



AN EGYPTIAN JAR FROM SIDON IN ITS EGYPTIAN CONTEXT SOME FRESH EVIDENCE

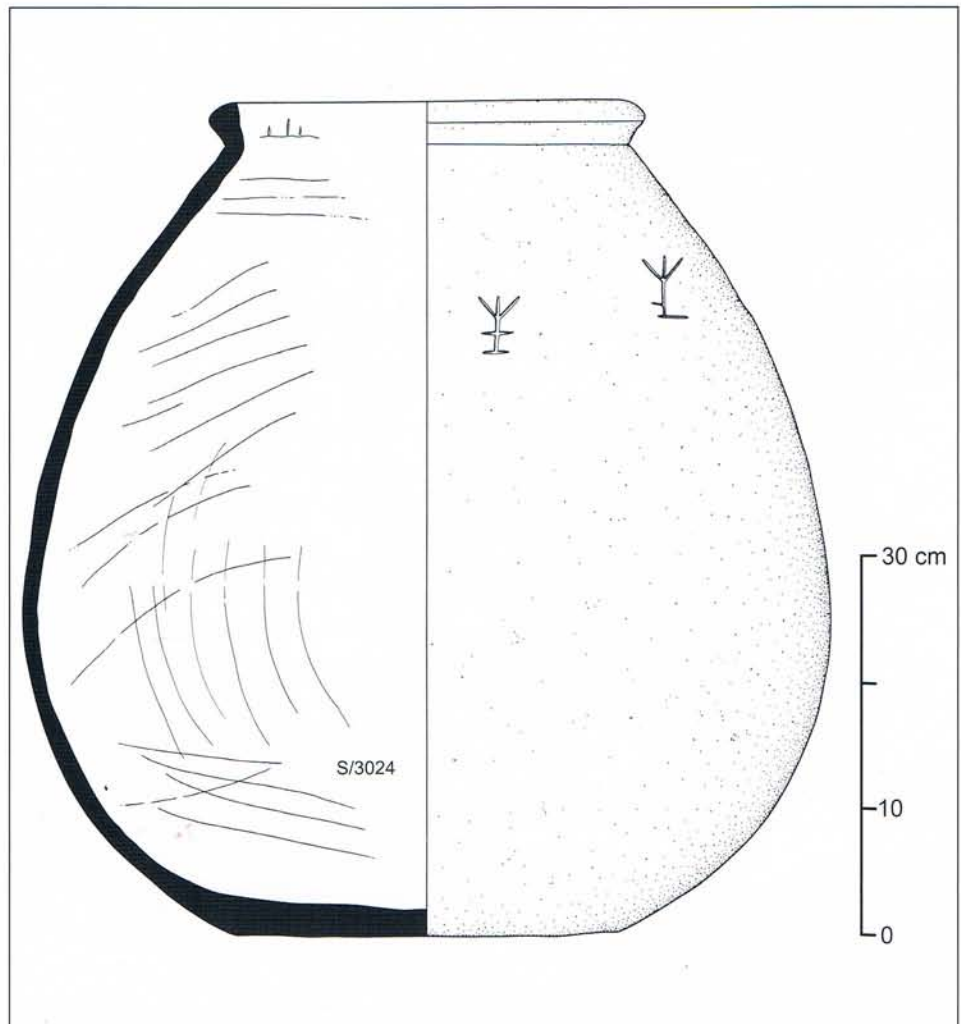
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A large Egyptian storage jar, commonly called *zîr* among ceramicists after the modern Arabic word for large pottery jars containing water, was found at Sidon in local phase 2 (S/3024). After falling out of use as a container for some kind of commodity imported from Egypt this jar was used as a practical alternative in which a child was laid to rest within the vessel¹. The burial container (burial 24) was already published by C. Doumet-Serhal², with a preliminary dating provided by B. Bader, which suggested a time from Senwosret I to Amenemhat III and perhaps beyond on the basis of Egyptian parallels³.

The examination of the original vessel from Sidon in the Beirut National Museum by one of the authors (K. Kopetzky, fig. 1) makes a re-evaluation of the applied dating criteria necessary, as some shape details differ from the original drawing⁴.

1 *Zîr* from Sidon.



This storage jar has to be classified as II-c-2 in the Tell el-Dab^ca fabric system⁵, which correlates with Marl C1 of the Vienna System⁶. In Egypt storage jars belonging to this type appear from the beginning of the 12th Dynasty, continue through the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period and on into the first half of the 18th Dynasty⁷.⁸⁰ Within these ca 500 years the shape and the fabric of this vessel type undergo significant changes, which are of chronological relevance. Attention has to be paid to the base diameter, the shape of the body as well as the proportion of the rim, the base diameter as well as the rim shape. To date unfortunately only a handful of vessels that can be reconstructed to complete profiles are available for comparison. For this reason the shape of the rim and its development over time often remains as the only dating criterion applicable to sherd material.

The Sidon example shows a height of 66 cm, a rim diameter of 34,3 cm, and a base diameter of 29,5cm⁸. The rim was rolled outside and turned onto itself, trimmed with a tool or the fingers of the potter, which often created a slight edge bulge on the inside and a profiled edge on the outside⁹. The maximum diameter of the jar is situated in the lower third of the height of the vessel, thus giving a bag-shaped impression. The vessel was found lying horizontally in the sand¹⁰. Outside the burial a painted carinated bowl was deposited upside down¹¹. Inside the jar an infant was laid to rest on its right side with its head near the opening of the jar directed to the East and its flexed legs. A painted jug was put before the legs¹². The closest parallel to this *zîr*¹³ comes from a securely dated context in Dahshur- the tomb of Queen Weret II, wife of Senwosret III¹⁴. The broken Dahshur vessel¹⁵ was found in the burial chamber of Queen Weret II, which is located under the pyramid of Senwosret III¹⁶. Her burial can most probably be dated to the later reign of Senwosret III. A similar but incomplete vessel of this type with its base missing¹⁷, came from the same place¹⁸. Another very close parallel is the storage jar from Dahshur found in the burial of the vizier's wife Sit-werut, dated to early in the reign of Amenemhat III¹⁹.

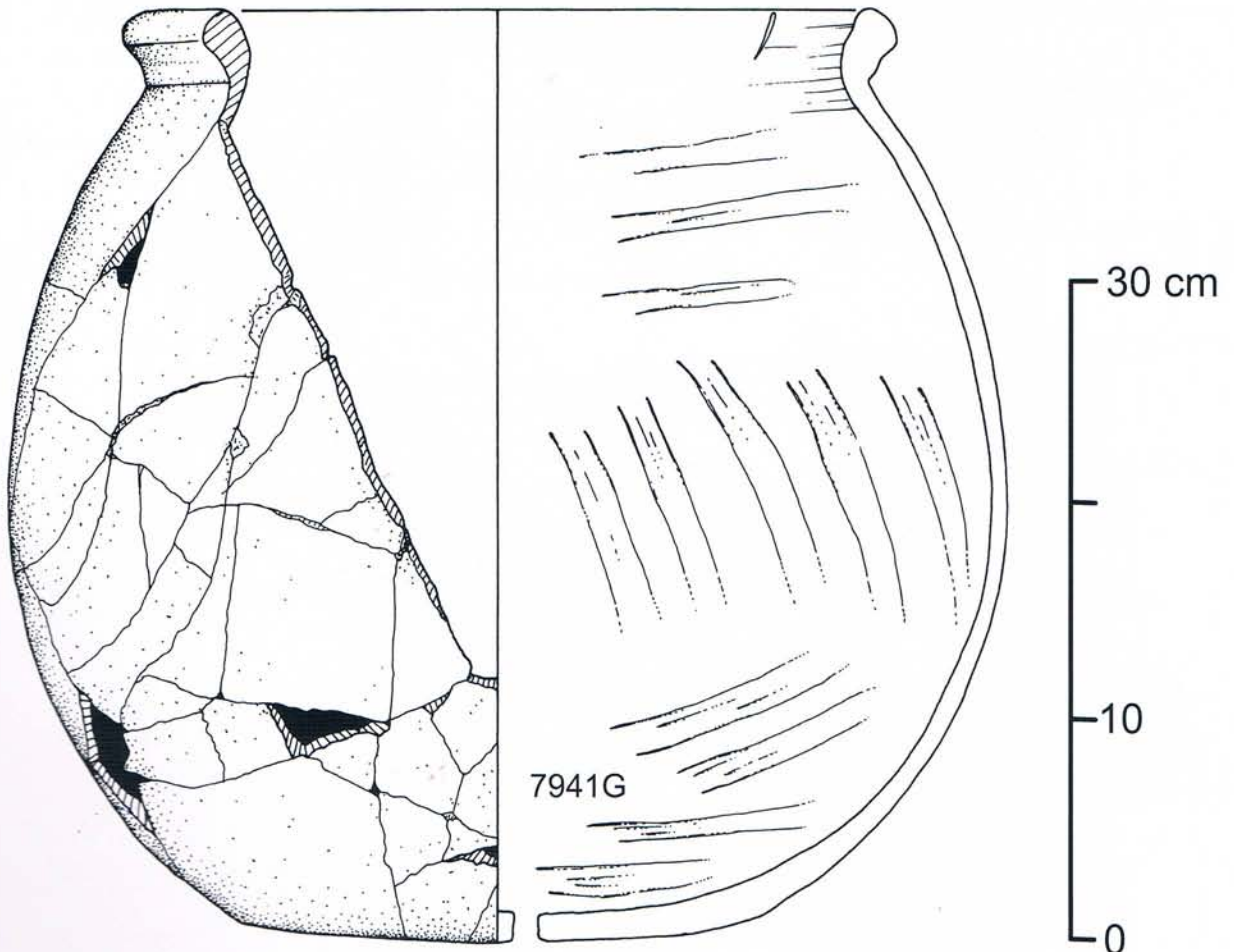
A rim fragment of this type was found in the construction debris of the temple at Qasr es Sagha²⁰. The ceramics found within this debris were dated to the period between Senwosret II and the beginning of Amenemhat III by Do. Arnold²¹.

Another parallel was excavated at Tell el-Dab^ca in Area A/IV²² (fig. 2). This storage jar comes from a test trench dug along the south section of the lowest excavated layer²³, which was pulled out from below the subsoil water and is now dated to Phase H²⁴ or more likely is even earlier. This phase has been paralleled with Dahshur, complex 6, on the basis of typical pottery shapes. Complex 6 can be dated to the late 12th early 13th Dynasty in accordance with the functioning of the cult of Amenemhat III at his pyramid complex at Dahshur²⁵. At Tell el-Dab^ca similar rim types occur until Tell el-Dab^ca Phase F, which corresponds to the transitional MB IIA/B Phase and the middle of the 13th Dynasty²⁶.

A deposit outside of the fortress of Mirgissa in Nubia provides us with another example of a similar jar rim comparable to the ones above ²⁷. In this very dump the famous execration texts were also found. They were dated by G. Posner to the period of Senwosret III and the following decades ²⁸. More recently Koenig wanted to date them on the basis ⁸¹ of textual evidence to just before the first half of the 12th Dynasty ²⁹. He argues that the execration texts from Mirgissa are older than those from Saqqara. In agreement with the dating first proposed by G. Posener, he assigns the latter to the end of the 12th Dynasty, namely the period of Amenemhat III and his successors. His argument leads to the conclusion that the Mirgissa texts belong to an earlier period including the reign of Senwosret III. His suggestion, that they should be dated with regard to the pottery to the construction of the fort, during the time of Amenemhat II and Senwosret II, is questionable.

The parallels discussed above thus indicate that this vessel type falls into the period between Senwosret III and the middle of the 13th Dynasty. Taking the two Levantine painted vessels into consideration found together with the storage jar the date for the Sidon vessel can now be restricted further to the period of Amenemhat III and the beginning of the 13th Dynasty.

2 Zir from Tell el-Dab'a, Area A/IV.



1 Very often Levantine Amphorae were used for child burials of this kind, although in some rare cases Egyptian storage jars were also utilised as burial containers. Cf. I. Forstner-Müller, 2008, Abb. 251.

2 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2003, p. 12.

3 B. Bader, 2003, p. 36. The main reason for this dating was the width of the base, which tends to be wider in the earlier part of the 12th Dynasty.

4 B. Bader, 2003, fig. 4.

5 M. Bietak, 1991a, p. 327-28.

6 H.-Å. Nordström and J. Bourriau, 1993, p. 180.

7 M. Bietak, 1991b, fig. 8. B. Bader, 2001, fig. 43, p. 155-194.

8 The measurements given by B. Bader, 2003, 34, are incorrect due to a mistake in the scale of the drawing.

9 Sometimes there are traces (unevenness) on top of the rim that suggest the vessel was turned upside down in order to finish the bottom part.

10 C. Doumet-Serhal, 2003, p. 12-13.

11 T. Bagh, 2004, p. 48.

12 T. Bagh, 2004, p. 49.

13 The storage jar from Dahshur looks slightly more squat.

14 D. Arnold, 2002, p. 75.

15 S. J. Allen, 2006, p. 32-33.

16 D. Arnold, 2002, p. 75-82.

17 S. Allen, 1998, p. 45, fig. 3/9.

18 Please note how the body shapes and sizes of the various storage jars differ from each other although they were deposited at the same time. Cf. S. Allen, 1998, fig. 3 and 2006.

19 S. Allen, personal communication. Lecture given at the Haindorf Conference, 2000. D. Arnold 1996, p. 25.

20 Do. Arnold, 1979, p. 31, fig. 18/5.

21 Do. Arnold, 1979, p. 32.

22 B. Bader, 2002, p. 163, cat. nr. 267, reg. nr. 7941G. There is a possibility that the orifice of the vessel might be less wide than shown on the drawing due to the bad preservation of the vessel (ea. a quarter).

23 Found together with a storage jar with a probably older rim type. Cf. B. Bader, 2002, p. 161, cat. nr. 265, reg. nr. 7941H.

24 Cf. M. Bietak *et al.*, 2001, fig. 2.

25 Do. Arnold, 1982, p. 30-32, 38-39.

26 Note that the time period associated with the middle of the 13th Dynasty as is applicable to the Delta capital Avaris is considerably shorter than in the rest of Egypt, due to the early commencement of the 15th Dynasty there.

27 A. Vila, 1963, 153, fig. 13/14.

28 G. Posener, 1940, p. 32.

29 Y. Koenig, 1990, p. 101-125.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AHL *Archaeology and History in Lebanon*.

AV *Archäologische Veröffentlichungen*.

BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*.

MDAIK *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Institutes, Abteilung Kairo*.

MMA *Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*.

OLA *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*.

RdÉ *Revue d'Égypte*.

UZK *Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo*.