

Glass finds from Area FW at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. Season 2019



Abstract: New glass finds from the Kom el-Dikka site in Alexandria come from the excavation of Area FW located in the central part of the site. The bulk of the recorded material, made up of conical lamps, beakers and bowls, and poorly fashioned bottles, belongs to the late Roman period (4th–5th century AD). The uniformity in color, distinctive low quality of the fabric and simple workmanship, all point to a common origin in local workshops covering the needs of the local market. A few pieces, including luxury cast and facet-cut tableware, apparently from a non-local source, represent the late Hellenistic/mid-Roman chronological horizon (2nd century BC–3rd century AD). Meriting note is new evidence of mosaic glass, once again confirming that this type of glass was manufactured in Alexandria in the mid-Roman period. The importance of this assemblage derives from the presence of early Roman luxury tableware which has seldom been observed before at Kom el-Dikka.

Keywords: Alexandria, Kom el-Dikka, late Hellenistic/early Roman cast glass, late Roman glass, mosaic glass

The glass finds from the central part of the site, where excavations proceeded in 2019 in Area FW, represent two broadly defined chronological horizons: the early/mid-Roman and the late Roman/early Byzantine, in similarity to the results of the previous year (see Kucharczyk 2019: 46–60). Current work concentrated on the southern part of the trench explored already in the previous season (for the location of the dig and results of excavation in 2018, see Majcherek 2019: 23–37,

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The study of glass artifacts from the residential houses discovered in Sector F, of which Area FW is part, are an integral part of the multi-disciplinary research on the Roman residential architecture of Alexandria.

Fig. 1; for the results of excavations in the immediate area in previous years, see Majcherek 1995: 14–20; 1996: 13–20; 1997: 19–30; 1998: 25–30; 1999: 35–39; 2010: 35–42; 2011: 38–46).

The assemblage discussed here was small and quite fragmented. The bulk of it consisted of 4th–5th century AD vessels produced by free-blowing, covering a repertoire of forms that includes bottles, flasks, bowls, cups, beakers and lamps. They were made of colorless glass with a greenish or yellowish tinge, shades of green and yellowish-green glass. Other colors are opaque blue and purple. In many instances, they display a milky-white, black and silver weathering, and iridescent layers. The vessel shapes, simple workmanship, noticeable inferior quality of the fabric, all point to local, mass production.

A limited number of fragments represented an earlier group from the late Hellenistic/mid-Roman periods (2nd BC–3rd century AD). The attested forms include cast and facet-cut tablewares, and

free-blown bottles, as well as mosaic glass. The composition of this assemblage is remarkable for the presence of luxury glass of the early Roman period, which has seldom been recorded at the site, and the definitive evidence for mosaic glass manufacture in Alexandria during the Roman period.

The finds are presented following a stratigraphic division of the material into four principal groups. Their dating is based on the pottery and glass analysis combined with stratigraphic and chronological data obtained in previous seasons.

1. Roman building post-destruction deposits (contexts 1343/19, 1307/19, 1312/19, 1315/19, 1337/19) = 4th century AD;
2. Lime-kiln burning deposits (contexts 1300/19, 1303/19) = 4th century AD;
3. Post-kiln levelling (contexts 1236/19, 1237/19, 1238/19) = late 4th–5th century AD;
4. Refuse dumps (contexts 1209/19, 535/19) = late 4th–5th century AD.

1. ROMAN BUILDING POST-DESTRUCTION DEPOSITS

The early Roman building (FB) excavated in this area was ruined most probably at the end of the 3rd century AD. Exploration of the post-destruction deposits yielded fragments assigned to two chronological horizons: obviously residual late Hellenistic–mid-Roman period (2nd /1st century BC–3rd century AD), and the late Roman period (4th–5th century AD).

LATE HELLENISTIC–MID ROMAN GLASS

Of particular importance in this group is a colorless thick-walled fragment with ground outer rim edge and two closely

spaced wheel-cut horizontal grooves just below the rim, on the inside (Ctx 1337/19) [Fig. 1:1]. It is too small for the body profile to be reconstructed, but it may come from a cast hemispherical grooved bowl typical of the 2nd–1st century BC (Grose 2012: 27–29, 41–46: Group A). It is only the second example of such a vessel from the Kom el-Dikka excavation. The first fragment was a tiny fragment of a thick rim of amber color, preserving two closely spaced horizontal grooves on the inside just below the rim. It was found in a late Roman/early Byzantine

context above a collapsed vault in the nearby Bath in Area G (for recent excavations in this area, see Majcherek 2015: 31, 43–47, Fig. 1). Cast bowls of this type

are seldom reported from Alexandria or from Egypt in particular (Kucharczyk 2016: 100–101, Fig. 8; and other references to similar finds from Alexandria

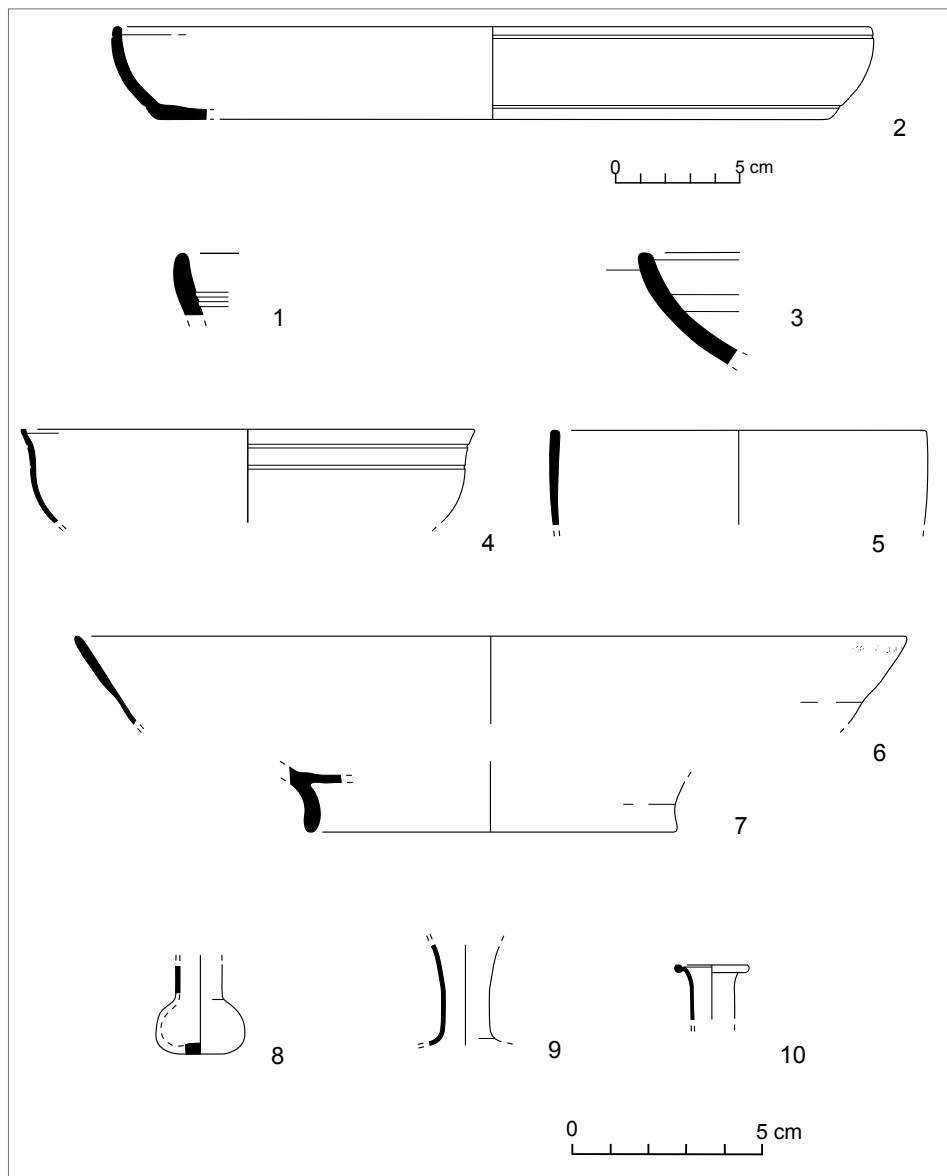


Fig. 1. Post-destruction deposits. Late Hellenistic/mid-Roman glass (2nd BC to 3rd century AD): 1 – cast bowl; 2–3 – cast plates; 4–7 – bowls; 8–10 – bottles (PCMA UW Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Project | drawing R. Kucharczyk, M. Momot)

and Egypt). The widest distribution of these bowls, however, is observed in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Syro-Palestine (Tel Anafa); find spots farther west (Italy, Carthage, and Spain) suggest other centers of production.

Fragments of shallow, thick-walled cast dishes from the 1st century AD are noteworthy because they represent an extremely rare category of glass at Kom el-Dikka. Both of them were made of opaque blue glass, now with milky-white weathering and black spots. The first large specimen (Ctx 1312/19) has a curving wall tapering towards a flat base, and a carefully fashioned, rounded thickened rim with horizontal grooves below the rim edge on the outside and near the bottom of the base [Fig. 1:2]. A similar fragment discovered earlier in this area (next to lime kiln Fd (Ctx 75/08) turned out to be a matching piece (for results of excavations in 2008, see Majcherek 2011: 39–46, Fig. 5). The other dish (Ctx 1312/19) was preserved as a small fragment of body wall with a neatly worked, grounded rim, decorated on the inside by very lightly cut horizontal lines [Fig. 1:3].

A few fragments of variously shaped bowls and bottles represent the 2nd–3rd century AD. One shard (Ctx 1343/19) comes from a thin-walled hemispherical bowl with a ground and polished cracked-off rim and two cut horizontal grooves below the rim on the outside. It was blown, the glass colorless with a greenish tinge, now with milky-white weathering [Fig. 1:4]. These are rare finds at Kom el-Dikka, another example (Ctx 1307/19) being a colorless shard from a large shallow bowl with flaring walls, thinning towards the bottom, and a rounded,

thickened rim. Lightly abraded horizontal lines appear at the rim and beneath on the outside [Fig. 1:6]. This find, along with a colorless solid ring-base found in the same context, may derive from the same vessel [Fig. 1:7]. The evidence, again from the same context, also includes a shard from a deep vessel with straight walls and a rounded, thickened rim, made of green bubbly glass [Fig. 1:5].

Bottles are preserved mainly as necks and a few bases. One should mention the thin-walled, squat globular body of a toilet flask, most probably with a narrow and long cylindrical neck and flared rim (Ctx 1337/19) [Fig. 1:8]. The original color of the vessel is obscured by a layer of black weathering. An identical fragment which could belong to a candlestick-type bottle, a receptacle common in the 2nd–3rd century AD, was recently found in Area U (sub-area UN) in the northwestern part of the site (for recent excavations in the area, see Majcherek 2015: 31–42). They are still surprisingly few at the site (Kucharczyk 2016: 88, Fig. 1:1). Another bottle type is represented by the bottom part of a thin-walled spherical container with a flat base and two thin-walled cylindrical necks (Ctx 1307/19) [Fig. 1:9], one of these with a rolled-in rim [Fig. 1:10]. They were made of colorless glass with tiny spherical bubbles; now their surfaces exhibit milky-white weathering.

Mosaic glass was represented by a thick-walled shard from a shallow bowl with a neatly worked, flattened rim (Ctx 1315/19) [Fig. 2:1]. The decorative pattern consists of polygonal sections of a single cane with a central green rod, surrounded by an opaque yellow circle, randomly encased in a

green matrix. The vessel is decorated with a narrow, finely cut horizontal groove around the lower body on the outside. The surfaces inside and outside were rotary-polished; the exterior surface is glossy. The context dates this vessel to the 2nd–3rd century AD. This simple design is well known among the mosaic glass from Kom el-Dikka, from both the early and the late Roman periods. Examples include vessels (bowls), wall revetment, small disk-like objects with perforations, domed gaming counters, beads, balls, but most importantly, prefabricated mosaic canes. The latter

evidence is undisputed proof of a glass workshop at the site producing various mosaic objects (Kucharczyk 2010a: 67, Fig. 7:2; 2011: 66–67, Fig. 9:3; 2019: 48–49, Fig. 3, early to mid-Roman). Interestingly enough, a fragment of composite mosaic canes with this pattern came to light also this season, in the post-kiln levelling (Ctx 1238/19; see below).

LATE ROMAN GLASS

The remaining finds can be attributed to the 4th–5th century AD. These are a cup, lamps, and windowpanes, as well

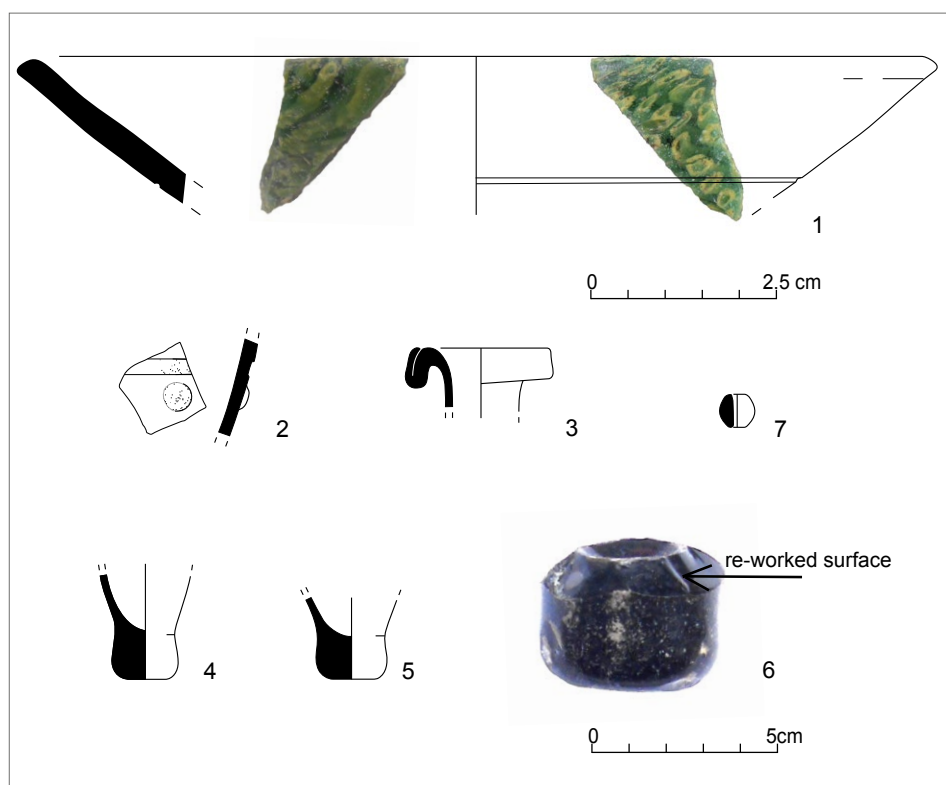


Fig. 2. Post-destruction deposits. Mid- to late Roman glass (2nd to 5th century AD): 1 – cast mosaic bowl; 2 – bowl or cup; 3 – bottle; 4–6 – lamps (6 – not to scale); 7 – bead (PCMA UW Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Project | drawing R. Kucharczyk, M. Momot, photo R. Kucharczyk)

as objects made with the non-blowing technique. A thick-walled shard (Ctx 1337/19) of a good quality, virtually colorless glass, with no weathering and fine polishing on the inside and outside surfaces, is unique. It preserves a small blue blob, protruding from the external shiny surface, and a finely cut, shallow, horizontal groove [Fig. 2:2]. The quality of the glass, the high level of workmanship, and the unusually good state of preservation make this fragment exceptional in this group of finds as well as in the material from this period from the site as a whole. Despite the small size, the fragment is recognizable as a possible cup or hemispherical bowl with a ground and polished cracked off rim, dated to the 4th century AD.

From the same chronological horizon there is a cylindrical neck with a thick rim with a double folding out (Ctx 1307/19) [Fig. 2:3], as well as fragments of conical lamps: two solid, knob bases made of colorless glass with a greenish tinge (Ctx 1307/19) or of purple glass streaked with light green, a rather unusual color for this type of lamp at Kom el-Dikka (Ctx 1307/19) [Figs 2:4-5 and 2:6 respectively]. The latter find deserves special mention because it appears to have been reworked after the vessel was broken. Its edges were neatly trimmed and then smoothed, possibly to be re-used as a stopper.

Other glass finds from this group include several fragments of windowpanes. They were produced in two different techniques, both based on free-blowing. One thick green piece, fire-polished on both sides, belongs to the “crown” variety (Ctx 1307/19). This method calls for a disk,

a so called “bull’s eye”, to be produced. It has a thick center and scar in the middle where the pontil was attached. Such disks were used either whole or cut into panes. The rest of the shards comes from flat panes, executed in the muff-process, also called the cylinder technique (Ctx 1307/19). They were blown of colorless glass with a greenish tinge, as well as of green and yellowish-green glass, with the typical elongated bubbles visible within the glass; some edges are sharp and rough, suggesting that they were cut, representing maybe the shear-cutting that opened the cylinder.

Apart from vessel glass, two other objects made with the non-blowing technique were also registered. They include a spherical, rod-formed bead made of green glass (Ctx 1307/19), and a pale-bluish, small disk-like object, flat on both sides with rounded edges and a wide perforation. The latter was used most probably as a pendant incorporated in a necklace (Ctx 1307/19). A single, small fragment of a bracelet with a roughly semicircular cross-section and one protruding diagonal rib was also registered (Ctx 1307/19). The glass of the bracelet appears to be opaque black. It had either been seamed-manufactured by drawing out a cane of glass and folding it upon itself to form the ring or by seamless-rotation on a rod to create the desired shape. This type of bracelet, termed by Spaer as ‘diagonally ribbed bracelets’ of the monochrome group (Spaer 2001: 199, Nos 447, 448, Pl. 33:447, 448), is dated to the late Roman/Byzantine periods. A few similar fragments are already known from the site (Kucharczyk 2010a: 65, Fig. 6:3; 2016: 99).

2. KILN OPERATION DEPOSITS

A circular, middle-sized lime kiln (Fe) was explored in the southern part of the trench, in an accumulation deposit covering the ruins of the early Roman building. Layers related to the operation of lime kilns yielded some glass material typical of the 2nd–5th centuries AD. A few fragments of thin-walled colorless beakers, at least two vessels, with a rounded, thickened flaring rim, were recognized. They are dated to the 2nd–3rd century AD (Ctx 1300/19). The category that they represent, colorless vessels from this period, is not overly represented in the Kom el-Dikka assemblage so far.

Finds of a 4th–5th century AD date include a low, hollow tubular base from a bowl or bottle, blown of pale yellowish-green glass (Ctx 1303/19) [Fig. 3:1], and windowpanes blown from pale green and yellowish-green bubbly glass, some with purple streaks in the glass (Ctx 1300/19) [Fig. 3:3]. Scratched parallel lines on the upper, glossy surface of a few fragments of panes may be guidelines to facilitate cutting. A distorted windowpane shard constitutes undisputed evidence of local glassmaking. It seems that all the panes came from the large windows of the nearby baths as indicated by a no-

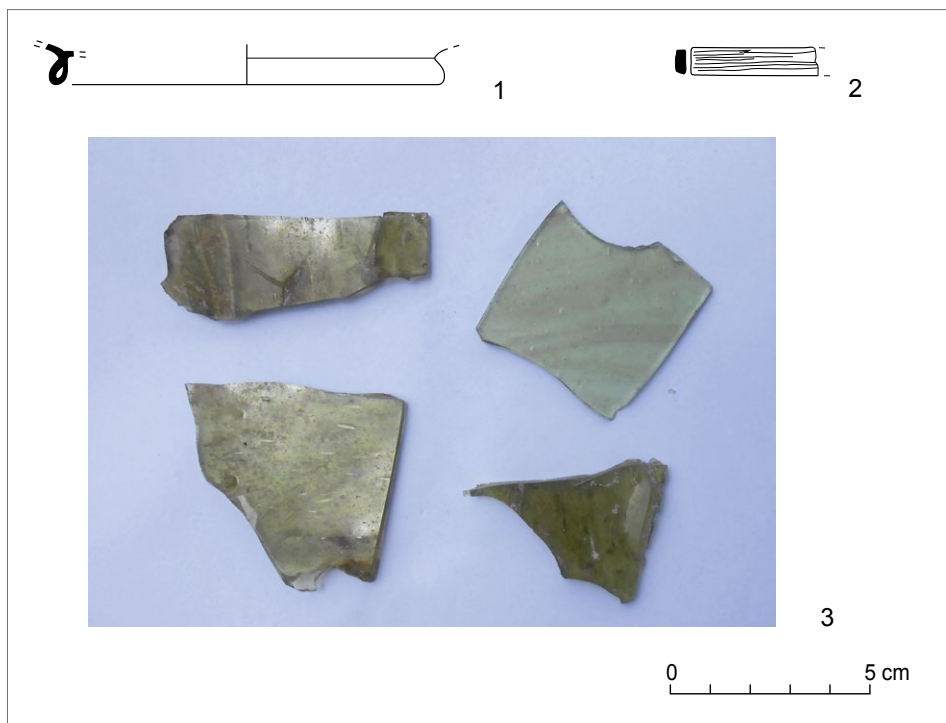


Fig. 3. Kiln-operation deposits. Late Roman glass (4th to 5th century AD): 1 – base; 2 – bar-shaped inlay; 3 – cylinder blown windowpanes (PCMA UW Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Project | drawing R. Kucharczyk, M. Momot; photo R. Kucharczyk)

table concentration of yellowish-green window-glass observed in deposits of ashes dumped from the baths (Kucharczyk 2007: 53; 2010a: 66; 2011: 62–63, Fig. 6; 2019: 59).

All the remaining glass finds from this chronological group represent specimens made by the non-blowing technique. This very small group consists of a bar-shaped inlay, a bead, and pieces of twisted rods. A fragment of a rectangular, pale yellowish bar-shaped flat inlay, roughly rectangular in cross section, retains long striations on the upper surface (Ctx 1303/19) [Fig. 3:2]. It appears to have been made in a mould as demonstrated by the glossy surface on one side and dull surface on the other, and by the rounded edges. Similar objects made of purple glass have been recorded from the site, from contexts dated to the end of the 4th–5th century AD (Kucharczyk 2010a: 65–66, Fig. 6:4–5; 2011: 62, Fig. 5:2; for the composite moulding stripes of the early Roman period, see Goldstein 1979: 247–248). They may have been used in inlay work: on furniture, small chests or other flat objects. Much longer pieces were composed into elaborate wall decorations like the mosaic glass panels and colored *opus sectile* from Antinoupolis, set within parallel lines made of colored glass (see Silvano 2001: 424–426, Pls I, II:1a, III: 7–7bis: 4th–5th century AD). Two rod fragments of pale yellowish-green and green glass, drawn out in a loose twist,

were also retrieved (Ctx 1300/19). They are deemed to represent cosmetic instruments used in the process of preparing and mixing various cosmetic and medical preparations (for a pale green glass rod from the early Roman period found in Sector U, see Majcherek and Kucharczyk 2014: 28–29, Fig. 4:3). Straight segments were sometimes set in panels as architectural ornaments (Goldstein 1979: 263–264: a fragment of a pilaster with twisted polychrome rods: mid-1st century BC to 1st century AD).

A faceted necklace bead made of a deep blue glass was noted as well (Ctx 1300/19). This type, a so-called “cornerless” bead, hexagonal in section, with a fairly large perforation, is made up of four neatly faceted lozenges framed by eight triangles. Six identical examples were found last season in the same area, although in lower layers of the excavated building. Not only the shape and quality of workmanship of all the beads, but above all the color of the glass, imitating lapis lazuli, enhance the significance of the group (Kucharczyk 2019: 52–53, Figs 6A: 1–2; 6B: top row). The ample evidence of bead-making: stone moulds with rows of grooves on top accompanied by a significant amount of gold-in-glass beads and half products (glass tubes), as well as wasters, testify to the artisanal production taking place in this area in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD.

3. POST-KILN LEVELLING FILL

Post-kiln levelling fill yielded one body shard of the 2nd–3rd century AD, belonging to a colorless beaker with flaring walls and a rounded rim (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:1].

The rest of the material is dated to the 4th–5th century AD and includes a beaker, bottles and their bases, a jug, a cup and a bowl, and lamps. The beaker,

apparently made of purple black glass, has flaring walls and a thick rounded rim (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:2]. Bottles, manufactured of various shades of bubbly green and yellowish-green glass, as well

as purple and blue glass, are exemplified by fragments of cylindrical necks, often with uneven walls, with a rather limited range of rims: rolled-in rim (Ctx 1237/19) [Fig. 4:3], partly infolded rim (Ctx 1236/19)

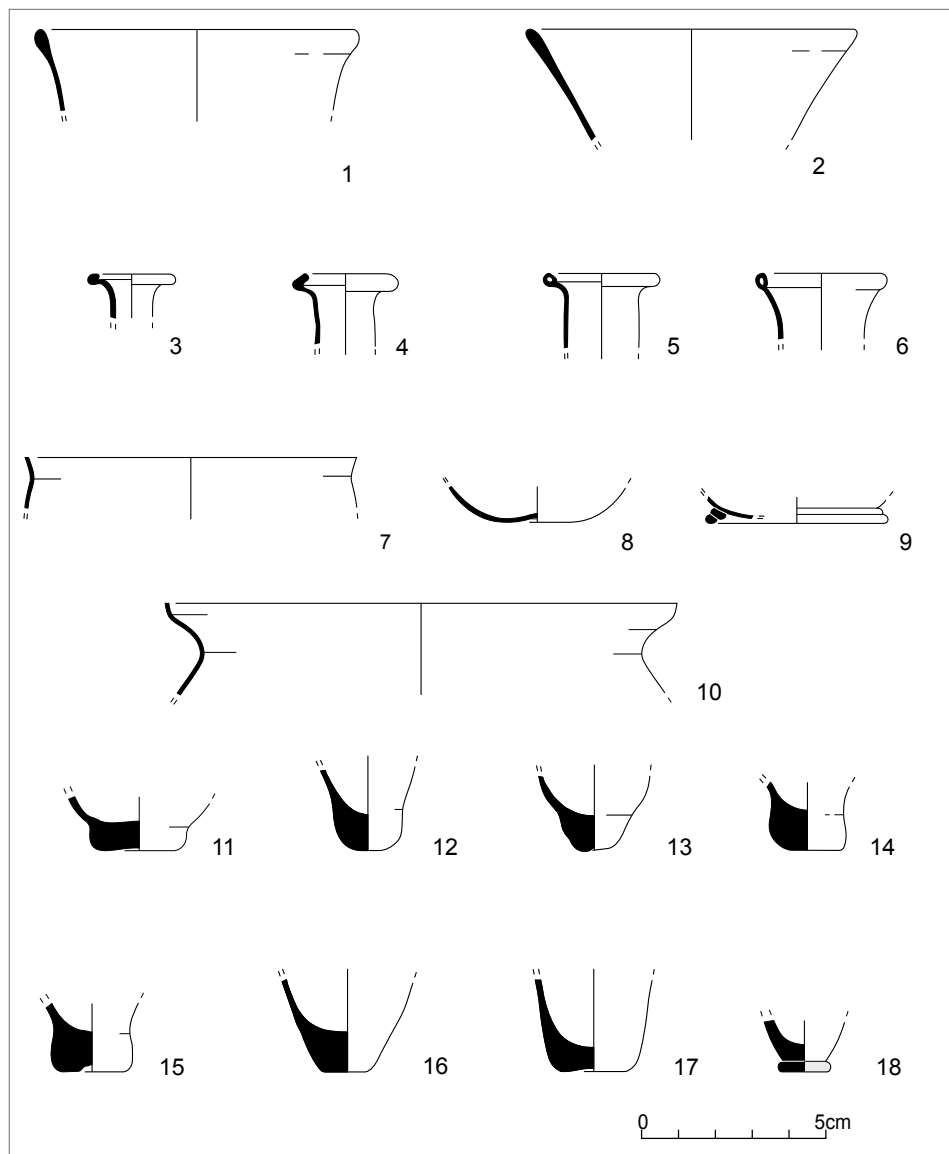


Fig. 4. Post-kiln levelling. Mid- to late Roman glass (2nd to 5th century AD): 1–2 – beakers; 3–6 – bottles; 7, 10 – cup/bowl; 8, 9 – bases; 11 – beaker; 12–16 – lamps; 17 – beaker or lamp; 18 – lamp or bottle (PCMA UW Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Project | drawing R. Kucharczyk, M. Momot)

[Fig. 4:4] and infolded rims with a small opening (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:5–6]. Two base fragments have also been recorded: a slightly concave base of an apparently spherical bottle (Ctx 1236/19) [Fig. 4:8], and a trail-wound base with two thin winds, spirally applied to the outer base edge. The vessel and the delicate trail on the base are of the same, pale green glass (Ctx 1236/19) [Fig. 4:9]. Several bases of this sort with fragments of a flat and convex floor, have been noted previously at Kom el-Dikka. In nearly all the examples, the body and bases are made of the same color glass, usually yellowish-green or shades of green; the number of winds ranges from two to four, and some form a pedestal base. Their quality, colour of the fabric and workmanship point to a local production. This type of base, well known from several different vessel forms, such as bowls but mostly bottles and jugs, is characteristic of the 4th century AD (Kucharczyk 2007: 51–52, Fig. 3:13; 2010a: 57–58, Fig. 1:11–13; 2011: 57–58, Fig. 1:5–7, 11; 2016: 92–93, Fig. 3:8, and references to similar finds from other sites in Egypt, including Marina el-Alamein and 'Marea'; also Majcherek and Kucharczyk 2014: 30, 28, Fig. 4:8; Kucharczyk 2016: 92–93, Fig. 3:8).

One shard of a decorated bottle was also found. A pale green flat base and body fragment with mold-blown decoration in relief, exhibiting most probably knobby locks, comes likely from a head flask (Isings 1957: 93–94, Form 78b; Stern 1995: 210–212: Type A4). Not enough has been preserved to determine whether this perfume container had a single or double head (Ctx 1238/19). To date, Kom el-Dikka has yielded a few

loose fragments of bases and lower parts of bodies (purple, yellowish-green, green and blue), and only one intact yellowish-amber bottle with two identical chubby youthful faces and knobby hair arranged in three rows. The latter object was recovered from the bath area, specifically the thick deposits of ashes from the bath furnaces preserved in the subterranean service passages. The find spot leaves no doubt as to its function (Kucharczyk 2004: Fig. 1A; 2010a: 59, Fig. 2:5; 2011: 58–59, Fig. 1:12; 2016: 92; for parallels, found in 2nd–3rd century AD contexts at House 1 in Marina el-Alamein, see Kucharczyk 2010b: Fig. 1:7). The seams on the bases indicate molding of the vessels in a bottomless two-part mold with the vertical mold seams incorporated into the hair of the two figures and the rough underside of the base reflecting the surface on which they were made. Once again, the color and the low quality of the fabric and workmanship point to a local workshop from the 4th century AD. This period also witnessed the manufacture of head flasks bearing a *crux monogrammatica* molded in relief on the underside of the base. Such a motif, composed of the Latin cross combined with the Greek letter *rho*, can be seen on a double-head flask, with two male heads set back-to-back, from Karanis (Harden 1936: 214, Pl. XVIII: 629; Harden thought the sign on the base to be a maker's mark rather than a Christian *chi-rho*).

The material from this context included a cylindrical neck fragment with a plain flaring rim with rounded edge and a single thick trail wound round once just below the rim, fitted with a reeded strap handle attached and folded below it

(Ctx 1238/19). The vessel, most probably a tall jug with a cylindrical or pear-shaped body, has a handle and trail from the same, very bubbly green glass. A limited number of containers of this type, which was common in the 4th–5th century AD, has been found at the site (Kucharczyk 2011: 57–58, Fig. 1:11; 2016: 92–93, Fig. 3:7,9; Majcherek and Kucharczyk 2014: 28, 30, Fig. 4:7; for evidence from House 1 in Marina el-Alamein, see Kucharczyk 2010b: 116–117, Fig. 1:13).

Open forms are clearly among the less frequent finds. They are represented by a beaker, bowl and lamps, specimens typical of the 4th–5th centuries AD. Vessels include examples with a cracked-off, ground rim: a thin-walled deep bowl or cup made of colorless bubbly glass with a greenish tinge (Ctx 1236/19) [Fig. 4:7] and a pale green, large bowl (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:10] (for variously shaped vessels with a cracked-off rim from the site, see Kucharczyk 2007: 49; 2010a: 60–61, Fig. 3:10–13; 2016: 90, 96, 98, Figs 2A: 4–5, 6: 3, 7: 5–6). A low, solid colorless base came from a beaker serving as a drinking vessel or a container for ointments of various kinds (Ctx 1237/19) [Fig. 4:11]. Although the upper body is missing, it is likely to belong to a specimen with a thin, slightly concave cylindrical body, curving under and in towards a base, and a thickened, fire-rounded, almost vertical rim, often decorated with one horizontal trail below it. Beakers of the common 4th and early 5th century AD type are still rare at Kom el-Dikka (Kucharczyk 2010a: 63–64, Fig. 5:1). The distribution of finds seems to indicate that the type was confined mainly to northern Palestine and northwestern Jordan (for

fragments unearthed in large quantities in the debris of the glass workshop at Jalame, dated to the second half of the 4th century AD, which would suggest that they were produced there, see Weinberg and Goldstein 1988: 60–62, Fig. 4-23, and see discussion and references therein).

Lamps were represented by only one type of conical lamp or beaker: six bases with thick, solid bottoms, made of bubbly yellowish-green, light green, and colorless glass with a greenish tinge, in some cases roughly formed (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:12–16] and one, thick flat fragment (Ctx 1237/19) [Fig. 4:17]. The lower part of a conical vessel, blown of good quality colorless glass, with a small disk formed from dark blue glass applied to its bottom, may have been either a lamp or a bottle. The combination of two contrasting colors made this vessel attractive, a feature infrequent among the Kom el-Dikka finds from this time (Ctx 1238/19) [Fig. 4:18].

The few windowpanes (Ctx 1238/19) were made with the cylinder technique based on free-blowing. The matt/glossy fragments (2.5–3 mm thick), all with rough edges, are of a pale green and yellowish green glass, with many elongated bubbles.

A mosaic cane with a simple pattern, consisting of a green center, surrounded by a ring of opaque yellow, was also evidenced in the material (Ctx 1238/19). It has already been said above that this was one of the commonest patterns of mosaic glass on Kom el-Dikka, used on vessels as well as small objects like beads and gaming counters. This find, together with other fragments of mosaic canes with simple patterns both floral (quatrefoils, connected at their tips, made

of opaque yellow glass, encased in a dark green matrix; and flower-like rosette with an opaque red center and opaque yellow small petals embedded in a dark green matrix) and geometric (opaque red

center surrounded by an opaque yellow border encased in a dark green matrix) already known from the site, are strongly suggestive of a local production of mosaic glass.

4. REFUSE DUMPS

The central area of the site (sector F) was most probably never built over and apparently served as a dumping ground. The core of the dump was made up of ash from the nearby bath, alternating with urban refuse. The contexts excavated this season belonged to the initial stage of the dump, deposited in the 4th–5th century AD.

Exploration of compact layers of ash yielded glass fragments mainly from the 1st–4th centuries AD (for the 4th–6th century AD glass material from 2018, chiefly comprising simple shapes of tableware, mostly free-blown bottles, bowls, wineglass, and lamps, and personal adornments as well as evidence of window glazing, see Kucharczyk 2019: 56–59). The most significant find from this context is a clear colorless body shard with parts of two rows of close-set, vertically oriented, hexagonal facets, slightly varying in form (Ctx 1209/19) [Fig. 5:1]. It is too small to give a full sense of the shape, but it was most likely part of a tall, truncated conical beaker with splayed foot, carved from a vessel blank, with undecorated recessed bands above the base and below the rim, and high ridges below the rim and above the base, with a wide register of cut decoration between the two. The decoration usually featured horizontal rows of normal facet-shapes, such as diamonds, hexagons, circles or ovals, set either in quincunx

or in a honeycomb pattern, very rarely an interlocking pattern consisting of long and wide curving facets, and a figurative scene. Colorless drinking vessels appeared in the third quarter of the 1st century AD and continued to be made until the end of the first quarter of the 2nd century AD. Their provenance is uncertain, but both Italy and Alexandria, as well as other Mediterranean centers, have been suggested (Isings 1957: 37–38, Form 21; for the colorless conical facet-cut beakers, including two principal versions: one tall and narrow (Group I), and the other short and wide (Group II) (see Oliver 1984; also Harden 1987: 194–195, Nos 102, 104–105). The importance of this small piece lies in the fact that luxury glass tableware of this kind is extremely rare at Kom el-Dikka. So far, it is the first evidence of this type of glass to come from the site.

Speaking of this fragment, one should recall a massive aquamarine disk-base with a solid dome, coming from a tall conical beaker, also representing luxury tableware of the 1st century AD. Interestingly, it was found also in Area FW, in House FB, located further east (Kucharczyk 2011: 66–67, Fig. 9:1; for the plan of Area FW, see Majcherek 2020, in this volume: Fig. 5; Isings 1957: 48–49, Form 34; see also Whitehouse 1997: 227, No. 384—a blue beaker with a cracked-off rim and simple wheel-cut linear

decoration from the Corning Museum of Glass).

Early Roman vessels decorated with facet-cutting were until now entirely absent from Kom el-Dikka, but the picture at the port of Berenike on the Red Sea coast is entirely different. The evidence of such vessels is particularly numerous and includes two shapes, tall and short, with several schemes of cut-decoration (Kucharczyk 2017: 155–156, Figs 4:4–5, 5:7–8; and references to earlier finds from the site). These distinctive faceted beakers were also observed at Quseir al-Qadim (Meyer 1992: 21, Pl. 5, Nos 76–86). Extensive evidence of glass material of a similar kind has been forthcoming from stations and small fortlets in the Eastern Desert: Wakalat al-Zarqâ/Maximianon, al-Muwayh/Krokodilô, Umm Balad/Kainé Latomia, as well as

Khashm el-Minayh/Didymoi (see Brun 2011: 217, Fig. 263: 33–39) and the sites at Gebel Abu Dokhan/Mons Porphyrites (see Bailey 2007: 239–241, Fig. 8.3:26–35). Facet-cut motifs on the fragments from Berenike find parallels among vessels published from Elephantine (Rodziewicz 2005: 88, Pl. 6:104), Tebtynis and Douch (Nenna 2003: 359–360, Figs 1–2). Complete examples of this type and some fragments are known from Karanis (Harden 1936: Pl. XV:409–412).

Other finds worth mentioning from the ash dumps include a complete, long, cylindrical neck with a short funnel mouth and fire-rounded rim, and an apparent piriform body (Ctx 1209/19) [Fig. 5:2]. This colorless piece of noticeable workmanship quality, may have belonged to a flask of 2nd–3rd century AD date. Such finds are still rare at Kom el-Dikka.

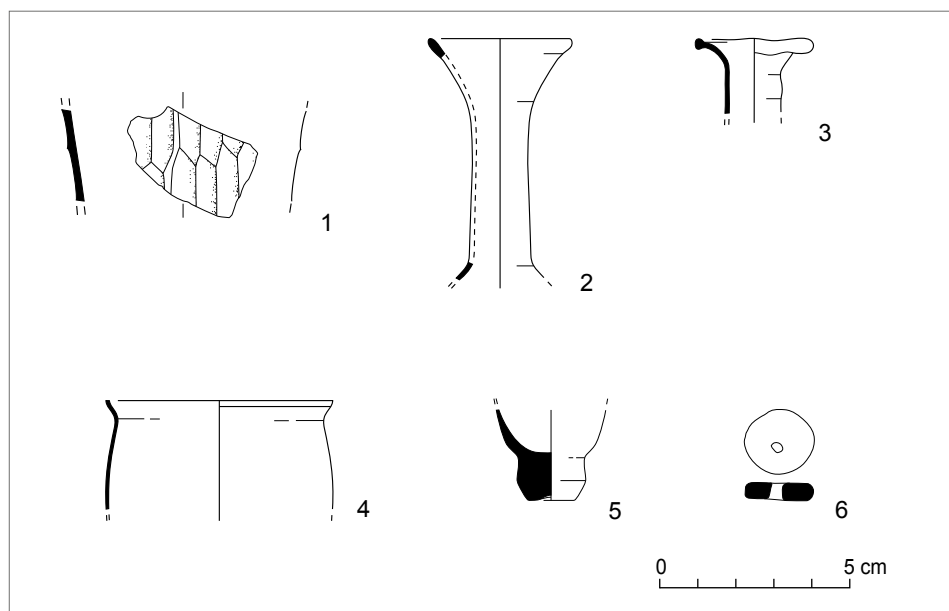


Fig. 5. Refuse dumps. Early to late Roman glass (1st to 5th century AD): 1 – facet-cut beaker; 2–3 – bottles; 4 – beaker or cup; 5 – lamp; 6 – disk-like object (PCMA UW Alexandria Kom el-Dikka Project | drawing R. Kucharczyk, M. Momot)

A few late Roman (4th and 5th century AD) fragments were also registered, including a roughly fashioned, cylindrical neck of a bottle with a short funnel mouth, and a thickened, unevenly folded rim, made of low quality green glass (Ctx 535/19) [Fig. 5:3]. There is also a solid, knobbed base of a conical lamp, made of green glass (Ctx 535/19) [Fig. 5:5], featuring distinctly good workmanship and a shiny surface, features not observed

on similar finds from the site. Another body fragment appears to have been part of a simply shaped, thin-walled beaker or a cup with a cracked-off, ground rim of near-colorless glass (Ctx 1209/19) [Fig. 5:4].

Glass other than vessels is embodied by two finds made in the non-blowing technique: a yellowish-green flat disk-like object with very smooth and rounded sides, and a slightly worn perforation (Ctx 1209/19) [Fig. 5:6] and fragments of stirring rods.

CONCLUSION

Despite its limited size, the glass finds assemblage from the excavation conducted in area FW in the central part of the site merits attention because of the presence of luxury tableware of late Hellenistic/early Roman date, which has seldom been recorded so far, not only from Kom el-Dikka but from the region as well. Standing out in the assemblage are two, presumably imported, blue cast plates and a colorless bowl with grooves, as well as a colorless beaker with facet-cut decoration.

However, the bulk of the material is late Roman: plain, free-blown bottles, bowls, and lamps, as well as windowpanes. Similarities to other vessels from the site, poor quality of the fabric and inferior workmanship are proof of local mass production.

The evidence of mosaic glass, including a shallow bowl and more importantly, a composite mosaic cane, which is yet another example of this sort from the site, confirms beyond all doubt that this type of glass was manufactured in Roman-age Alexandria.

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