

## **Pottery from Kom el-Khamsin Public Bath in Kom Oshim Museum**

**Dr. Mona M. Taha Hussein\***

### **Abstract:**

Kom el Khamsin is one of the sites that was examined by Rathone from 1995 till 1998 during his Survey of the Meris of Polemon. In 1999, Mr Saeed Mohamed Mostafa, Fayum Monuments Inspector and projects excavator discovered in Kom el Khamsin a Public Bath and fifteen undecorated Pottery inside it. The bath is the type of Greek-style baths that was introduced in the Ptolemaic period in Egypt and were still being built well into the Roman period. It incorporated individual immersion bathtubs without hypocausts. The bath was built probably in Artisans quarter or even the agora or forum, where it functioned as a convenient bath. The Pottery which was found in Kom el Khamsin complex Bath was stored at the magazine of Kom Oshiem Museum and was not described or dated. This article describes and dates the pottery through a comparative study with dated objects. The Pottery includes three convex bowls, two carinated pots, four oinochoe' jars, two cooking jars, two pigeonier pots, one drinking pot, and one Amphora that could be dated to the early Roman period.

### **Key words:**

EL Fayum, Kom el Khamsin, Complex Public Bath, The Pottery.

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## 1.Introduction

El Fayum was the ancient Arsinoite nome<sup>(1)</sup>, located to the west of the Nile valley and fed by a branch of the Nile. In 1993, the survey work of Dominic Rathbone (British-Egyptian team) on ancient villages in the Fayum started and between 1995 and 1998, eighteen sites were examined in the Meris of Polemon<sup>(2)</sup> in the south-west of the nome<sup>(3)</sup>. Pottery was collected for analysis and final reports of the pottery found during the surveys in the Polemon of the Fayum were issued<sup>(4)</sup>. Kom el Khamsin<sup>(5)</sup> is one of the sites that has been examined<sup>(6)</sup> and show in its mounds amphora production. After that excavation, work continued under Mr. Saeed Mohamed Mostafa in Kom el Khamsin on 23rd February 1999, and lasted till 31st March 1999, and stopped due to wheat harvest season. Works were presumed for 15 days in the beginning of June 1999. The excavation works were finalized by 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 1999 as the end of the fiscal year.<sup>(7)</sup> The excavation resulted in discovering a Public Bath complex and fifteen Pottery<sup>(8)</sup>. The complex bath is from the type developed in Egypt

(1) Roger S. Bagnall, Archaeological Work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 1995-2000, in: *The American Journal of Archaeology* 105, 2001, p. 234.

(2) Donald M. Bailey, A Form of Amphores Egyptiennes 3 from the South-West Fayum, in: *Amphores D'E'gypte De La Basse E'poque A' L'E'poque Arabe, Cahiers de la C'e'ramic E'gyptinne* 8, Vol.I, 2007, p. 227.

(3) Some of the villades concerned once lined the shores of the ancient Gharaqlake, now mostly dried up.

(4) D. Rathbone, Towards a Historical Topography of the Fayum, in D.M. Baily, *Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt*, Ann Arbor, 1996, p. 50-56.

(5) Kom el khamsini is located 40 km south west of Al-Faiyum city in Itsa (اطسا) and covers an area of 94 feddan.

(6) Post-survey work on the material gathered during the Rathbone Survey of the Meris of Polemon during 1995-1998 leads to date the sites examined. Kom el Khamsin probably Berenikis Themophrou is not adjacent to the lake, was occupied from late Ptolemaic to second century AD.

(7) My thanks goes for Mr. Ahmed abdel Aal head of Al Fayum Monuments office, Mr. Saeed Mohamed Mostafa and Mr. Adel Monuments Inspectors in Al-Faiyum.

(8) Mona M. Taha Hussein, Unpublished Roman Public Bath in Al-Khamsein in Al-Faiyum, in: *The journal of the Faculty of Tourism & Hotels Journal, Fayoum University, 2009*, pp. 100-118.

in the Ptolemaic period and incorporated individual immersion bathtubs without hypocausts<sup>(9)</sup>. The time when this complex bath type became popular in Egypt cannot be determined. It was introduced in the Ptolemaic period and was still built into the Roman period.<sup>(10)</sup>Fifteen pottery were found in the relaxing and cleansing sections as well as in the small multifunctional rooms with benches in Kom el Khamsin public complex bath. The Pottery which was stored at the magazine of Kom Oshiem Museum was not described or dated. The purpose of this paper is to describe and date the Pottery through a comparative study with dated objects.



**Fig. 1: The double hip bath (tholoi) of Kom el Khamsin Complex Bath (after Mr. Saeed Mohamed Mostafa)**

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<sup>(9)</sup>Kom el-Khamsin/ Berenikis Thesmophorou or Kerkethoeris is completely excavated with 2 tholoi with each 20 hip-baths; 1 room with at least 5 immersion bathtubs.

<sup>(10)</sup> Monika Trümper, Complex Public Bath Buildings of the Hellenistic Period A Case Study in Regional Differences, in: *Le bain collectif en E'gypte*, 2009, p.150.

## 2. Description

(Fig.2-4)

Fig.2, R.7, Convex bowl with ring base. Terra cotta, H.6 cm, D.15 cm. Parallels: BALLETT, POLUDNIKIEWICZ 2012, p.28-32, pl.1-3, nos. 5-39 (Tebtynis); SPENCER 2003, p. 51, pl.35, no. 7 (Tell el-Balamun), Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 2, p.236.

Fig.3, R.8, Convex bowl with ring base, Terra cotta, H.4 cm, D.14 cm. Parallels: BALLETT, POLUDNIKIEWICZ 2012, p.28-32, pl.1-3, nos. 5-39 (Tebtynis); SPENCER 2003, p. 51, pl.35, no. 7 (Tell el-Balamun), Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 2, p.236.

Fig.4, R.9, Convex bowl with ring base, Terra cotta, H.5.5cm, D.14.5cm. It differ from Fig.2, and Fig.3 with their rounder, shallower profile and their higher ring base. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand 2011, Group 2, p.236.

(Fig.5-6)

Fig.5, R.5, Carinated pot with ring base, Terra cotta, H.6 cm, D.15,5cm. Parallel: BALLETT, POLUNDNIKIEWICZ 2012, p.46, pl.8,nos.101-107. Fig.6, R.6, Carinated dish with ring base, Terra cotta, H.11cm, D.15 cm. Parrallel; Aston 1999, p.331, pl.III, no.2928, Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 2e, p.237.

(Fig.7-10)

Fig.7, R.2, Oinochoe Jar with one hand, Terra cotta, H.6cm, D.15 cm. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 7, p.242. Fig.8, R.3, Oinochoe Jar with one hand, Terra cotta, H.15cm, D.6m. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 7, p.242. Fig.9, R.18, Oinochoe Jar, Terra cotta, H.22 cm, D.8cm. Fig.10, R.10, Oinochoe Jar, Terra cotta, H.18cm, D.8.5cm. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 7, p.242.

(Fig.11-12)

Fig.10, R.12, Pots a pigeonnier, Terra cotta, H.9 cm, D.16cm. Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 15, p.218. Fig.11, R.13, Pots a pigeonnier, Terra cotta, H.7 cm, D.3cm. parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 15, p.218.

(Fig.13- 14)

Fig.13, R.1, cooking pot two hands are broken, Terra cotta, H.19 cm, D.10cm. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, group 5, p.239.

Fig.14, R.4, cooking pot with two hands, Terra cotta, H.18cm, D.6.5cm. Parallel: Sylvie Marchand, 2011, group 5, P'ate Va, p.239.

(Fig.15-16)

Fig.15, R.14, drinking Jar, Terra cotta, H.14 cm, D.7 cm. The jar with modelled rim, a rounded base and a body showing turning marks made by a fast wheel. Parallel: Drinking pot, Sylvie Marchand, 2011, Group 8a, p.243. Fig.16: R.15, Amphora type AE3, H.23 cm, D.5. A jar with two hands. The neck is narrower than the body, showing turning marks made by a fast wheel. Parallel: Parallel: Donald M. Bailey, 2007, p.235.

### 3. Comment:

Vessels made in Nile clay are the most represented within the Roman material of the Fayum region. Kom el Khamsin in the Fayum was a production site for the AE3<sup>(11)</sup>. The fifteen pottery objects found in Kom el Khamsin Public Bath are from the table and cooking ware type which were made from the Nile. B1, B2 and C. The Convex bowls (Fig. 2, 3, 4) were frequently encountered in shape. Widespread in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period, they are attested over long period of time, from the end of the late period until the Roman period<sup>(12)</sup>. The profile and fabric of the bowls (Fig. 2, 3, 4) show similarities with convex bowls in silt clay produced in el Fayum found in Tebtynis<sup>(13)</sup> and Aswan reign<sup>(14)</sup>. The carinated pot is a common shape in Egyptian ware that appeared in the Ptolemaic period and persists into the Early Roman period<sup>(15)</sup>. The Oinochoe (Fig. 7, 8, 9, 10) are close to a Greek oinochoe in shape. This oinochoe is a vessel with a globular body on a small ring base, with a short, flaring neck and an outturned rim. A slightly flattened rolled handle is present too that joins the shoulders and the rim. The only difference between the vessel (Fig. 7, 8, 9) and the Greek Oinochoe is that it has a simple round mouth instead of the traditional trefoil, and a rather more squat shape of the body. The vessel has a self-slip in a buff-brown colour too and a polished surface. The cooking pot (Fig. 13, 14) that has a modelled rim, is a well-known type in

<sup>(11)</sup> Roberta Tomber, Early Roman Egyptian Amphorae from the Eastern Desert of Egypt: a Chronological Sequence, in: *Amphorae D'Égypte De la Basse Époque À L'Époque Arabe, Vol II, Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne 8, 2007, p.527.*

<sup>(12)</sup> Aure'lia Masson, Ptolemaic, Ceramics of the Theban Region Between Tradition, Imitation and Innovation: The Priests' Quarter as a Study Case, in: *Céramiques Ptoémaïques De La Région The'baine, Acts de la table Ronde de Karnak les 28 et 29 September 2014, Institut Français D'Arche'ologie Orientale, Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne 10, 2016, p.151.*

<sup>(13)</sup> Silvie Marchand, La dernière occupation d'une maison d'époque ptolémaïque du village de Tebtynis (Fayoum) Une céramique de transition tarde-hellénistique, in: *Cahiers de La Céramique Égyptienne 9, Le Caire 2011, Fig4a, Groupe 2a, p.219.*

<sup>(14)</sup> *ibid.* Fig4a, Groupe 2a, p.219.

<sup>(15)</sup> *ibid.* Group 2e, p.237.

Egypt including the Fayum Region, it has some traits that are typical to the chytrai, and appeared in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and persisted into the Roman period. It is classified to be from the fine cooking wares that were made from the Nile clay, with a generally finely levigated, dense, and conspicuous amount of sand inclusions and micas. The drinking jar (Fig. 15) was produced from a finely levigated Nile clay and covered with a shiny red slip. Similar drinking jars are found at El Karnak in Luxor and in Aswan, they were well attested in the end of the Ptolemaic period and the early Roman period. The Amphore (Fig.16) is similar to Amphore AE3 that has a short neck, handles coming from well down the neck to the shoulder, a wide body and a button base. The best comparative material for the pottery of Kom el Khamsin Public Bath (Fig.2-15) is offered by the Pottery of Tebtynis, described and dated by Sylvie Marchand<sup>(16)</sup>, their shapes and fabrics are similar to those found in the Public Complex Bath of Kom el Khamsin. This dating is also supported by comparing the Amphore (Fig.16) with the material from Kom el Khamsin site discussed and dated by Donald M. Bailey<sup>(17)</sup>.

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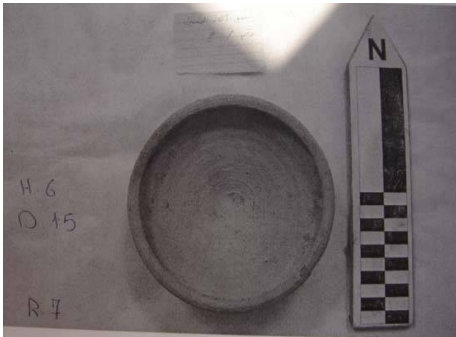
<sup>(16)</sup> Sylvie Marchand, La dernie're occupation d'une maison d'e'poque ptole'maique du village de Tebtynis (Fayoum) Une ce'ramique de transition tardo-hell'enistique, in: Cahiers de La Ce'rameque E'gyptienne 9, Le Caire 2011, p.215-225.

<sup>(17)</sup> Donald M.Bailey, A Form of Amphores Egyptiennes 3 from the South-West Fayum, in: *Amphores D'E'gypte De La Basse E'poque A' L'E'poque Arabe, Cahiers de la C'e'ramic E'gyptinne 8, Vol.I, 2007, p.227.*

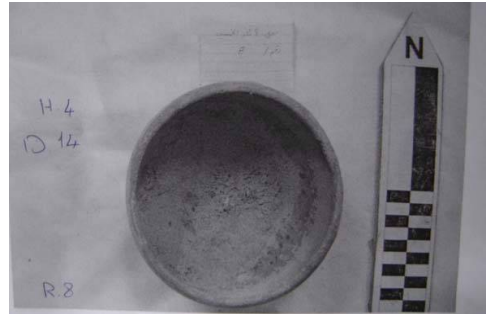
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- 6-Silvie Marchand, La dernie're occupation d'une maison d'e'poque,ptole'maique du village de Tebtynis (Fayoum) Une ce'ramique de transition tardo-hell'enistique, in: Cahiers de La Ce'rameque E'gyptienne 9, Le Caire 2011, Fig4a, Groupe 2a, p.219.

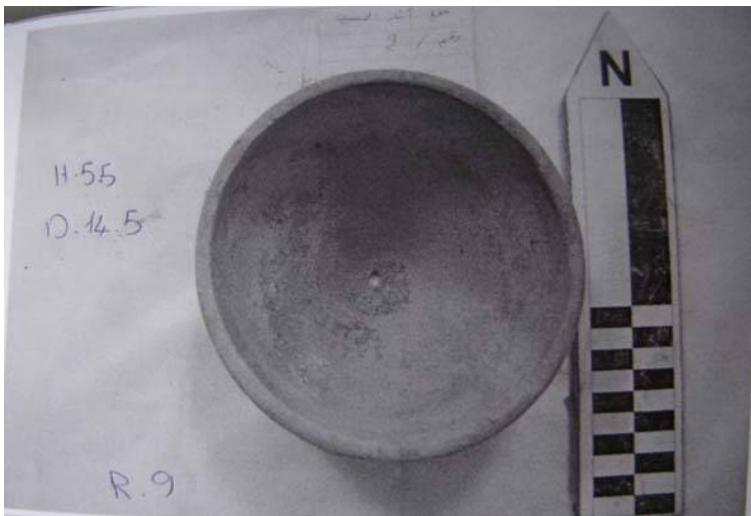




(Fig.2)

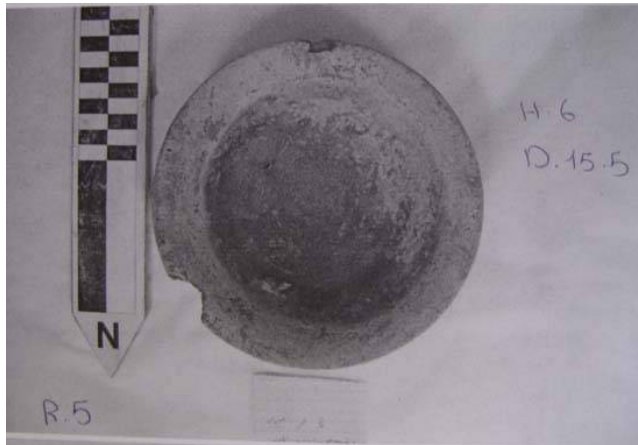


(Fig.3)

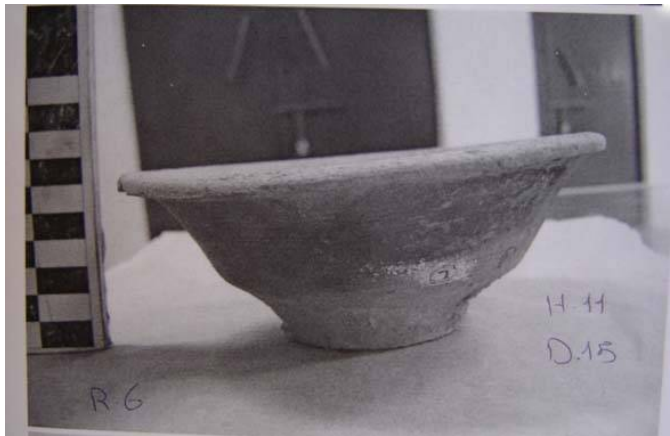


(Fig.4)

Fig. 2,3,4: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )

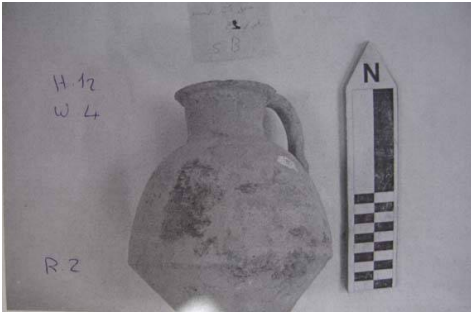


(Fig. 5)

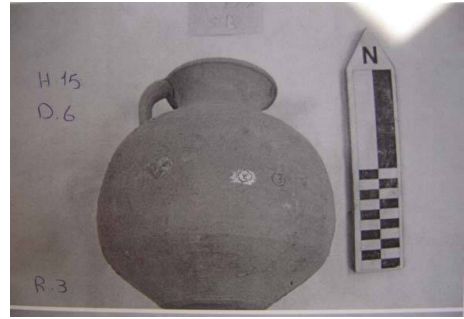


(Fig. 6)

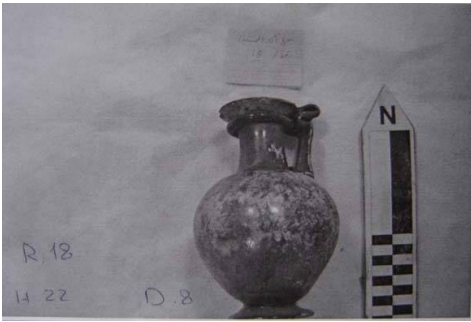
Fig.5,6: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )



(Fig. 7)



(Fig. 8)

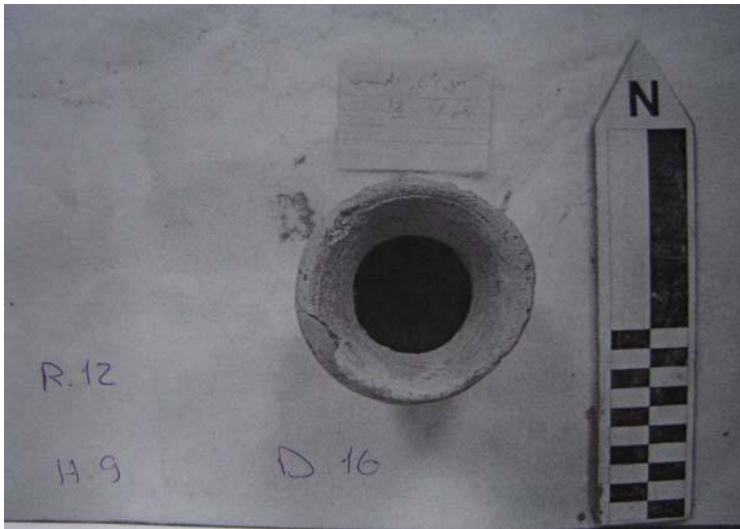


(Fig. 9)

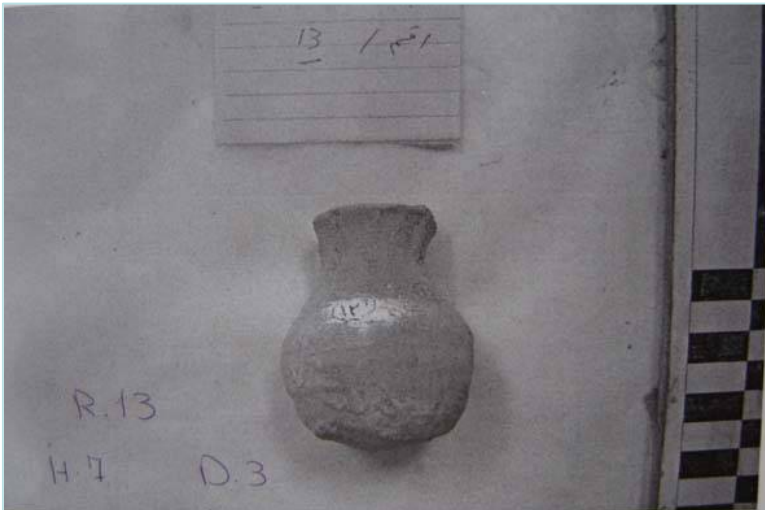


(Fig. 10)

Fig. 7,8,9,10: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )

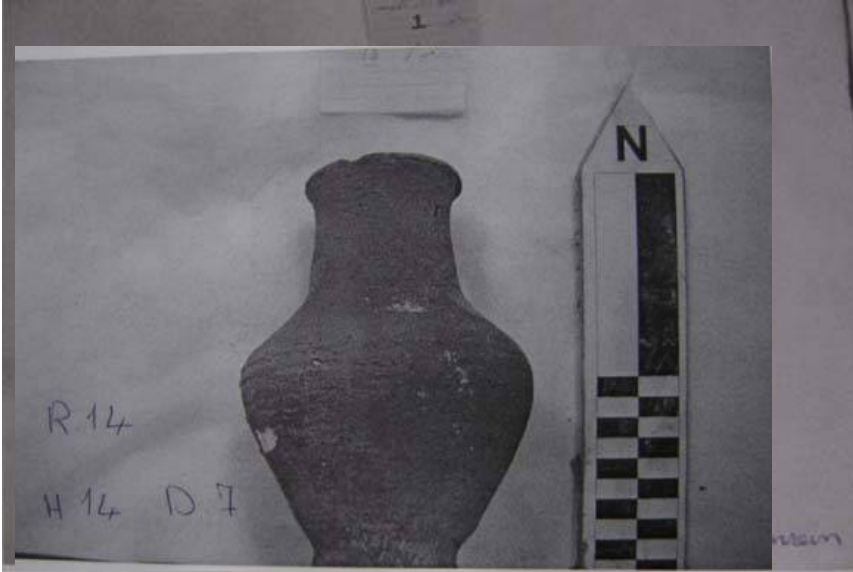


(Fig. 11)



(Fig. 12)

Fig.11,12: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )

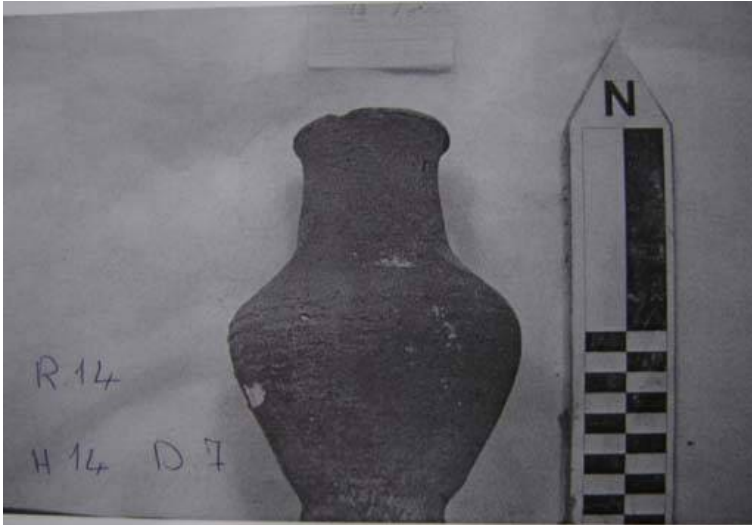


(Fig.13)



(Fig.14)

Fig. 13,14: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )



(Fig. 15)



(Fig.16)

Fig. 15,16: Kom Oshim Museum, Fayum (photo@Saeed M. Mostafa )

## أواني فخارية من حمام كوم الخمسين العام بمتحف كوم أوшим بالفيوم

د. منى محمد طة حسين\*

### الملخص:

أكتشف حمام كوم الخمسين العام سنة ١٩٩٩ على يد الأستاذ سعيد محمد مصطفى، مفتش آثار الفيوم ومدير عام المشروع. الحمام من نوع الحمامات العامة التي شيّدت في العصر البطلمي و استمر بنائها في العصر الروماني في مصر. كما تم العثور وقت اكتشافه على خمسة عشر من الأواني الفخارية داخل أماكن متفرقة من الحمام. الأواني الفخارية و التي تم تخزينها بمتحف كوم و شيم بالفيوم لم تؤرخ بعد. الهدف من البحث وصف القطع الأثرية و تاريخها. إعمدت الدراسة على دراسات سابقة للفخار في مصر و بالخاص في منطقة جنوب غرب الفيوم مثل قرية تبتينس.

أثبتت الدراسة ان الأواني التي وجدت في الحمام من الأواني ذات الاستخدام المنزلي المصري (أواني المائدة و أواني الطهي) والتي استخدمت في صناعتها الطين الرسوبي و الطين الخشن و المختلط ذو الطبيعة الجيرية من الفيوم. تتميز هذه الفترة بتنوع و تعدد أشكال الانية. يدور تاريخ هذه النماذج حول نهاية العصر الهلينستي، حتي بداية الإمبراطورية الرومانية (القرن الأول الميلادي)، اما الامفورة المصرية (شكل ١٦) يرجع تاريخها من القرن الأول حتي الثالث الميلادي.

### الكلمات الدالة:

الفيوم- كوم الخمسين- حمام كوم الخمسين العام- الأواني الفخارية