNOVSKY 2005, fig. 1,1 and 2.

¹¹ S. J. KEAY, Late Roman Amphorae in the Western Mediterranean. A typology and economic study: the Catalan evidence. BAR Int. Ser. 196 (Oxford 1984) 219–224. — C. RAYNAUD/M. BONIFAY, In: Dictionnaire des céramiques antiques en Méditerranée nord-occidentale (VII^{ème} s. av. n. è.–VII^{ème} s. de n. è.), Lattara 6, 1993, 18: 380–450. — C. DOVIS-VICENTE, Étude du commerce maritime au IV^e siècle: Cas de l'épave de la Luque B (these Université Lyon 1999) 34: Keay XXVIIA late in the 4th c. AD.

¹² R. TOMBER, Pottery from the sediments of the inner Harbour. In: K. G. HOLM/A. RABAN/J. PATRICH (eds.), Caesarea Papers 2. JRA Suppl. 35, 1999, 295–322, esp. 301 and 314 fig. 5,88–90.

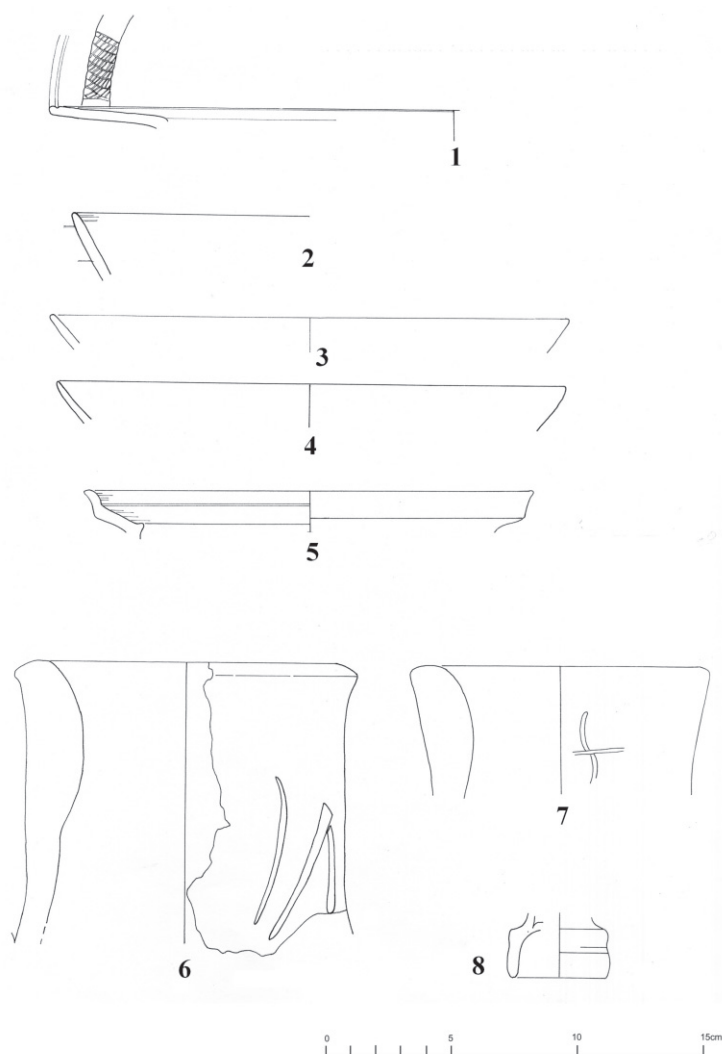


Fig. 1: 1 ARS 45. — 2–4 ARS 50. — 5 carinated rim of Aegean cooking pot. — 6–7 amphorae Keay type XXVII. — 8 Peacock – Williams class 45 (LRA 3) (1 : 3)

erected and the open exterior walls were closed with limestone blocks. We can date this reconstruction by the coins found, which reach up to AD 491 and prove that this building was erected after the Council.

Significant fine wares for this phase are ARS form 67 (**fig. 2,1**) and the LRC forms 1, 2 and 3 (**fig. 2,2–8**). A fragmentary stamp decoration probably showed an angel (**fig. 2,9**). A juglet decorated with white painted stripes in a zigzag pattern (**fig. 3**) represents the thin-walled wares in the Roman tradition.

Among the Aegean coarse gray cooking wares a distinctive development of the rim types of globular cooking pots can be observed and this is chronologically relevant. In the 5th century AD stepped rims (**fig. 4,1–2**) and rims with an internal flange and a broad rim bent upwards ending in a rounded lip on the outside (**fig. 4,3**) came into being. The external surface is generally smoothed and lacks the earlier ribbing. Open forms show similar rim types. Another shape among this ware is the frying-pan (**fig. 4,4–6**) with a flat base, equipped with one spirally twisted handle¹³. This ware is generally called “Aegean” because of its region of origin¹⁴ and it was exported to the Mediterranean coastal areas¹⁵.

Macroscopical methods enable one to distinguish several different fabrics. The production centers are not known yet¹⁶, but the quantities found in Ephesos suggest that they were not too far away.

Another category among the common wares are the “buff wares”. The micaceous local fabric shows shades of light red-brown and light brown. Typical forms are basins with broad rims (**fig. 5,1**). Decoration with painted dots in brown or red occurs in the 5th century AD¹⁷. Another shape found in the deposits of this phase is a large *pithos* (rim diameter approx. 50 cm) with a flanged rim. A large fragment shows red-painted decoration with a pattern of crossed stripes (**fig. 5,2**). Comparable *pithoi* were published from Emporio on the island of Chios¹⁸ and from the fill of a cistern in the Heraion on the island of Samos¹⁹. The filling up of the Samos cistern took place in the 2nd quarter of the 6th century AD. Our finds demonstrate that such *pithoi* were already common at the end of the 5th century/beginning of 6th century AD.

¹³ TURNOVSKY 2005, fig. 1,6–8.

¹⁴ HAYES 1983, 125–126.

¹⁵ Crete, Knossos: HAYES 1983, 126, no. 94–98; Crete, Gortyn: A. MARTIN, *Ceramica comune: vasi da fuoco*. In: A. DI VITA/A. MARTIN (eds.), *Gortina II. Pretorio. Il materiale degli scavi Colini 1970–1977*. Monogr. Scuola Arch. Atene e Missioni Italiani in Oriente 7 (Padova 1997) 346–365, esp. 354–355 no. 33–40. — North Africa: J. A. RILEY, *The Coarse Pottery from Berenice*. In: J. A. LLOYD (ed.), *Excavations at Sidi Krebsh Benghazi (Berenice)*. *Lybia Antiqua* 2 (Tripolis 1979) 91–467, esp. no. 550 fig. 106. — Italy, Naples: P. ARTHUR, *Naples: note on the economy of a Dark Age City*. In: C. MALONE/S. STODDART (eds.), *Papers in Italian Archaeology IV. Part IV: Classical and medieval archaeology*. BAR Int. Ser. 246 (Oxford 1985) 247–259, esp. 254 fig. 16.2.1; Ravenna: F. FIUMI/L. PRATI, *Note sulla ceramica comune*. In: G. BERMOND MONTANARI (ed.), *Ravenna e il porto di Classe. Venti anni di ricerche archeologiche tra Ravenna e Classe* (Bologna 1983) 118–126, esp. fig. 6.32–6.34. — Southern coast of France: C.A.T.H.M.A., *Importations de céramiques communes méditerranéennes dans le midi de la Gaule (V^e–VII^e s.)*. In: *A Cerâmica medieval no Mediterrâneo Ocidental*, Lisboa 16–22 novembro 1987 (Mértola 1991) 27–47; PASQUALINI/TREGLIA 2003, 13–16. — Spain: P. REYNOLDS, *Settlement and pottery in the Vinalopó valley (Alicante, Spain), AD 400–700*. BAR Int. Ser. 588 (Oxford 1993) Group 7, 134. — J. M. MACIAS SOLÉ/J.-A. REMOLÀ VALLVERDÚ, *La cultura material de Tarraco-Tarracona (Hispania Tarraconensis-Regnum Visigothorum): cerámica común y ánforas*. In: J. M^a. GURT I ESPARAGUERA/J. BUXEDA I GARRIGÓS/M. A. CAU ONTIVEROS (eds.), *LRCW I. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean, Archaeology and Archaeometry*, BAR Int. Ser. 1340 (Oxford 2005) 125–135.

¹⁶ Analyses of Aegean cooking pots have been made by: S. Y. Waksman/J.-Chr. Treglia, *Marmites et poêles “égéennes”: le répertoire typologique des exportations à longue distance et leurs caractéristiques géochimiques*. Paper at the LRCW2 congress in Aix-en-Provence 2005.

¹⁷ Evidence for the dating of these was derived from deposits in the stadium of Ephesos: TURNOVSKY 2005, 637 fig. 3,1.

¹⁸ J. BOARDMAN, *The finds*. In: M. BALANCE/J. BOARDMAN/S. CORBETT/S. HOOD (eds.), *Excavations in Chios 1952–1955, Byzantine Emporio*. BSA Suppl. 20, 1989, 86–142, esp. 110 and 112 no. 259 and 261.

¹⁹ H. ISLER, *Heraion von Samos: Eine frühbyzantinische Zisterne*. Mitt. DAI Athen 84, 1969, 202–230, esp. 205–206 fig. 4–7.

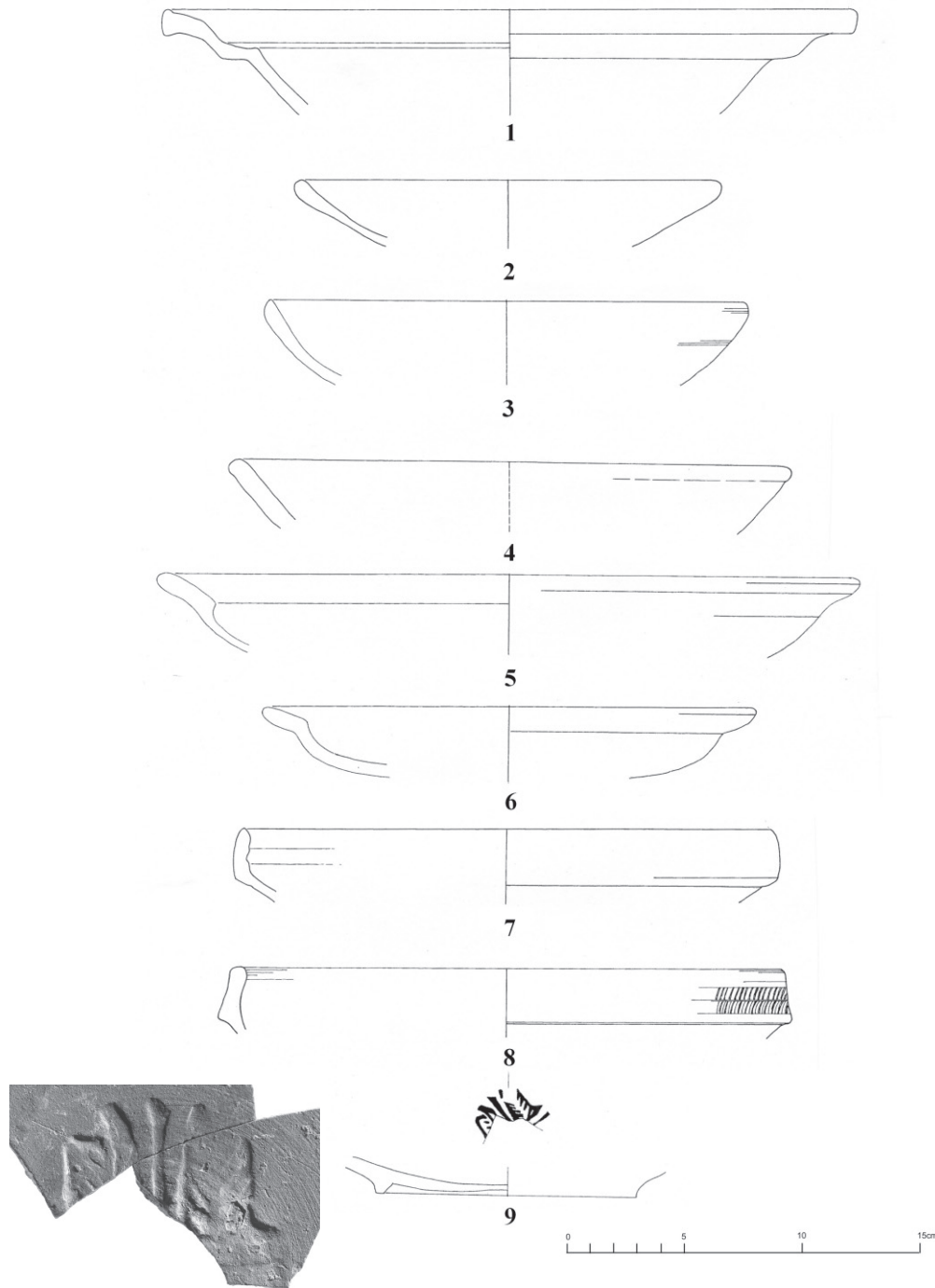


Fig. 2: 1 ARS 67. — 2–4 LRC form 1. — 5–6 LRC form 2. — 7–8 LRC form 3. —
9 Fragmented stamp on the base of an LRC plate (1 : 3)

The erection of the Episkopeion

This took place at the same time as the construction of the Column Church. The best evidence for dating was found in a lime pit within the Episkopeion, which was presumably in use during the construction works and was filled up with pottery immediately thereafter. The content of this pit is a valuable deposit dated at the end of the 5th to the beginning of the 6th century AD. It consists mostly of fine wares and amphorae, common wares are rather rare in this deposit. The predominant LRC form is form 3. ARS form 84 (**fig. 6,1**), dated to 440 to 500 AD²⁰, with a stamp depicting a cat of

prey, most probably a *panthera*, and form 91A/B (**fig. 6,2**), dated to the second half of the 5th and the 1st quarter of the 6th century AD, also occur.

²⁰ HAYES 1972, 132–133; in Italy there seems to be a continuation in the 1st quarter of the 6th c. AD: St. TORTORELLA, *La sigillata africana in Italia nel VI e nel VII secolo d. C.: problemi di cronologia e distribuzione*. In: SAGUI 1998, 41–69, esp. 67. — ARS 84 is one of the forms found on the site of the late antique pottery centre at Sidi Marzouk Tounsi in Central Tunisia: M. MACKENSEN, *Centres of African red slip ware production in Tunisia from the late 5th to the 7th century*. In: SAGUI 1998, 23–39, esp. 28–29 fig. 3,2–6.

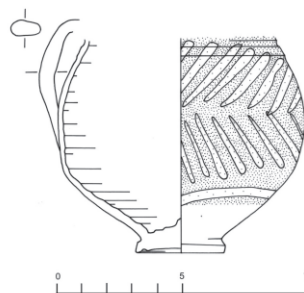


Fig. 3: Juglet with painted decoration in thin-walled ware. (1 : 3)

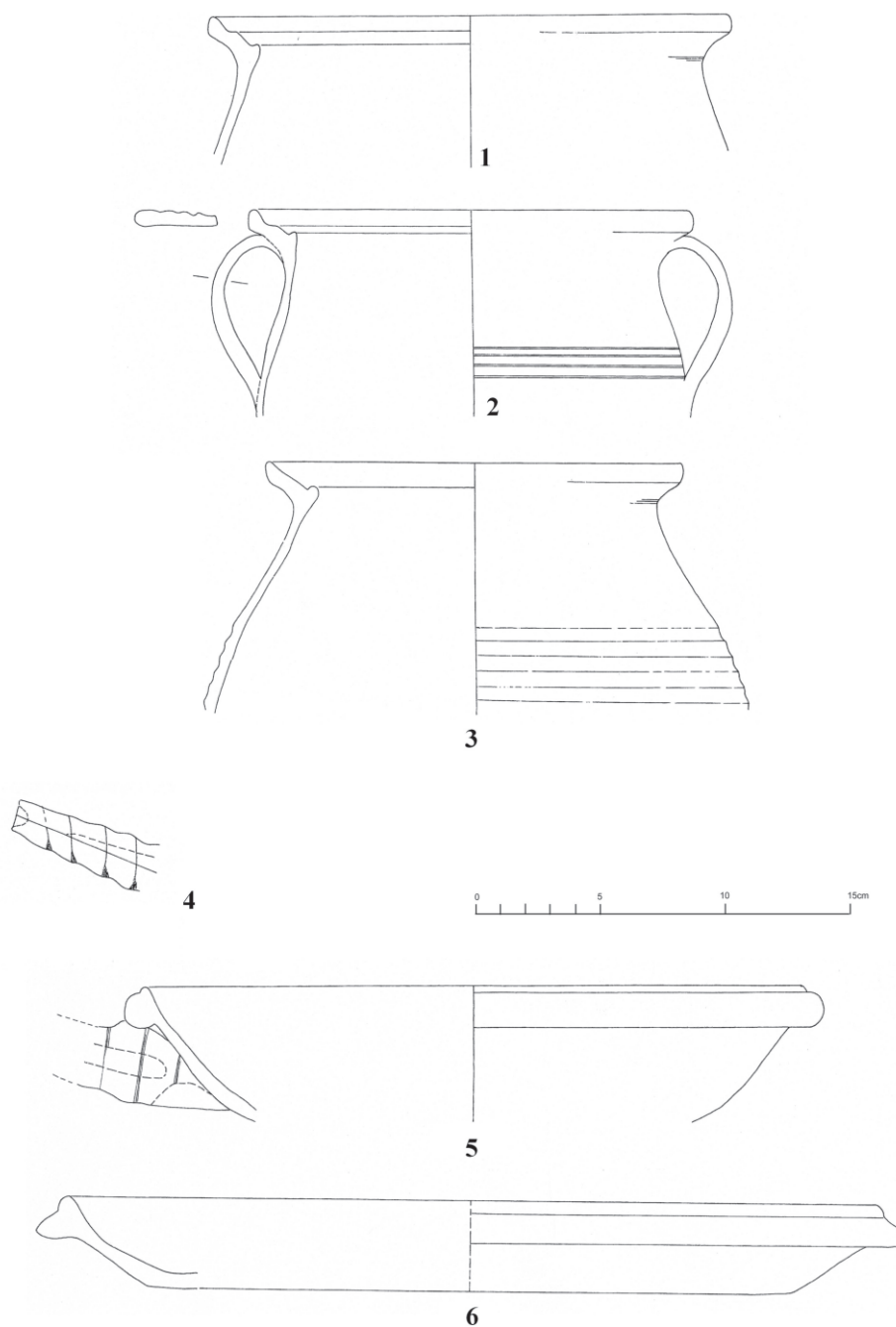


Fig. 4: Gray coarse cooking wares from the strata of the column church (1 : 3)

Amphorae of the types Peacock-Williams classes 45, 44, 46 and 49 are present. Another amphora well represented in this deposit is not included in the current typologies: these amphorae are made of a light coloured rather soft fabric and show a rounded rim above a slightly bulging neck, round-sectioned handles from the neck to the upper shoulder and a solid little knob at the base (**fig. 6,3**)²¹. Additional to a few sherds of Aegean cooking wares with rims bent upwards and straightened at the outer edge²², a fragment of an imported cooking-pot was found (**fig. 6,4**). It shows ribbed external surface and a strap handle attached to the rim. The fabric is hard and dark red in colour, slightly micaceous with small white and gray inclusions. The form suggests a possible levantine origin²³.

Strata of the Dome and Pillar Church

The columns were replaced by pillars in the area in front of the apse. The western part of the church was converted into a domed church. The space between the two churches resembled a narthex. It is most probable that this happened not earlier than during the second half of the 6th century AD, as red slip wares LRC 10A and ARS 104 occur. Ceramic evidence for this phase is scarce, but the coin finds indicate a post-justinianic date. A frying pan belonging to the Aegean coarse gray cooking wares²⁴ shows a different rim form in comparison to those from the the Column Church strata (**fig. 7,1**).

An unparalleled pot fragment (**fig. 7,2**) was found in a disturbed construction pit of the Dome Church: this pot has an olive-green glaze internally, tiny handles, a straight rim and the junction between body and base is sharply angular. As a tiny fragment of this very pot was found in an undisturbed Byzantine grave covered with a stone slab nearby, a modern date can be excluded, although similar pots were in use on the island of Siphnos about a hundred years ago²⁵. Nevertheless its dating remains doubtful but it might be an early glazed vessel from the poorly known 8th–9th centuries AD.

Strata of the final phase of the Episkopeion

The evidence for the final phase of the Episkopeion is more ample. The Episkopeion seems to have been abandoned during the time of the coastal raids by the Arabs, which were

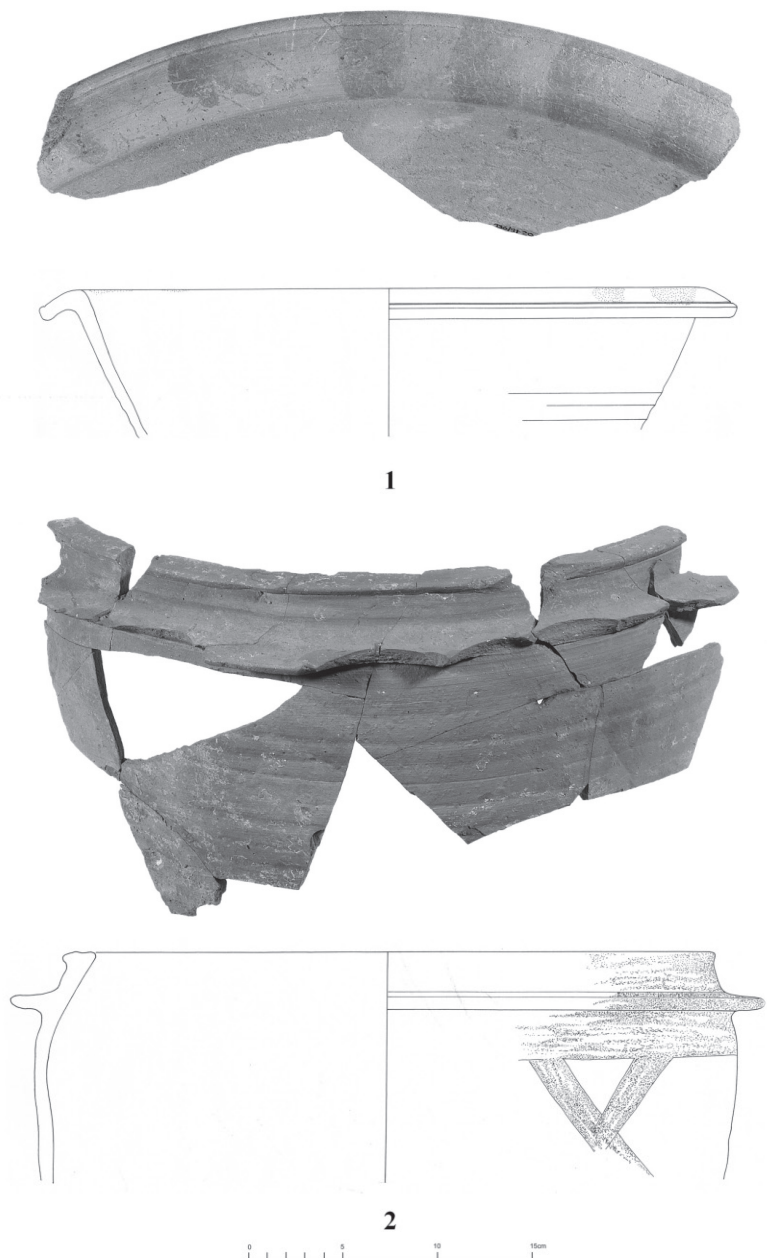


Fig. 5: Buff wares from the strata of the column church
(1 : 4)

between 500 and 700: a view from Italy. In: SAGUI 1998, 157–184, esp. 170–171 fig. 9,1. — A. OPAIT, Local and Imported Ceramics in the Roman Province of Scythia (4th–6th centuries AD). BAR Int. Ser. 1274 (Oxford 2004) 16–17 (Opait C-I). — M. G. FULFORD/D. P. S. PEACOCK, Excavations at Carthage: The British Mission, I.2. The Avenue du Président Habib Bourguiba, Salammbô: The Pottery and other ceramic Objects from the Site (Sheffield 1984) 127–128 no. 39 fig. 38,48 and 48bis (there it is dated 425/450 to 500 AD, around AD 530 only residual). — It seems also to be related to the earlier Torone VII amphora: J. K. PAPADOPOULOS, Roman amphorae from the excavations at Torone. Arch. Ephemeris 128, 1989, 67–103, esp. 98–100 fig. 17.

²² TURNOVSKY 2005, fig. 1,14–16.

²³ J. W. HAYES, Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery (London 1997) 79 fig. 33. — Pots of similar shape found in Marseille: BONIFAY/CARRE/RIGOIR 1998, 159–160, fig. 130 no. 204–205.

²⁴ PASQUALINI/TREGLIA 2003, 15–16 fig. 10,56–60.

²⁵ Information by J. Vroom.

²¹ The same type is found in Corinth in small quantities (information from K. Slane). For published comparisons see: B. ADAMSHECK, Kenchreai, Eastern port of Corinth IV. The Pottery (Leiden 1979) 117 and pl. 29. — P. ARTHUR, Eastern Mediterranean amphorae

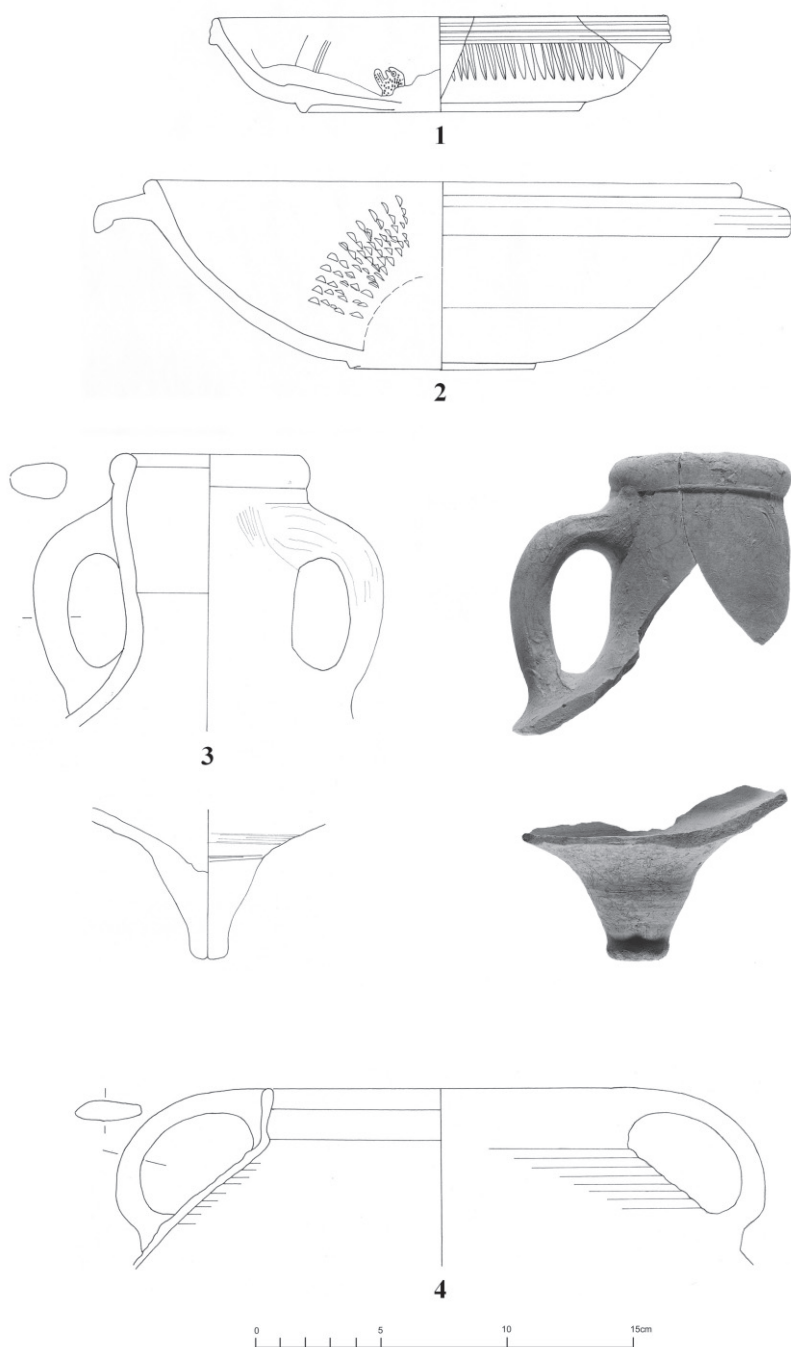


Fig. 6: 1 ARS 84. — 2 ARS 91A/B. — 3 Fragments of light-coloured amphorae. — 4 Cooking-pot (levantine), all from the lime pit in the episkopeion (1 : 3)

led by the later Caliph Muawiya in AD 654–655. At this time the residence of the Metropolitan was transferred to Haghios Theologos, the Church of St. John in the present town of Selçuk. Consequently the Church of St. Mary lost both importance and function.

An interesting pottery assemblage from the fill of a sewer in the Episkopeion relates to this phase. It contains ARS 99, 105, 108 and 109 as well as LRC 10C variants. Many local micaceous imitations occur too. Their fabric is very similar to the fabric of buff common wares.

Red slip plates in a micaceous fabric with a rather thick slightly glossy slip and incised and pricked decoration appear (fig. 8,1) in contexts of the 1st half of the 7th century AD.

The coarse gray ware cooking vessels show rims which are much more curved upwards and sometimes slightly bent inwards to form an S-shaped profile (fig. 8,4)²⁶. The handles of the frying pans are no longer twisted, but elongated with a smooth surface.

Among the local micaceous buff wares small bowls with flanged rims (fig. 8,2) are typical for the 1st half of the 7th century AD as well as base fragments with incised wavy lines (fig. 8,3). Instead of painted decoration we can now observe incised decoration as a new feature.

Very characteristic for this time are large vessels with diameters of approximately 40 to 60 cm with horizontal rims (fig. 8,5). At least some of them were equipped with handles, as fragments found in the stadium of Ephesos demonstrate. Other large basins have heavy high rims or hooked rims (fig. 8, 6), the latter sometimes displaying decoration on the inside of the rim.

Final Phase of the Church and Cemetery

With the harbour of the city silted up and the population having left the antique town, the remnants of the Church of St. Mary served as a cemetery church. 87 graves have been unearthed in and around the church. For this middle to late Byzantine period we do not have any stratigraphy. Pottery fragments were found in the graves and in the debris on the surface. We have to rely on the datings of the Byzantine glazed wares and identifiable amphorae derived from the research results on other sites. There are other amphorae and common wares which cannot be dated exactly. Among them are amphorae typologically resembling the amphorae of the type Saraçhane 55 of the 11th century AD (fig. 9)²⁷. The fabric is identical to the micaceous fabric of Peacock – Williams class 45, but the sherds are rather thick walled. These similarities made me assume that this amphora might be a Byzantine successor of Peacock – Williams class 45²⁸.

Another type present is Saraçhane 58 (fig. 10), also dated to the 11th century AD²⁹. This cemetery is of special interest

²⁶ Aegean cooking pots of this late variant were also found in the *Crypta Balbi* at Rome: M. RICCI, *La ceramica comune dal contesto di VII secolo della Crypta Balbi*. In: SAGUI 1998, 351–382, esp. 358–359 fig. 4,5 “caratterizzato da un impasto analogo a quello delle anfore microasiatiche LR 3”.

²⁷ HAYES 1992, 75 and fig. 25,11: “Slender heavily ridged form with narrow neck, bulging slightly at rim, and upright round-sectioned handles, micaceous gritty red-brown ware.”

²⁸ S. KARWIESE/P. TURNOVSKY, Ein „Mustergrab“ aus der Marienkirche von Ephesos. *Arch. Austriaca* 84–85, 2000–2001, 181–186 fig. 6.

²⁹ HAYES 1992, 75 and fig. 25,15.

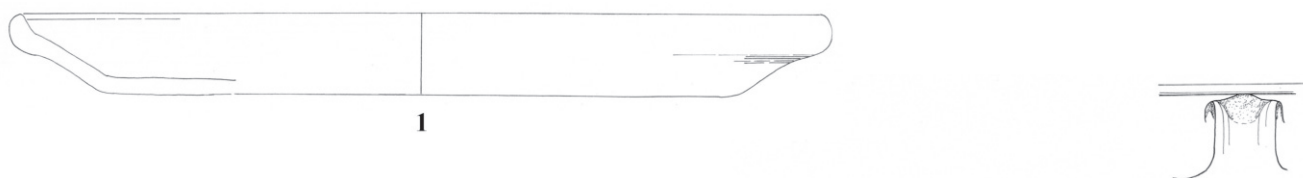


Fig. 7: 1 Frying-pan, gray coarse cooking ware (1st half 7th c. AD?). —
2 Pot with glaze on the interior (1 : 3)

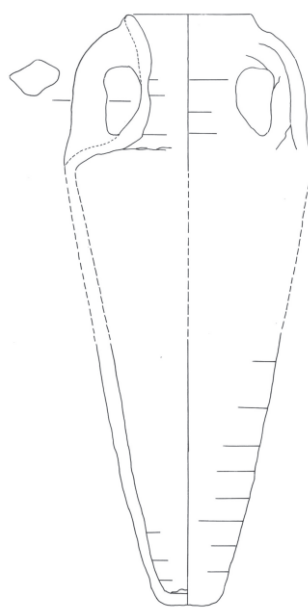
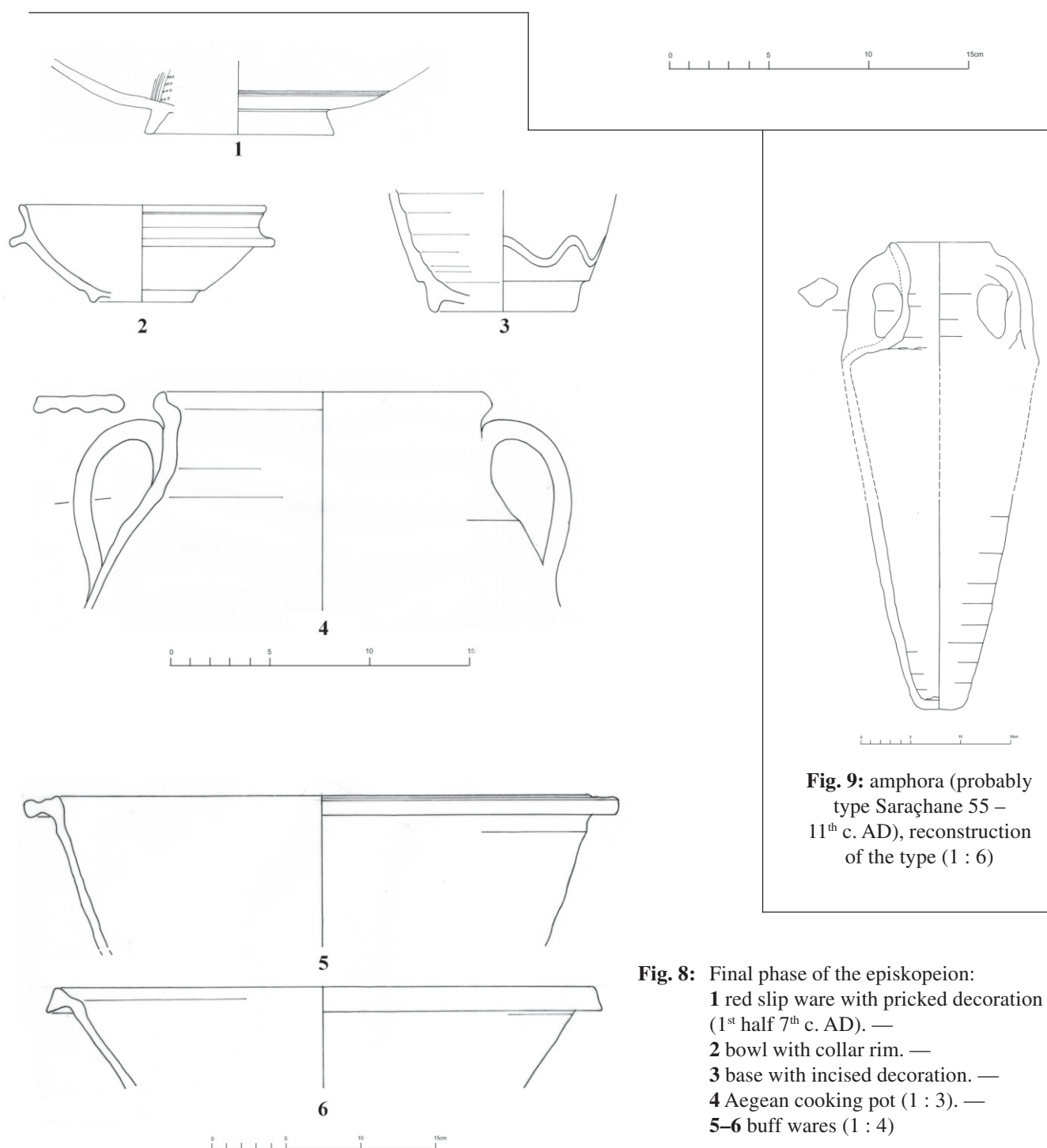


Fig. 9: amphora (probably type Saraçhane 55 – 11th c. AD), reconstruction of the type (1 : 6)

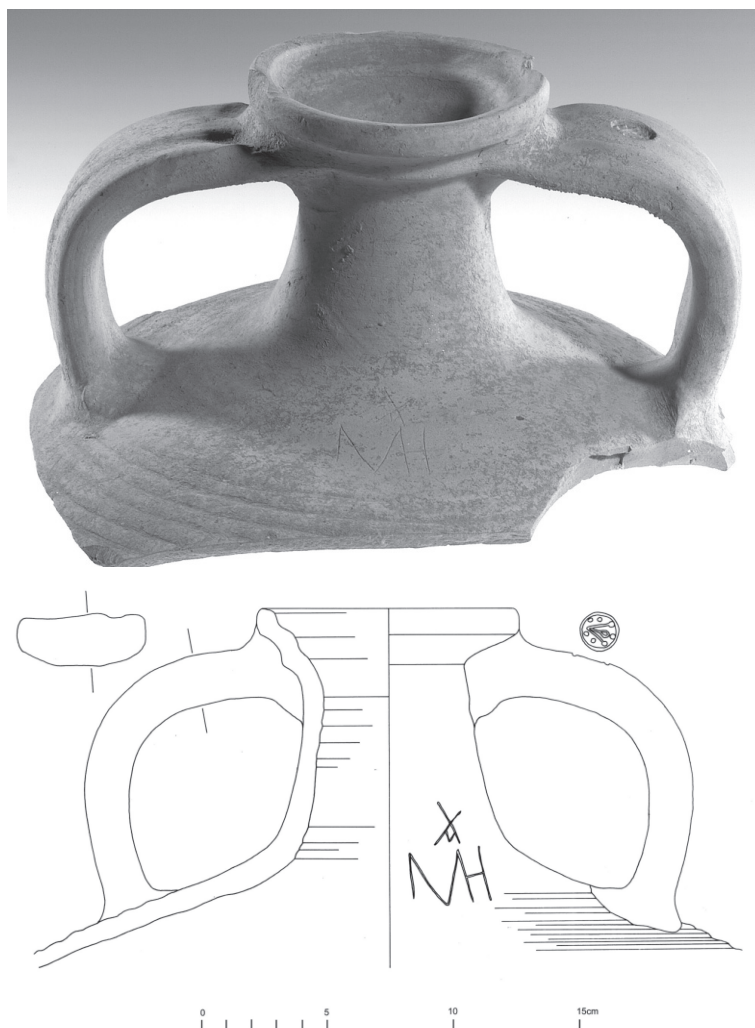


Fig. 10: amphora type Saraçhane 58 (11th c. AD) (1 : 3)

as graves of this period have received little scientific attention so far.

Conclusion

The purpose of our current project is the clarification of the stratigraphy and the building history of the church. Due to the general conditions given concerning both finances and time-frame, the research had to concentrate on the dating of the deposits and the morphology of the vessels. Nevertheless the deposits of the church of St. Mary are perfectly qualified to provide an overview of the ceramics of the late antique and Byzantine period in Ephesos. Owing to the fact that some valuable contexts can be associated with fixed building phases, they can provide clear chronological indications once the repertoire of late Roman and Byzantine pottery in Ephesos is compiled. Then more precise questions concerning the date range of certain morphological variants and the distinction of fabrics will be formulated.

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