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# TERRACOTTA FROM BIJAN ISLAND

MAJA RZEPLINSKA

**B**IJAN, small artificial island on Euphrates, was excavated by Polish Archeological expedition<sup>1</sup> during salvage excavation carried out as a part of Haditha Dam Project (FIG. 1). Between 1979 and 1983, eight seasons of fieldworks were conducted, under the direction of, first Michal Gawlikowski and then Maria Krogulska. The site, now covered by the waters of Lake Qadisiyyah, laid in the borders of modern Iraq, approximately 25 km downstream from Ana.

The island (FIG. 2) was built as a fortress at the beginning of 8th century BC during the neo-Assyrian period. Stone foundations rising straight from the river waters were 120 m long (from north to south) and 29 m wide (from east to west). Then the Assyrians rebuild the construction, and enlarged it to 185 m in southerly direction and 72 m in westerly. Stone frames of the fortifications filled with earth, sand, clay, gravel and crushed rock created an artificial sterile layer. During time the river formed a 150 m sandbar along the southern wall enlarging the original construction (FIG. 3).

The modern day cultivation and palm plantation on the island has determined the position of some trial pits, especially those opened during the first season of excavations.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the first trench was dug across the island, on previously cultivated land. This narrow trench – E-W, with

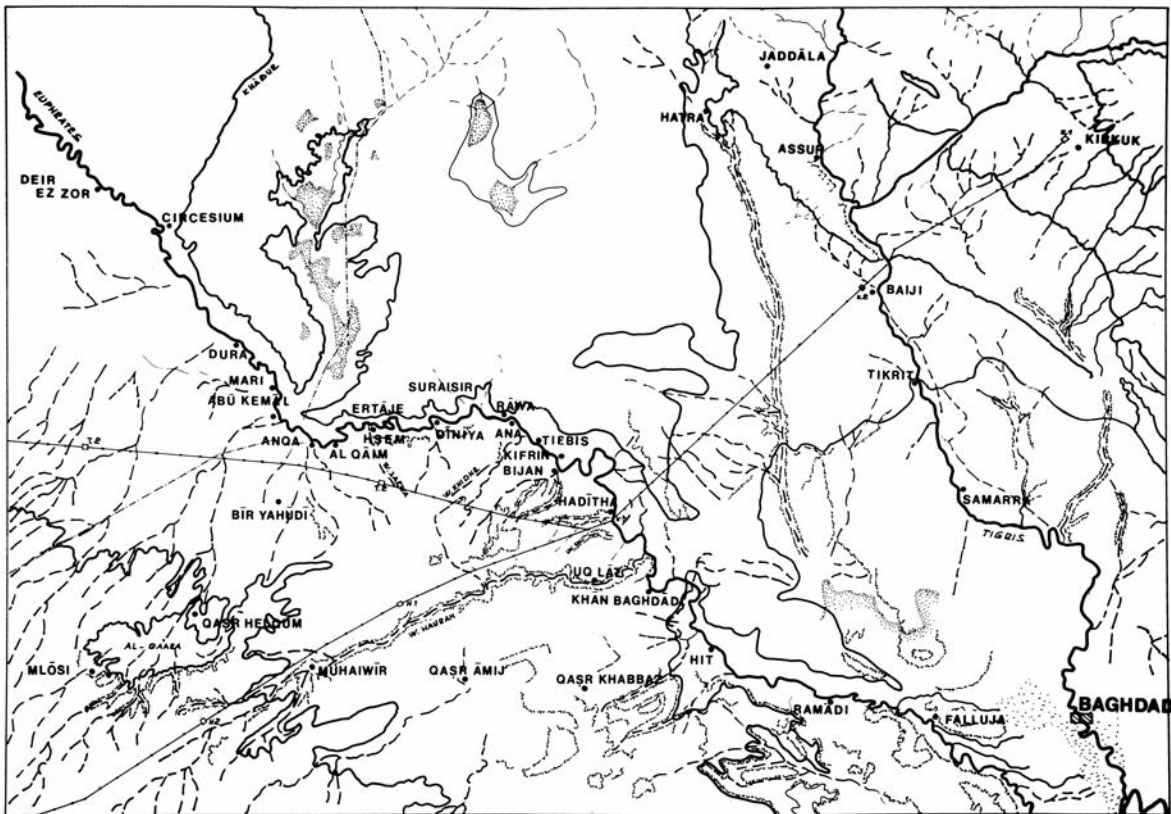


FIG. 1. Map of Haditha Dam Project (Archive of Centro Scavi Torino).

<sup>1</sup> Under the auspices of Polish School of Mediterranean Archaeology.

<sup>2</sup> On the *naura* located on the western bank see GAWLIKOWSKI 1983, 26-33; 1983-1984, 207; 1985, 15-21; KROGULSKA 1987, 155-156, figs. 64-66 and 1992, 353-362.



FIG. 2. Photo of the Bijan Island (after KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006, fig. 1).

the average depth ranging from 0.8 to 3 m –, was laid out in order to recognize the stratigraphy of the site. Based on the results those of excavations, the following occupational phases were established:

- 0 - surface layer connected with modern agricultural activities;
- I - Islamic: Abbasid 9th-10th century;
- II - Roman: first half of the 3rd century AD;
- III - Parthian: 1st century BC-2nd century AD;
- IV - Assyrian: 8th-7th century BC.

As one can see, Bijan was abandoned and re-settled several times. No architectural remains were detected during the span of about five hundred years between Assyrian and Parthian times, as well as six hundred years between the end of the Roman occupation and the beginning of Islamic settlement.

The second and the third phase are crucial for the purpose of this paper, as the terracotta from Bijan are mostly Hellenistic, even if few of them were found in secure context.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, stratigraphy of those layers is not always clear as they were very compressed and difficult to distinguish. Moreover we know very little about the Parthian times architecture, as it was covered with Roman constructions. The builders of the Roman period repeated the Parthian plan, destroying the older buildings. Therefore, and due to limited area of excavations, we know only small fragments of domestic architecture unearthed in trenches A, B and E-W. Three pottery kilns were uncovered in trench B and F, and five tombs, one built of stone slabs and four made in ceramic vessels,<sup>4</sup> were excavated in trench E, F and C. In the Islamic period new settlers dug pits, *inter alia*

<sup>3</sup> During the excavation no precise description of of the terracotta's finding place was made.

<sup>4</sup> All information about Parthian period on Bijan can be found in KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006.

for large storage jars, and disturbed this already complicated image. That is why the terracotta were sometimes found in layer 1. Unfortunately not all the pieces were well documented during the excavations. In some cases we have only a photograph or a simple drawing of the figurine and no information about the founding place. Thus we date the terracotta only on stylistic or technological bases.

The most regular architectural remains from the Parthian period were unveiled in trench A and B (FIG. 4). On the centre of this section a stone-paved, north-south street was uncovered. It was built directly on the sand and gravel carried here by the flood.<sup>5</sup> Further on the west, archeologist excavated wall foundations made of undressed stones, build with two faces of stone and smaller rocks with earth in the middle, which occurred as typical technique for Parthian period on Bijan. All of the walls had similar thickness and were built perpendicular to each other. The walls formed one big rectangular room, with no traces of an entrance. It was surrounded with narrow rooms or corridors, one with round oven in its northwest corner. Still there were traces of other walls, suggesting an row of rooms facing the street. On the opposite site, in trench A, archeologist excavated a complex of small rectangular rooms.<sup>6</sup>

The pottery kilns were found in trench B and F. In trench B, two, jointed, squared kilns of uncertain date, were constructed directly in the center of the big rectangular room, whereas the pottery kiln found in trench F was build outside the walls of Assyrian fortress, dug into the sand bar. All three were constructed with bricks.

Five graves connected to the Parthian period were found in trenches E-W, F and C, always beyond the limits of the settlement, although it is hardly likely that there was a specifically marked and isolated burial ground. Furthermore there was no regularity in the grave construction, as there was a pit burial, a vessel graves and a chamber tomb<sup>7</sup> found. The funerary equipment was very modest and was not repeated between graves. It included handle-less storage amphora with bitumen coating inside and a small bowl; globular jar and fish remains; children's bronze bracelet; iron ball (hollow inside) and an iron spoon with a long handle.

Besides terracotta, which will be described below, other small finds dated for Parthian period include mostly pottery sherds. They were found in all of the trenches, but mostly in the ceramic layers from trench G and E-W, where thick-walled storage jars made of chocolate brown clay, handle less storage amphora made of brown clay, and common ware vessels were excavated. Additionally a fragmentary lid was unearthed in trench B, as well as fragments of white-glazed vessels, big

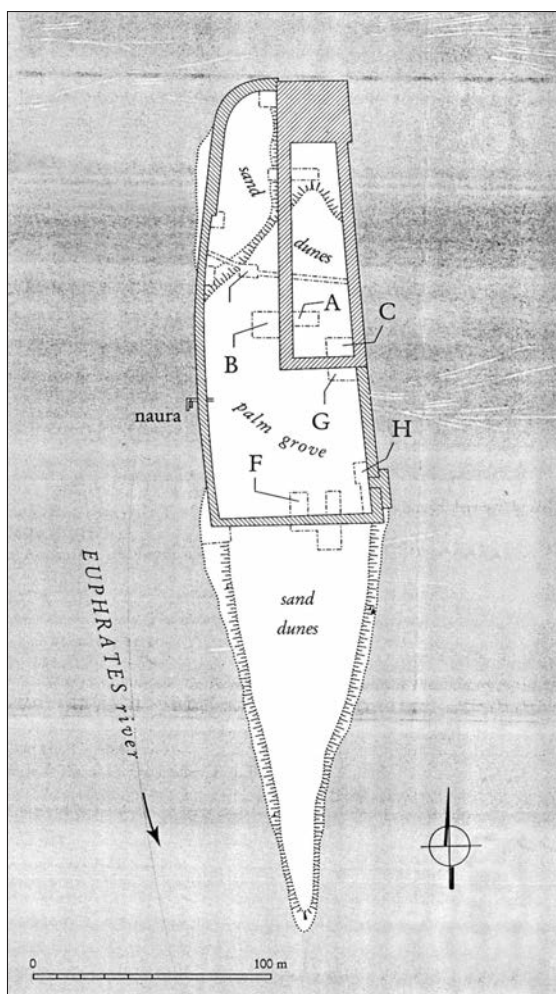


FIG. 3. Bijan, plan of the trenches (after KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006, fig. 2).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, 342.

<sup>6</sup> For full description of trenches A and B see *ibidem*, 342-343. Traces of smaller rooms found in trench A were almost entirely covered with Roman constructions.

<sup>7</sup> This last burial is thought to be an reflection of rock-cut chamber tombs that were found in Dura Europos (*ibidem*, 344).

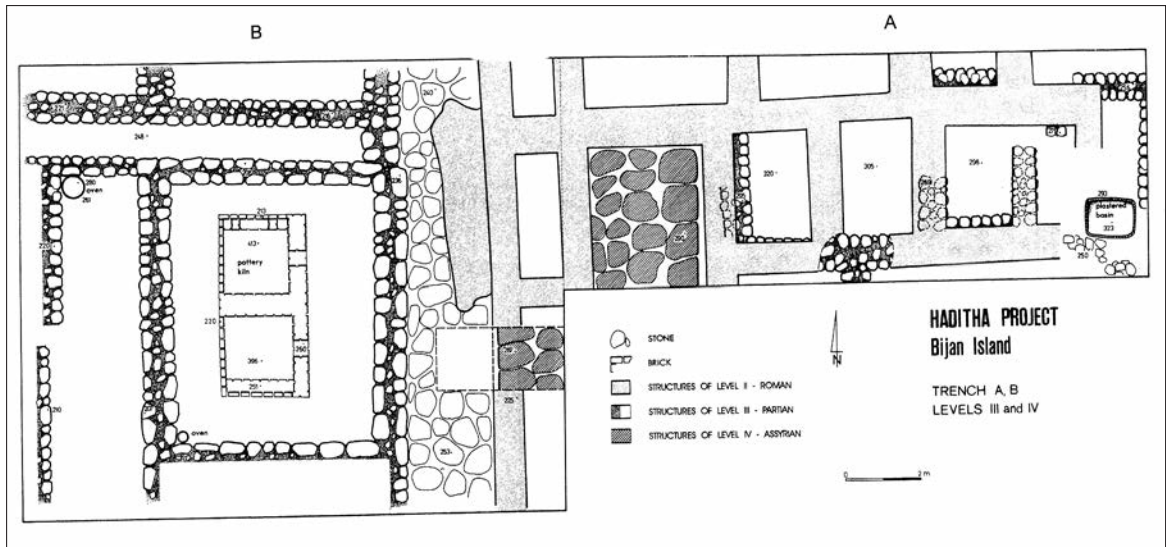


FIG. 4. Bijan, plan of trenches A and B (after KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006, fig. 36).

thick-lipped bowls and round handmade lids, some decorated with grooved patterns made in wet clay with fingers. They were all scattered along the kilns found in this trench. Common ware types and a lid with plastic ornament and an Aramaic inscription were found in trench F. The excavators consider the Parthian time population on Bijan as civil, most probably conducted of pottery makers who produced storage pots and common ware.<sup>8</sup>

With the arrival of Roman soldiers, we observe the occurrence of Parthian luxury items on Bijan, such as incense burner with horse-shaped handle and glazed vessels. They were found together with brittle ware shreds and oil lamps of Parthian, Euphratanian, and Bidlampen types and Roman coins dated to 3rd century AD. The Romans occupied Bijan from the times of Septimius Severus. The island was the last, most southern strengthening on Euphrates, while the local administrative and military center was probably in Kifrin, and the whole region was commanded from Dura Europos.<sup>9</sup> This kind of sequence: neo-Assyrian fortification-Roman fort, with interval of Parthian civil or military occupation, was typical for the Northern Mesopotamia as it was already shown by Oats.<sup>10</sup>

#### TERRACOTTA<sup>11</sup>

Most of the terracotta excavated on Bijan island were found in trench A (nos. 1, 6, 9, 17, 25.) and F (nos. 3, 5, 10-12). Three figurines came from trench G (nos. 14, 18, 21) and E (nos. 7, 15, 16). Only one was found both in the trench C (no. 19) and in the west site of the E-W trench (no. 2). In the case of terracotta nos. 22-24 we do not have any information about their founding place. Furthermore the pieces were located more or less evenly in the I (nos. 14, 18, 21, 25) or II (nos. 6, 7, 13, 16, 17) layer and in between the II and III (nos. 2, 4, 5, 15). Two were found in a disturbed context (nos. 1, 12) and one in the IV (no. 19) layer. No. 11 was found in the pottery kiln dated as Parthian, although its filling can be derived from a later period. As for the terracotta nos. 3, 8-11, 16, 17, 22-24 we have no details about the layer given.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> EDWELL 2007, 26-29, 64-66, 97-115.

<sup>10</sup> OATS 1956, 192.

<sup>11</sup> As all of the terracotta were left in Iraq, I based our research on photographs, drawings, documentation, and con-

sultations with dr. Krogulska. Because of the poor preservation and the quality of images in the case of some terracotta (nos. 22-24), I limit the description to available technical information and do not publish any picture.

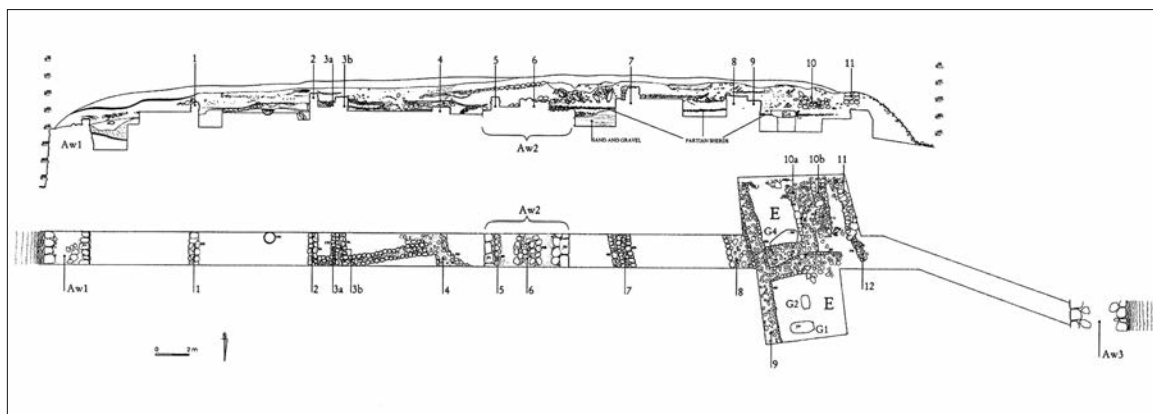


FIG. 5. Bijan, plan and southern wall section of the E-W trench (after KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006, fig. 3).

None of the twenty five terracotta discovered on Bijan was found intact. In most cases the missing element was the head or legs, therefore the weakest point, with least diameter. What is more terracotta nos. 3 and 6 shown signs of bitumen on their surface, and were probably repaired in Antiquity.

The findings form a heterogenic group in terms of technology, style and typology. The animal figurines (mostly roughly shaped cattle or sheep) are quite frequent, still there are eleven human representations (eight women and three men). Only three of the lot are plaques, rest being figurines. Fifteen of them were hand-shaped (nos. 2, 11, 12, 14-25), ten were cast, mostly in single mould (nos. 1, 3-5, 7-10), one in a double mould (no. 13). We should stress that for terracotta nos. 22-24 there was no technological data in the documentation.<sup>12</sup> The color of the fired clay oscillates between brown to pale-brown and beige, however the clay of the figurines nos. 12, 18, 21 is greenish-grayish and of the no. 16 is red.<sup>13</sup> Back side of the figurine no. 5 is black as a result of firing process. Creators of the terracotta added sand and organic temper, while mica was probably originally in the sand or clay.<sup>14</sup> Probably some of the terracotta were covered with beige slip (nos. 2-4, 13, 15),<sup>15</sup> although in the case of at least some of the figurines the effect of a lighter surface can be an outcome of post deposit processes.<sup>16</sup> There were slight signs of paint noticed on the plaque no. 10 during the excavation, but no details about its color were placed in the documentation. All the terracotta from Bijan was average size – slightly over 10 cm height and 5 cm width.

#### *Female Terracotta*

Six figurines and one plaque were female representation, qualifying to different types known from Mesopotamia: 'Draped standing woman supporting her breasts' (no. 1), 'Clothed standing woman' (no. 2), 'Draped standing woman with her hands clasped' (no. 3); 'Draped woman holding an object with her left hand' (no. 4), 'Draped standing woman with a child' (nos. 5 and 6), and 'Clothed seated woman' (no. 7). All of these are typical for Hellenistic Mesopotamia, joining traditional Oriental forms with Greek-Roman dresses and coiffures.

Yet there are still some doubts concerning classification of the nos. 2 and 7 to more specific types. Terracotta no. 2 was reconstructed as 'Draped standing woman supporting her breasts' during the excavations, but both of her hands are missing. They were reconstructed as adjusted close to the body on the drawing made during the excavations. However, as small hands, pasted close to the body, are not a weakest point in general, while the breasts seems to be more vulnerable and since there is an indentation below breasts with no 'negatives' of the hands, shows that it might be a

<sup>12</sup> Although they were probably hand-shaped, as we can assumed from the simple drawings.

<sup>13</sup> Not typical for Bijan and around area.

<sup>14</sup> As it was also common in ceramic shreds from Bijan.

<sup>15</sup> As it was noted in documentation.

<sup>16</sup> Today this is also dr Krogulska statement.

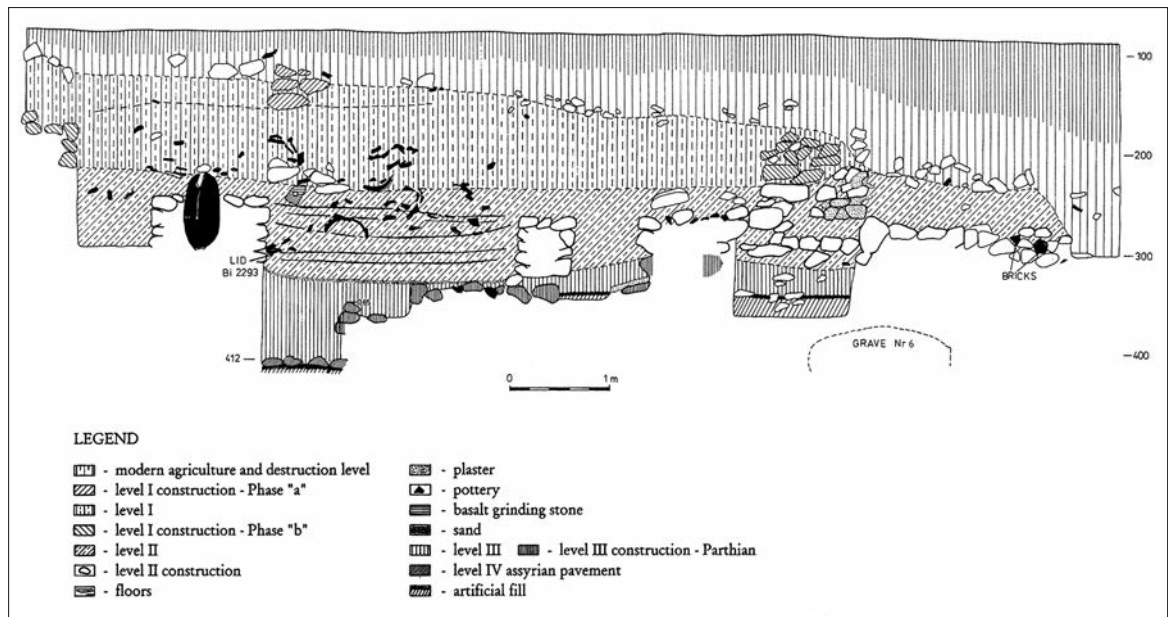


FIG. 6. Bijan, western wall section of trench G (after KROGULSKA and REICHE 2006, fig. 5).

wrong assumption. It is therefore more probable that the woman holds some attribute that was, intentionally or not, broken off.

As for no. 7 it could be a 'Draped seated woman with her arm folded across the chest'<sup>17</sup> or a 'Draped seated woman feeding a child',<sup>18</sup> yet, as only the legs of the figurine preserved, it cannot be resolved.

Most female figurines, apart from no. 3 and no. 7, were made very coarsely. No. 1, as is shown by shallow relief, was cast in a worn mould or a mould made from worn patris. No. 5 was cast regardless, moreover in damaged mould that leaved a convex line on the front site. Figurines nos. 3 and 6 were inelegantly repaired in Antiquity, as they have visible traces of bitumen on their necks. No. 2 was handmade with medium standard of skills and carefulness, found under deposit of the Roman time. It was made in technique typical for pre-Hellenistic times, but as it is not a naked woman it is connected rather with figurines made after Alexander the Great. Thus it can be compared with examples of hand-made terracotta found in North Mesopotamia, that repeated Babylonian cast types.<sup>19</sup>

1. DRAPED STANDING WOMEN SUPPORTING HER BREASTS (FIG. 7)  
3/81/1.<sup>20</sup>

Trench A, disturbed layer.

Broken in the bottom so that part of the legs beneath knees is missing. Shallow relief with almost invisible details

H. 11 cm; w. 5 cm.

Single mould, flat slab,<sup>21</sup> *false tongue relief* visible on the sites; could not stand unsupported.

Brown clay.

Cf. KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, figs. 67, 69, pl. 14 (from Babylon); DOWNEY 2003, no. 5 (from Dura Europos); VAN INGEN 1939, figs. 1-2 (from Seleucia on Tigris).

<sup>17</sup> As in Babylon (KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 82-84, pl. 16), Seleucia on Tigris (VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 226, 227, 246).

<sup>18</sup> As in Seleucia on Tigris (VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 42-44) and Babylon (KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, no. 134).

<sup>19</sup> Examples were found in Assur (KLENGEL-BRANDT 1978, pl. 13).

<sup>20</sup> Number in the documentation.

<sup>21</sup> Similar to those found in Babylon (KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, p. 53, figs. 67-68, pl. 14).





FIG. 7. Terracotta no. 1.

2. HANDMADE CLOTHED STANDING WOMEN (FIG. 8)  
16/79.  
West part of the sound, layer II / III.  
Top part of the head and hands broken.  
H. 8.3 cm; w. 3.2 cm.  
Handmade; eyes, breasts and necklace added; stand unsupported.  
Pale-brown clay with mica, cream slip.  
Cf. KLENGEL-BRANDT 1978, nos. 272-312, pls. 9-10 (from Assur);  
ACKERMANN 1962, fig. 42.

3. DRAPED STANDING WOMEN WITH HER HANDS CLASPED (FIG. 9)  
21/83/1.  
Trench F3, layer II (bottom of cell B).  
Head broken, traces of bitumen on the shoulders.  
H. 10.5 cm; w. 5.5 cm; th. 3 cm.  
Single mould; smooth backside; could not stand unsupported.  
Pale-brown clay with mica and sand tamper, beige slip.  
Cf. We did not find an exact analogy, but the prototype for that type  
was probably a nude standing women with her hands clasped, that  
we know from Nippur (LEGRAIN 1930, nos. 48-53) and Seleucia on  
Tigris (VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 1, 2, p. 18).

4. DRAPED WOMEN HOLDING AN OBJECT WITH HER LEFT HAND (FIG. 10)  
1538.  
Trench A, layer II.  
Head and legs broken, right shoulder and left arm blurred.  
H. 5 cm.; w. 5.6 cm; th. 2.3 cm.  
Single mould; smooth backside.  
Brown clay, beige slip.  
Cf. VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 127, 158-162, 169 (from Seleucia on Tigris); KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 105-112  
(from Babylon).



FIG. 8. Terracotta no. 2.



FIG. 9. Terracotta no. 3.



FIG. 10. Terracotta no. 4.



FIG. 11. Terracotta no. 5.

5. DRAPED, STANDING WOMAN WITH A CHILD (FIG. 11)  
20/83/1.  
Trench F, pottery kiln, layer II/III.<sup>22</sup>  
Woman's head broken.  
H. 13,5 cm; w. 5,5 cm; th. 2,5 cm.  
Female figure cast in a single mould, child hand-shaped and adjusted (?); smooth backside; stand unsupported.  
Brown clay; black backside.  
Cf. Ziegler: 1962, figs. 349, 350, 352, 353 (from Uruk); Koldway: 1914, figs. 205, 206, pp. 272, 275 (from Babylon).

6. WOMAN WITH A CHILD PLAQUE (FIG. 12)  
1539  
Trench A, layer II.  
Head, legs and fragment of a right shoulder broken; traces of bitumen on the upper part.  
H. 8,5 cm; w. 7 cm; th. 2,8 cm.  
Single mould; smooth backside.  
Brown clay.  
Cf. q.v. no. 5 description.
7. CLOTHED, SEATED WOMAN (FIG. 13)  
1406.  
Trench E, layer II.  
Upper part of the figurine broken (head, torso and arms).  
H. 6,5 cm; w. 5,7 cm; th. 2,5 cm.  
Single mould; cut sites; smooth backside.  
Brown clay with mica.

<sup>22</sup> The pottery kiln was built in the Parthian times but it could be filled with later, probably Roman material.



FIG. 12. Terracotta no. 6.



FIG. 13. Terracotta no. 7.



FIG. 14. Terracotta no. 8.

Cf. for 'Draped seated woman with her arm folded across the chest' type: VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 226, 227, 246 (from Seleucia on Tigris); KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 82-84, pl. 16 (from Babylon).

'Draped seated woman feeding a child' type: VAN INGEN 1939, no. 42-44 (from Seleucia on Tigris); KLENGEL-BARNDT 1978, no. 261 (from Assur); KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, no. 134 (from Babylon).

#### *Terracotta of undefined sex*

On plaque no. 8 we can see a bottom part of a person, with softly outlined abdomen and legs set apart, left probably slightly bent in the knee. Therefore, to some point, the feminine and masculine characteristic are merged in this object. Triangular abdomen is characteristic for women representations.<sup>23</sup> However position of the legs indicate that it is an image of man, as nude women, while standing still, were always carved in clay with jointed legs, although we know two examples from Uruk, of women with legs slightly set apart.<sup>24</sup> Yet nude men known to us from the Hellenistic period are mostly gladiator-warrior representation with clearly marked genitals.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, without missing upper part, it is unable to determine the sex and the posture of the figure, even if we assume that it was a cross-gender representation.

#### 8. NUDE STANDING WOMEN OR MAN (FIG. 14)

1961.

NE corner, rubble, 15 cm under surface.

Upper part of the figure (head, torso and arms) and right bottom edge broken.

H. 7 cm; w. 5.8 cm; th. 2.7 cm.

Single mould.

Greenish clay with mica and sand temper.

Cf. no direct analogies.

#### *Male terracotta*

There are three male terracotta between the Bijan group. One, no. 9, is a small fragment of gladiator-warrior figurine, cast in a worn mould or a mould made from worn patris. Another one, no. 10 is a man in a Parthian costume. This plaque was found damaged, but it is clearly visible that it

<sup>23</sup> Cf. VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 23, 24c, 26b, 32, 37, 37b, 38b, figs. 10-12, 14, 15, 17, 18; KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 12, 14, 15, 19, 22, 26, 27, pls. 5-7; MATHIESEN 1982, nos. 1, 8, 10, figs. 1, 3.

<sup>24</sup> ZIEGLER 1962, nos. 394, 696: the first is a plaque with a representation of two women, second shows a musician in draped, slightly transparent dress.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 251, 252c, 254, 266, figs. 121-123, 266, pl. XVIII; KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 394-396, pl. 62. Only in Uruk there was found a man with a «soft triangle» (ZIEGLER 1962, no. 332). Still his posture and above all his well-sculpted abdominal muscles suggest that this is a man.



FIG. 15. Terracotta no. 9.



FIG. 16. Terracotta no. 10.



FIG. 17. Terracotta no. 11.

was carefully cast in single mould and skillfully decorated with pinches. As I mentioned it was supposed to be painted, but no detailed information was added in the documentation. The terracotta no. 11 is a rider model in a simple and coarse manner from one piece of clay. Only fragments of torso and limbs are preserved, with no anatomical features shown. However on the chest we can see five fingernail impressions composed in a circle, supposedly as a symbol or decoration.

9. GLADIATOR-WARRIOR (FIG. 15)  
1537.  
Trench A, layer unknown.  
Head and legs broken.  
H. 7.1 cm; w. 4.5 cm; th. 3.5 cm.  
Single mould;  
Brown clay with mica.  
Cf. ZIEGLER 1962, fig. 468; INVERNIZZI (v-vi Uruk) fig. 72 (from Uruk); VAN INGEN 1939, nos. 397b-407, figs. 193-201 (from Seleucia on Tigris); KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 392-396, pl. 62 (from Babylon).
10. MAN DRESSED IN PARTHIAN COSTUME (FIG. 16)  
No number in the documentation.  
Trench F, layer unknown.  
Head and legs broken; right arm damaged.  
H. 3 cm; w. 4 cm.  
Single mould; pinched, incised decoration.  
Brown clay, traces of paint (?).  
Cf. KLENGEL-BRANDT 1978, figs. 466-486, pl. 15 (from Assur); DOWNEY 2003, nos. 24-32, figs. 23-30, dr. 9 from Dura Europos.
11. RIDER (FIG. 17)  
2594.  
Trench F, pottery kiln, layer II/III.<sup>26</sup>  
Head, legs and arms fragments broken;  
H. 4.7 cm; w. 3 cm.  
Handmade.  
Pale-brown to beige clay with mica.  
Cf. DOWNEY 2003, nos. 60-66, 73, figs. 56-60, 67 (from Dura Europos).

<sup>26</sup> See note no. 21.

*Animal terracotta*

Nine terracotta of quadrupeds,<sup>27</sup> two eagles, one horse, one animal leg and one head were found on Bijan island. They are mostly large – up to 12.5 cm in height and 18 cm in length, while the average size of the terracotta from Bijan is 5 cm height. In addition, all except two: no. 13 – an eagle figurine and no. 22 – an animal head, are coarse. No. 13 was made in sophisticated double-mould technique. Meanwhile, no. 22 was delicately decorated by engraved wavy lines and stamped or even incised eyes. This little head could belong to a lion or a sheep. Moreover, one of the animal figurines, no. 20 bears an inscription which reading I present below. As we know inscribed figurines, mostly with magical texts, were popular in pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia, yet they were not found in later contexts.<sup>28</sup> Thus it is probable that this figurine is earlier, even from the time of Assyrians.

Apart from those figurines, there were also some animal legs found. No picture or detail information about those terracotta fragments are available, but we can assume that they were probably parts of coarse quadrupeds figurines.

## 12. HORSE (FIG. 18)

5336.

Trench F, disturbed layer.

Front legs and back-site broken.

H. 7.5 cm; w. 6.3 cm.

Handmade.

Beige clay with greenish shade.

Cf. ZIEGLER 1962, nos. 905-917, and WREDE 1990, no. 25 (from Uruk); KLENGEL-BRANDT 1962, nos. 569-578 (from Assur); MATHIESEN 1982, nos. 37, 39, 43-46 (from Ikaros); KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, nos. 634-641; DOWNEY 2003, nos. 116-134 (from Dura Europos).

## 13. EAGLE (FIG. 19)

842.

Trench B (NW corner), layer II.

Only right wing and a fragment of right leg preserved; upper part of the wing broken

H. 11 cm; w. 9.5 cm; th. 6 cm.

Double-mould.

Brown clay, beige slip.

Cf. INGHOLT 1954, fig. 1 (from Hatra); DOWNEY 2003, pp. 206-207, no. 18, fig. 148, dr. 31, and DOWNEY 1977, figs. 164-167 (from Dura Europos).



FIG. 18. Terracotta no. 12.

<sup>27</sup> In most cases only torso is preserved with no details allowing us to define whether it was a cattle, a camel, or a sheep.

<sup>28</sup> KARVONEN KANNAS 1995, 109.



FIG. 19. Terracotta no. 13.

14. EAGLE II (FIG. 20).  
 4553.  
 Trench G, layer I.  
 Head broken  
 Oval dimensions 3.4 × 2.5 cm.  
 Handmade with engraved details.  
 Beige clay with mica.  
 Cf. q.v. no. 13 description.



FIG. 20. Terracotta no. 14.

15. ANIMAL FIGURINE I (FIG. 21)  
1435  
Trench E, layer II/III.  
Broken left side of the head, front left leg, both back legs (in ¼ length) and hump.  
H. 12.5 cm; w. 7 cm; l. 18 cm.  
Handmade, adjusted element – a hump (?).  
Beige clay, beige slip.  
Cf. for cattle see VAN INGEN 1939, no. 1484c, fig. 567 (from Seleucia on Tigris); DOWNEY 2003, nos. 139-143, figs. 133-136, 148-149, pp. 195, 196 (from Dura Europos); and for sheep: KLENGEL-BRANDT 1978, no. 605, pl. 19 (from Assur).
16. ANIMAL FIGURINE II (FIG. 22)  
1461.  
Trench E, layer II.<sup>29</sup>  
Head and legs missing; upper part of the hump and part of tail broken.  
H. 4 cm; w. 5.4 cm; l. 8 cm.  
Handmade, hump adjusted.  
Red clay.  
Cf. q.v. no. 15 description.
17. ANIMAL FIGURINE III (FIG. 23)  
1536.  
Trench A, layer II.  
Head, hump, both front and left back leg missing.  
H. 7-4 cm; w. 6.5 cm; l. 15.5 cm; neck diameter 4.3 cm.  
Handmade with adjusted hump; hollow torso.  
Brown clay with mica.  
Cf. q.v. no. 15 description.
18. ANIMAL FIGURINE IV (FIG. 24)  
4552  
Trench G1, layer I.  
Head, legs and 'tail' broken; back-right site damaged.



FIG. 21. Terracotta no. 15.



FIG. 22. Terracotta no. 16.

<sup>29</sup> This figurine was found close to the Roman lamp and coin.



FIG. 23. Terracotta no. 17.



FIG. 24. Terracotta no. 18.



FIG. 25. Terracotta no. 19.

H. 4.5 cm; w. 5 cm.  
Handmade of one piece of clay.  
Greyish clay with mica.  
Cf. no direct analogy.

19. ANIMAL FIGURINE V (FIG. 25)

5769.

Trench C, layer IV.

Head and bottom parts of the legs missing, backside of the figure broken.

h. round 4-6 cm; l. round 6 cm (dimensions were measured from the photo, there were no information in the documentation).

Handmade from one piece of clay.

Brown clay with organic temper (?).

Cf. no direct analogy.

20. INSCRIBED ANIMAL FIGURINE (FIG. 26)

5356.

Trench F, layer I/II.

Front part of the figurine broken.

H. 10.5 cm.

Handmade, engraved inscription and two strings of a headgear on both sides of the neck.

Inscription has been read by professor Michal Gawlikowski, and as he states it contained tree letters in a graphia typical for Aramaic inscriptions from Northern Mesopotamia, although form of this letters





FIG. 26. Terracotta no. 20.

are very similar in Pahlavi writings. Letter 'B' should be read as «Abba», what means «father», yet exists also as a proper name, and was found in Palmyra (6 examples), Hatra (9 examples), and also in Nabatean inscriptions and Syriac texts.

Beige clay.

Cf. no direct analogies.

21. ANIMAL LEG (?) (FIG. 27)

4998.

Trench G2, layer 1b.

Edge with bigger diameter is broken.

H. 6.5 cm; diameter I  $4 \times 3.2$  cm; diameter II  $2.4 \times 2$  cm.

Handmade from one piece of clay.

Greyish-greenish clay.

Cf. VAN INGEN 1939, figs. 563-564, nos. 1479-1480f  
(from Seleucia on Tigris).

22. ANIMAL FIGURINE VI

A.

Finding place unknown.

Head, legs and back of the torso missing.

Dimensions unknown.

Handmade.

No information about the clay.

Cf. no direct analogy, as it is only a small fragment.

23. ANIMAL FIGURINE VII

B.

Finding place unknown.

Head and back of the torso missing, front legs broken.

Dimensions unknown.

Handmade.

No information about the clay.

Cf. no direct analogy, as it is only a small fragment.

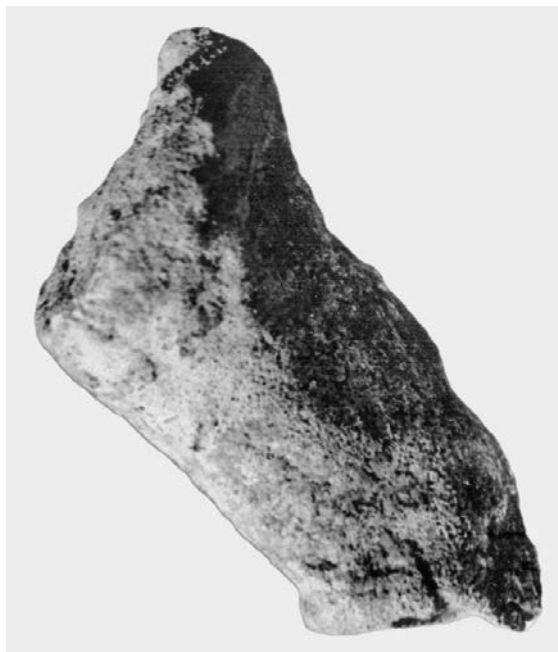


FIG. 27. Terracotta no. 21.

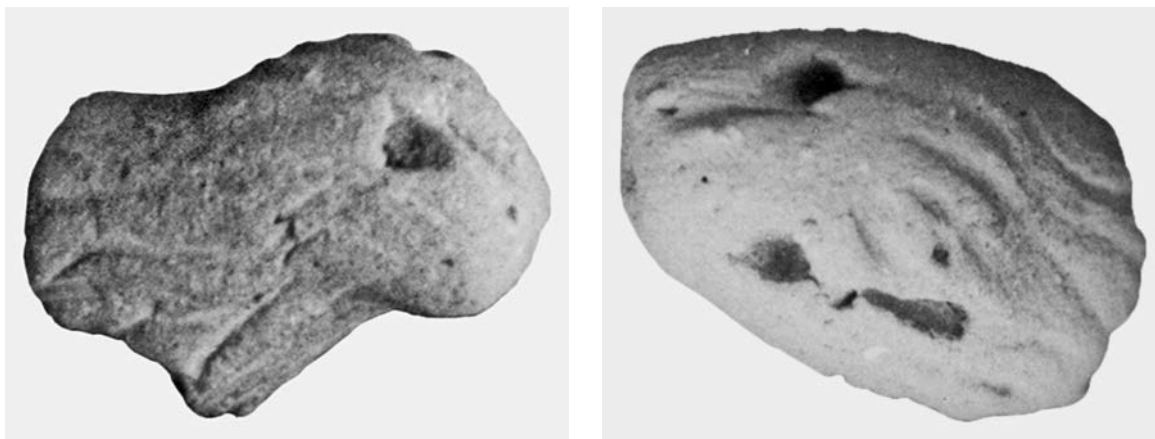


FIG. 28. Terracotta no. 25.

## 24. ANIMAL FIGURINE VIII

C.

Finding place unknown.

Head and back of the torso missing, front legs broken.

Dimensions unknown.

Handmade.

No information about the clay.

Cf. no direct analogy, as it is only a small fragment.

## 25. ANIMAL HEAD (FIG. 28)

450.

Trench A, layer I.

Only the head with a neck preserved.

H. 1.9 cm; w. 2.2 cm; l. 3.5 cm.

Handmade engraved lines and eyes.

Brown clay with sand temper.

Cf. VAN INGEN 1939, figs. 563-564, nos. 1479-1480f (from Seleucia on Tigris).

## REFLECTIONS CONCERNING ORIGIN, CHRONOLOGY AND USE OF THE TERRACOTTA FROM BIJAN

Although those terracotta do not have secure archeological context, we can make some conclusions about their chronology and purpose, some assumptions on who, when and why 'collected' all of them on Bijan. I state that thought some luxury Parthian artifacts were found in the Roman layer, plaques and figurines belong to Parthian time occupation. Firstly, what we know from the excavations on Bijan determines the view that in the Roman period only the legion resided on the island. Moreover, they were Palmyrene soldiers who protected the Euphrates region south from Dura Europos<sup>30</sup> and we know few figurines from Palmyra itself,<sup>31</sup> thus it is not likely that the legionaries would need and own such a big, in comparison to island dimensions, amount of terracotta pieces. Secondly, we know that the island in the times of the Parthians, was inhabited by pottery makers. Yet it is highly improbable that the terracotta was made in their workshops, due to technological diversity and in some cases use of elaborated technology. Finally, we can observe the stylistic elements that are characteristic only for northern or only for southern Mesopotamia. As for example the 'Gladiator-Warrior', 'Draped, standing woman with a child' or the 'Draped women holding an object with her left hand' types were not found outside Babylonia, and in the other hand an 'Eagle' figurines are known only from Northern Mesopotamia. Going further terracotta no. 10 – 'Men dressed in a Parthian costume' – is decorated with pinches and incisives in a sophisticated style

<sup>30</sup> EDWELL 2007, 64-66.<sup>31</sup> KROGULSKA 1991.

known to us from Assur and not seen in the hand-made figurines from Babylonia. Most of the terracotta was therefore imported to the island, however there is still the question why.

Certainly they were not intended to be used in a sanctuary, as there is no indication that there was any religious building on the island, and the figurines and plaques are too diverse to be use in one sanctuary. Moreover, since population of the island was small and artisanal, it is hardly possible that it was so heterogeneous to possess a figurine of Hellenistic gladiator soldier and Arabic eagle in the same time. Thus in my opinion those terracotta were trade items, intended for sale to the population of Euphrates territory. And since the river was the trade route connecting north and south Mesopotamia it is not surprising that Bijan could have been a warehouse for a figurine tradesman.

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I would like to thank Maria Krogulska for her many advices and information, and my Ph.D. adviser Barbara Kaim for ideas and encouragement. I am also grateful to Antonio Invernizzi for giving me the possibility to publish this text on «Parthica» and to Carlo Lippolis for his help.

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No.	SUBJECT	EXCAVATION NUMBER	TRENCH	LAYER	CHARACTER OF FIND SPOT	DIMENSIONS	CLAY	TAMPER	SL>IP	TECHNIQUE
1	Draped standing women supporting her breasts	3/81/1	A	disturbed	n.d.	H. 11 cm. W. 5 cm.	brown	n.d.	-	Single mould, flat slab, false tongue relief visible on the sites
2	Hand-made clothed standing women.	16/79	E-W	II/III	n.d.	H. 8.3 cm. W. 3.2 cm.	Pale-brown	mica	cream	Handmade; eyes, breasts and necklace added;
3	Draped standing women with her hands clasped.	21/83/1	F	II	bottom of cell B	H. 10.5 cm. W. 5.5 cm. Th. 3 cm	Pale-brown	mica and sand	beige	Single mould, smooth backside; traces of bitumen on the upper part.
4	Draped women holding an object on her breast with her left hand	1538	A	II	n.d.	H. 5 cm. W. 5.6 cm. Th. 2.3 cm.	brown	n.d.	beige	Single mould; smooth backside.
5	Draped, standing woman with a child.	20/83/1	F	II/III	pottery kiln	H. 13.5 cm. W. 5.5 cm. Th. 2.5 cm.	brown	n.d.	-	Women figure cast in a single mould, child hand-shaped and adjusted (?); smooth and black backside;
6	Women with a child plaque	1539	A	II	n.d.	H. 8.5 cm. W. 7 cm. Th. 2.8 cm	brown	n.d.	-	Single mould, smooth backside; traces of bitumen on the upper part.
7	Clothed, seated women	1406	E	II	n.d.	H. 6.5 cm. W. 5.7 cm. Th. 2.5 cm	brown	mica	-	Single mould; cut sites; smooth backside.

No.	SUBJECT	EXCAVATION NUMBER	TRENCH	LAYER	CHARACTER OF FIND SPOT	DIMENSIONS	CLAY	TAMPER	SL > IP	TECHNIQUE
8	Nude standing women or man	1961	N-E corner	15 cm under surface	rubble	H. 7 cm. W. 5.8 cm. Th. 2.7 cm.	greenish	mica and sand	-	Single mould
9	Gladiator - warrior	1537	A	n.d.	n.d.	H. 7.1 cm. W. 4.5 cm. Th. 3.5 cm.	brown	mica	-	Single mould
10	Men draped in a Parthian dress.	n.d.	F	n.d.	n.d.	H. 3 cm. W. 4 cm.	brown	n.d.	-	Single mould; stamped and cut decoration. Traces of paint (?).
11	Rider	2594	F	II/III	pottery kiln	H. 4.7 cm. W. 3 cm.	pale-brown to beige	mica	-	Hand-made
12	Horse	5336	F	disturbed	n.d.	H. 7.5 cm. W. 6.3 cm.	beige with greenish shade	n.d.	-	Hand-made
13	Eagle	842	B (N-W corner)	II	n.d.	H. 11 cm. W. 9.5 cm. Th. 6 cm.	brown	n.d.	beige	Double-mould
14	Eagle	4553	G	I	n.d.	Oval dimensions 3.4 × 2.5 cm.	beige	mica	-	Hand-made with engrave details.
15	Animal	1435	E	II/III	n.d.	H. 12.5 cm. W. 7 cm. L. 18 cm.	beige	n.d.	beige	Hand-made, adjusted hump
16	Animal	1461	E	II	n.d.	H. 4 cm. W. 5.4 cm. L. 8 cm.	red	n.d.	-	Hand-made, adjusted hump

No.	SUBJECT	EXCAVATION NUMBER	TRENCH	LAYER	CHARACTER OF FIND SPOT	DIMENSIONS	CLAY	TAMPER	SL>JP	TECHNIQUE
17	Animal	1536	A	II	n.d.	H. 7-4 cm. W. 6.5 cm. L. 15.5 cm; neck diameter 4.3 cm.	brown	mica	-	Hand-made with adjusted hump. Hollow in the torso.
18	Animal	4552	G	I	n.d.	H. 4.5 cm. W. 5 cm.	greyish	mica	-	Hand-made of one piece of clay.
19	Animal	5769	C	IV	n.d.	H. round 4-6 cm. L. round 6 cm (dimensions were measured from the photo, there were no information in the documentation).	brown	organic	-	Hand-made from one piece of clay.
20	Inscribed animal figurine	5356	F	I/II	n.d.	H. 10.5 cm	beige	sand	-	Hand-made, engraved inscription and headgear.
21	Animal	4998	G	I	n.d.	H. 6.5 cm. diameter I 4×3.2 cm; diameter II 2.4×2 cm.	greyish-greenish	n.d.	-	Hand-made from one piece of clay.
22	Animal	A	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	Hand-made
23	Animal	B	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	Hand-made
24	Animal	C	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	Hand-made
25	Animal	450	A	I	n.d.	H. 2.5 cm. W. 2.2 cm. L. 3.5 cm.	brown	sand	-	Hand-made engraved lines and eyes.





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