

**Roman pottery
in the Near East:
Where, whence, whither?**

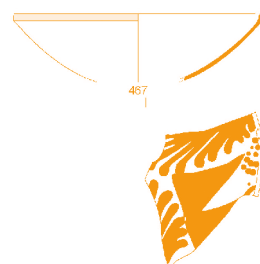
**Second Round Table
Amman, 2014**

In memoriam



S. Thomas Parker
1950–2021

Introduction



The idea for this kind of workshop on “Roman Pottery in the Near East” was voiced initially at the Conference on Archaeology and Archaeometry in Parma and Pisa in 2008, where we participated in the section on Late Roman coarse wares, cooking wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean. The conference venues were gorgeous, as was the hospitality of our Italian hosts and colleagues. In the course of the conference, it became very clear that the main focus was the abundance of pottery from Italy, Greece and the Western Mediterranean up to the Aegean. With our material from the Near East we were marginalized, unable to discuss and compare our pottery from Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan in a meaningful way, especially not on the basis of regional coarse ware typologies.

We greeted with enthusiasm the idea of organizing our own series of pottery workshops, in which we would strive to connect scholars and researchers currently working on pottery from the Roman period in the Near East, mainly Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Knowing full well the complicated political landscape of the region, we were hoping to establish an academic network that would provide a platform for researchers of all levels to carry on discussions that could transcend political differences.

Bettina Fischer-Genz¹
Yvonne Gerber²
Hanna Hamel³

¹ Independent researcher

² Klassische Archäologie,
University of Basel

³ Independent researcher

The first pottery workshop entitled “Roman Pottery in the Near East: Local Production and Regional Trade” was organized in Berlin in 2010, with the support of the German Archaeological Institute and the Thyssen Foundation. The papers of that workshop were published in the *Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean Pottery* (RLAMP) series in 2014.

When selecting a venue for the second workshop, we were fortunate to gain the American Center of Research (ACOR) in Amman as a partner. This location was central and more easily accessible for scholars involved in this field of research. Nevertheless, the majority of colleagues attending the workshop were still foreign researchers working in the Near East. On the one hand, this is due to political constraints and our inability to overcome the reservations of the various local institutions and antiquity authorities concerning the idea of scientific exchange across political divides. On the other hand, the lack of financial aid and funding especially for the analysis of large amounts of common ware pottery is also part of a wider problem. Nowhere, whether in the West or the East, is this type of research viewed as a stepping stone to an illustrious career in archaeology, and this is in sharp contrast with the vast amounts, as well as importance, for contextual dating of the ceramic material uncovered in each and every fieldwork project. Therefore, in effect, very few researchers are actively engaged in this type of research, and funding remains difficult and inconsistent.

The round table organized in 2014 presented a couple of pottery studies from Syria and Lebanon (Bettina Fischer-Genz, “Rural pottery traditions around Laodi-

cea-ad-Libanum, Syria”; and Paul Newson, “Pottery of the Niha Valley, Bekaa, Lebanon”). The focus, however, was on the large number of ceramic research projects from Transjordan. Pottery studies from Northern Transjordan were presented by Frauke Kenkel, “The so-called ‘Galilean bowls’ from Tall Zirā’a”; Günther Schörner and Nora-Miriam Voss, “Historical land-use and landscape change in the Decapolis region”, a part of this pottery study is also published in this volume; Annette Højen Sørensen, “Roman household wares”; and Signe Bruun Kristensen, “Defining shape and function in Late Roman–Byzantine locally produced reddish ware”, both part of the Danish–German Jerash North-west Quarter project. Several pottery projects from Israel, both established and new, were presented (Haim Ben David and Uzi Leibner, “Local pottery in ‘high resolution’ surveys around the Sea of Galilee”; Mickey Osband, “Analytical evidence for trade between the Hippos region and the Eastern Galilee in the Roman period”; Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, “The kiln works of the *Legio Decima Fretensis*: pottery production and distribution”, but she publishes now a paper of different content; Mordechai Aviam and James R. Strange, “Evidence for oil lamps production at the Galilee Jewish village of Shikhin, near Sepphoris”; and David Adan-Bayewitz, “Pottery production and historical transition: Early Roman-period Jerusalem and its vicinity”).

Nabataean/Roman pottery studies from Middle and Southern Transjordan comprised: Noor Mulder-Hymans, “The Roman pottery of Tell Abu Sarbut and Khirbat al-Mudayna: A comparison of two sites”; Maria-Louise Sidoroff, “Multidisci-

plinary studies of pottery from the Nabataean settlement in the Wadi ath-Thamad"; Konstantinos Politis, "Late Hellenistic/Roman/Nabataean pottery in context at sites of the Southern Ghors in Jordan"; Caroline Durand, "Change and continuity of the Nabataean pottery tradition during the Roman provincial period: Ceramic assemblages coming from 3rd–4th century AD contexts in Khirbet edh-Dharih"; Craig A. Harvey, "Tubuli in Nabataea and Roman Arabia"; Yvonne Gerber, "Petra common ware – common at home, fashionable elsewhere?"; Jordan E. Karlis, "A comparative analysis of Eastern Sigillata A from Petra and surrounding sites within the Nabataean kingdom"; Pamela K. Koulianos, "The chronology of the Petra Garden and Pool Complex through coarse wares", published in this volume; François Renel, "The Roman pottery from the C4 Building in the Qasr al-Bint area", published in this volume; Sarah Wenner, "A reconsideration of the Nabataean painted fine ware chronology in the early 2nd century", published in this volume; S. Thomas Parker, "Nabataean and Roman coarse ware pottery from Aila (Aqaba)", published in this volume; and finally Tali Erickson-Gini, "Problems and solutions in the dating of Nabataean vessels of the Roman period", also here in this volume. The latter is an essential contribution to the dating of Nabataean fine ware pottery of later periods, which raised much controversial discussions in literature as well as during the workshop. Based on her pottery research in the Negev, she questions the already established typo-chronology of Nabataean fine ware for the later periods in the Petra region, an issue of crucial importance for future

pottery research in Nabataean territories. Under these circumstances, we opted to publish also a "Response to Erickson-Gini's problems and solutions in dating Nabataean pottery in the post-annexation period" by Sarah Wenner and S. Thomas Parker, in the hope of providing future scholars ample material for thought and information substantiating their dating criteria of Nabataean fine ware contexts.

Many of the presented papers were not submitted then for publication. Some of the scholars participating in 2014 in the round table in Amman have left either the field of pottery studies or archaeology as such. Some have already published their pottery research in final publications or were unable to submit their papers due to time constraints with other projects. Therefore, we are very grateful to Iwona Zych and the editorial team of the *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* journal for undertaking to publish the papers from our workshop in the *PAM* 30/2 volume (2021 issue). We are very happy that finally some of the excellent conference papers will be published and available online at the same time.

In Amman, we were very fortunate to be hosted at ACOR for the two intensive and fruitful days of our workshop and would like to give our thanks to Dr. Barbara Porter and Dr. Christopher Tuttle who were the director and associate director of ACOR at the time, and also to all the staff of ACOR for their marvellous and kind support and wonderful hospitality.

Finally, we dedicate this volume to the memory of our dear friend and colleague, S. Thomas Parker, who supported our vision wholeheartedly and was an active participant and discussant in both

of our workshops. He was committed to supporting and including young scholars in our scientific endeavour and would emphatically argue and debate his vast knowledge of Roman Arabia and Jordanian archaeology. During our workshops we were fortunate to have him contribute his visions on fine ware typologies in

Petra and the distribution of coarse ware productions from Aila to our discussions. He was an outstanding mentor for our research, able at the same time to hear and value all opinions with an open mind, but analyse and dissect them through the lens of physical evidence and his scientific experience.

Note from the Editors

Some differences in terminology that are due to different 'schools' should be noted. Researchers who have worked and excavated in Aqaba speak of 'Aila Ware' and 'Aila amphorae': the export of Aila amphorae to other regions. However, most researchers who have worked or are working in Jordan call them 'Aqaba Ware' or 'Aqaba amphorae'. We should add that Tom Parker himself always used the term 'Aila amphora'. Therefore, it would be strange to find the term 'Aqaba' instead of 'Aila' in the papers of those researchers who were originally trained in Aqaba, the homeland of this production. In the end, the Editors decided against applying standards of volume consistency across all texts in this case. Another major editorial issue was the decision to leave the abbreviations NPFW and NFW in the texts of American researchers, who tend to use them as the natural course of things, unlike their European counterparts who have not adopted them in any extent. We offer here a handy glossary of these terms and their different variants: *Alia amphora* = *Aqaba amphora*; *Alia Ware* = *Aqaba Ware*; *NPFW* = *Nabataean Painted Fine Ware*; *NFW* = *Nabataean Fine Ware*; and *NSFW* = *Nabatean Semi-Fine Ware*.

Moreover, for easy reference and for the sake of clarity, Schmid's Phase 3, which comprises Nabataean unpainted and painted fine ware, runs roughly from the second quarter of the 1st through the mid-2nd century AD. It is divided into three Dekorphases (referred to sometimes as Subphases) based on different painted décor/patterns on the interior of bowls/cups:

- 3a – AD 20/30–70/80 or the second to third quarter of the 1st century AD (dating accepted by most researchers and supported by other findings),
- 3b – AD 70/80–100 or the last quarter of the 1st century AD,
- 3c – from AD 100 probably through mid-2nd century AD (Schmid's AD 106 originally), passing gradually into the so-called Dekorphase 4.

Dekorphase 4 was first defined based on small changes of the rim form of the bowls/cups and by changes of the painted décor/patterns from vegetal to more abstract patterns.

Yvonne Gerber, Grzegorz Majcherek and Urszula Wicenciak-Núñez