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*Fragments of Wall Paintings
from Polish Excavations at Kom el-Dikka, Alexandria*

Little and at the same time a lot is known about Alexandrian mural painting which was employed to decorate temples, houses and tombs. Written sources provide several names of painters, and certain facts concerning their social status are familiar, including their earnings. The understanding of the art itself, however, is based on the paintings decorating tombs and funeral stelae. It is a consequence of the fact that both sacral and non-sacral architecture was mainly reconstructed by using analogies for the sepulchral structures preserved in large numbers and their painted decorations were the major resource applied for the reconstruction of the wall paintings on public buildings and private houses of ancient Alexandria.

Mural paintings from tombs suggest that the most frequent style in Alexandria during the Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods was ‘incrustation’ (or ‘zone’) style (that is the First Pompeian style), which did not differ much from the analogical paintings from Pompeii, Delos or Ephesus (perhaps with the exception for the local features connected with Egyptian tradition). Figural paintings which decorate the tombs contribute less to the scope of knowledge related to mural decorations of public buildings and private houses as their subject matter was directly connected with the function of the rooms where they were placed. Apart from the paintings from tombs, painted plaster pieces were not frequently found in Alexandria. If they were mentioned in reports, it was normally without many details and mostly without graphic documentation.

D.G. Hogarth reported painted plaster pieces at two locations where he discovered remains of houses from the Early Roman Period. He mentioned, without a detailed description, fragments of ‘the Late Roman stuccos’ found in debris covering remains of a villa with a mosaic floor located on the northern side of the former hill of Kom el-Dikka.¹ He also found fragments of ‘red, yellow and blue’ plaster in the ruins of a villa discovered on the northern side of street L1,² which, enigmatic as it sounds, might suggest that those were pieces of monochrome panels.

Painted plaster pieces were found at three locations around the Caesareum as well, and the same as with other finds of that kind, the information is very scarce.

There were also ‘fragments of walls’ with ‘Pompeian style’ paintings preserved on them in a pile of architectural elements filling the remains of a building dated to the Roman Period by G. Botti.³ It is likely that they were dispersed blocks with preserved pieces of painted plaster.

A fragment of a mosaic floor dated to the Early Roman Period was discovered in the area of the so-called École Ecossaise.⁴ There were remains of an earlier Ptolemaic edifice below it (a room with heart-shaped columns in the corners) and both structures were separated with a thick layer of debris containing ‘numerous pieces of painted plaster’, not defined in greater detail.

¹ B. TKACZOW, *Topography of Ancient Alexandria. An Archaeological Map, TCAM 32*, Varsovie 1993 [= *Topography*], Site 46.

² *Ibid.*, Site 48.

³ *Ibid.*, Site 91.

⁴ At present the el-Manaar School, see: *ibid.*, Site 101.

Botti found remains of an edifice constructed of large limestone blocks on the southern side of the former Hospital Hill.⁵ He called the building ‘Tempio policromo’ due to the significant number of fragments of architectural decorations fashioned of polychrome limestone. The find, transferred to the Graeco-Roman Museum which was forming then, included painted plaster pieces with figurative decorations, among others ‘woman’s head in a halo’ described by Botti as a ‘representation of Madonna’.⁶

Remains of painted plaster preserved on walls were also discovered in the so-called House of Medusa located nearby. The building, dated to the second century AD, was probably abandoned in the second half of the third century AD and then found by French archaeologists in 1994.⁷

Fragments of painted plaster found in the Alexandrian Serapeum are better documented, both with a more detailed description and photographs. These remains were discovered by Botti during his excavations in 1896.⁸ A few block fragments with preserved mural paintings come from excavations performed by E. von Sieglin’s mission two years later.⁹

Fragments found by Botti came from excavations performed in the area of the so-called Iseum, on the east side of the sanctuary and constituted two assemblages. The first was discovered in the rubble covering the so-called ‘cistern’, the pieces were associated by Botti with the wall decoration of ‘the eastern portico’ from the times of Trajan, unfortunately, Botti did not provide a detailed description. The other assemblage was found a few days later ‘at the foot of the eastern wall’ in the debris scattered around it. Chunks of plaster and limestone fragments of architectural decoration were said to form a layer 20m long, 0.5m wide and nearly 0.4m thick. That assemblage mainly consisted of ‘monochrome’ pieces (according to Botti they were fragments of the painting background or simply monochrome panels), but several dozen pieces with floral or figural decoration were identified (among others: animals, ‘architectural landscapes’, ‘hunting scenes’, a silhouette of Horus-falcon in a crown and a couple of griffins in heraldic arrangement). Botti analyzed the style of the paintings and concluded that ‘they were fashioned not later than in the first century AD’.

The remains recovered by von Sieglin’s mission were photographed in 1898/9 by F. Noack. The photographs display more than ten pieces of architectural decoration (mostly column capitals and cornices) and five blocks with fragments of paintings.¹⁰ One of those fragments seems to be an imitation of alabaster revetment, two are representations of floral ornaments, one is a part of a complex stripe decoration and one is a part of an arc consisting of stylized *fleur-de-lys* painted with a thin line on a pale background.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Site 112.

⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 152, n. 209.

⁷ J.-Y. EMPEREUR, *Alexandrie (Égypte)*, BCH 119/2, 1995, p. 745.

⁸ G. BOTTI, *Fouilles à la Colonne Theodosienne* (1896), *Alexandrie* 1897, pp. 28 and 79–81.

⁹ G. GRIMM, J. MCKENZIE, Appendix: Architectural fragments found in the excavation of the Serapeum in Alexandria in c. 1900, [in:] J. MCKENZIE *et al.*, *Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the archaeological evidence*, JRS XCIV, 2004, pp. 115–116, Pls VII–X.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Pls VIII, IX/1.

Relatively the best-documented assemblage of painted plaster pieces is a small one recovered by A. Adriani at the so-called Chantier Finney,¹¹ where he discovered remains of two buildings (probably private houses), one constructed on the virgin soil and dated to the Ptolemaic Period, the other built directly on top of its walls and dated to the Late Roman Period. Adriani concluded that apart from the fragments of mosaics found in the context of the earlier building, the other fragments of limestone architectural decoration and painted plaster pieces discovered in debris enveloping the two structures could have come from elsewhere, though perhaps from close vicinity.

Painted plaster pieces from chantier Finney are a few fragments imitating architectural elements,¹² pieces of panels including about 30 monochromatic ones (some of them with traces of rustication),¹³ two fragments imitating colourful marble revetment, also with rustication¹⁴ and one item probably coming from a ceiling decoration.¹⁵

Nevertheless, a large number of movable objects were collected during more than 50 years of Polish excavations at Kom el-Dikka – more than four thousand items in the main inventory and tens of thousands of materials for further study. The category of painted plaster pieces was a relatively small group for a long time but over the last 20 years it has grown significantly.

The first classification which can be made puts them in two groups: scarce and usually partially preserved fragments of mural paintings *in situ* and a lot larger group of chunks found ‘split-off’, dispersed or in bigger assemblages (though not always compact or homogeneous). The latter group can be further divided into:

- fragments found in a context which indicates the particular structure at Kom el-Dikka they belong to;
- fragments which supposedly came from paintings from one particular building, due to the similarity of decorative motifs and, to a lower degree, because of the context they were found from which provided evidence that the fragments were not part of decoration of any structure discovered at Kom el-Dikka and were placed there as rubble. The rest consists of dispersed pieces, found without any context.

FRAGMENTS OF MURAL PAINTINGS *IN SITU*

Remains of paintings imitating stone revetment were identified on the walls of the *tepidarium* and *caldarium* in the so-called private bath (Sector A).¹⁶ Five layers of plaster

¹¹ TKACZOW, Topography, Site 95.

¹² These fragments imitate cornices decorated in Doric or Ionic styles – see A. ADRIANI, Nouvelles découvertes dans le quartier de *basileia*, *Annuaire du Musée Gréco-Romain* 1935–1939, Alexandrie 1940, pp. 52–53, Pl. XIX.1–4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Pl. XX.3–6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Pl. XX.1–2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53, Fig. 22; cf. a fragment of the plafond in the tomb at Gabbari, A.M. GUIMIER-SORBETS, Les décors de plafond dans les tombes hellénistiques d’Alexandrie. Un nouvel essai d’interprétation, [in:] J.-Y. Empereur, M.-D. Nenna (Eds), *Nécropolis 2.2*, *EtudAlex* 7, Le Caire 2003, p. 595.

¹⁶ K. KOŁODZIEJCZYK, Private Roman Bath at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria, *EtudTrav* II, 1968, p. 154; EAD., Remarques sur les thermes privés à Kom el-Dikka (Alexandrie), *EtudTrav* XVI, 1992, pp. 60–61.

coated the walls of the *caldarium*, the last two displayed preserved fragments of panels of virtually identical pattern and colour (black, red and orange ‘veins’¹⁷ on a white background surrounded with a triple black frame) but the panel of the fourth layer was shifted in relation to the fifth one about 2cm. In the *tepidarium*, on the other hand, a broad dark green band with dark brown ‘veins’ was preserved on the edge of a wall next to the pool.¹⁸

The villa whose remains were discovered below the Theater Portico¹⁹ (Sector MX) was lavishly furnished: mosaic floors, architectural decorations fashioned of polychrome limestone and mural paintings, two of which were preserved *in situ* and were discovered during campaigns of 1973/4 and 2001.

One of them, placed in the hall (a room with the so-called diamond mosaic), consisted of two layers of plaster.²⁰ The earlier one is a broad black frame surrounding a dark red panel with a yellow emblem in the centre, embellished with an olive branch and a bird silhouette. This composition is visible only partially as the rest of the painting, which covered the whole wall, is coated with next layer of plaster showing a pink rhombus with a green circle in the middle. This painting is rather badly preserved and faded.

The other painting was a decoration of a room marked with number 14. Two panels surrounded with black and red frames were preserved (in a fairly good state of preservation up to the height of 1m). There were narrow rectangles ornamented with red and green garlands between the panels. Some traces of figural painting were preserved as well: a woman’s face and a dog.²¹

Two types of painted wall decoration were found *in situ* in sector WIN, house H, room H3a: a pilaster with an imitation of porphyry revetment and fragments of a wall coated with white rusticated plaster imitating *opus isodomum*.

The paintings in the private bath in sector A, from the villa in sector MIX, and from the room H3a, belong to residential architecture covering the area of Kom el-Dikka *insula* from the first century AD until the end of the third century AD.²² The rest of the remains of painted plaster found *in situ* belong to architecture constructed at the beginning of the fourth century AD.²³

Remains of a large but rather badly executed composition were identified in sector W1, in the corridor of the so-called house D. It represents Madonna with Child Jesus enthroned and on her left there were two standing figures: a bigger winged one (an archangel) and a smaller one (donator?). The painting is dated to the sixth

¹⁷ It might be an imitation of revetment of *breccia corallina*.

¹⁸ Imitation of revetment of *porfido verde*?

¹⁹ TKACZOW, Topography, Site 34.

²⁰ M. RODZIEWICZ, Les habitations romaines tardives d’Alexandrie à la lumière des fouilles polonaises à Kom el-Dikka, *Alexandrie III*, Varsovie 1984 [= *Alexandrie III*], p. 35, Fig. 16.

²¹ G. MAJCHEREK, Alexandria. Kom el-Dikka. Excavations 2000/2001, *PAM XIII* (Reports 2001), 2002, pp. 41–43, Figs 8–9.

²² B. TKACZOW, Historical Topography of Ancient Alexandria, *EtudTrav XXXVI*, 2013, pp. 689–690.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 693.

century AD.²⁴ A few chips of painted plaster found in the vicinity were recognized as remains of this image.²⁵

Room H9 in house H (sector WIN), yielded a badly-preserved fragment of a mural painting which consisted of large red and yellow panels,²⁶ surrounded with narrow green frames placed on a black background. Despite the poor state of preservation, its relatively good workmanship can be seen by the quality of the panels and frames, as opposed to a painting of similar composition and colour range which was found on a wall of the so-called auditorium A in sector G.²⁷ A fragment of a mural imitating stone (alabaster?) revetment was also discovered in auditorium C in the same sector.

A few rooms in the Imperial Baths comprised walls with plaster layers which most probably were painted;²⁸ several fragments were also discovered *in situ*, among others, imitation of stone revetment in the *tepidarium*.²⁹

DISPERSED FRAGMENTS

Fragments of dispersed painted plaster have been divided for convenience into certain clusters associated with the place and time of discovery but it is worth mentioning that the context of these finds generally proves that the items were not part of the decoration of the ruined buildings they were discovered in. In a large part they come from secondary layers, from debris filling the rooms or separating different stages of construction.

One of these assemblages is a huge group, amounting to nearly 600 pieces of painted plaster from the initial campaigns (1960–1962) of excavations at Kom el-Dikka in sector A, found in layers of rubble covering remains of the so-called private bath.³⁰ A number of those fragments showed very faint traces of geometric patterns or vegetal decorations (or both at the same time), many other are ‘monochrome’ chunks, a few are pieces of figural scenes including six items displaying parts of faces (**Fig. 1**), and three of these have been published.³¹ The other four are as follows:

- a fragment of a woman’s head – an eye and part of the hair: inv. no. SA 33/60 (this number covers 17 pieces, a figure fragment measuring 0.16 x 0.10m, the height of

²⁴ RODZIEWICZ, *Alexandrie* III, pp. 194–207, Figs 228–229, 236.

²⁵ The fragments include pieces with yellow circles and rectangles on a white background – these might be parts of the throne, as well as two matching pieces which display a raised hand and a part of the face, *ibid.*, p. 199, Fig. 232 and pp. 205–207, Fig. 237.

²⁶ Debris filling the rooms of house H contains fragments of painted plaster which might come from that painting or similar ones.

²⁷ B. TKACZOW, An Imitation of *opus alexandrinum* in Wall Painting? Two Wall Paintings from Kom el-Dikka (Alexandria), *EtudTrav* XVII, 1995, pp. 320–326, Figs 1–3.

²⁸ W. KOLAŃAJ, Imperial Baths at Kom el-Dikka, *Alexandrie* VI, Varsovie 1992, pp. 90–91.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Fig. 63. Similar pattern and colours are represented in dispersed finds discovered in 1987 among fragments from sector G, see: *infra*, p. 430.

³⁰ TKACZOW, Topography, Site 44A.

³¹ K. KOŁODZIEJCZYK, Fragments d’enduits peints des fouilles polonaises à Kom el-Dikka (Alexandrie), *EtudTrav* XV, 1990, pp. 194–202. These fragments are registered in the main inventory as SA 57/60, SA 403/61 and SA 404/61.

the fragment of the head is 0.011m). The photograph shows at least two layers of plaster and the bottom one lacks remains of another, older picture. Colours: blue background, black hair with red smudges and yellowish 'reflexes', white (cream) face and a red-yellow eye lined with black;

- the left side of a face (probably female): inv. no. SA 431/61 (this number covers 16 pieces); the figure fragment measures 0.09 x 0.05m. The face is slightly pink, contoured with a red line, a similar colour lines the eye, nose and lips, the pupil of the eye is a black triangle;
- a fragment of a hand(?): unidentified inventory number. Dimensions: 0.11 x 0.08m. If the proportions are taken into account, it could be concluded the hand must have belonged to a silhouette of a real-life human size;
- a small fragment of a face(?): unidentified inventory number, it is only known that it was found during campaign 1961. Dimensions: 0.05 x 0.03m. Preserved item shows the upper part of the nose and fragments of both eyes (marked with red, the pupils and eyebrows with black).

Inventory number SA 489/61 registers 8 fragments, two of them display remains of painted inscriptions: one – letter A, the other – letter C. It was not clearly stated if these letters were in Latin or Greek character.

All the fragments from sector A, due to their context, most likely do not come from the decoration of the villa which incorporated the private bathroom. However, fragments SA 403/61 and SA 404/61 might have come from decoration of a single building whose location is unknown but it might possibly have been situated somewhere in the vicinity.³²

During the excavations in the Theater Building several painted plaster assemblages and several single items were found, all of them in contexts which indicated that they were not part of the Theater Building decoration.

The biggest cluster, amounting to nearly 60 fragments (**Fig. 2**) comes from debris filling the audience and orchestra (sector MIX, campaign 1965–1965). It comprises several groups representing similar decoration:

- a pattern of broad red lines on a white background – imitation of stone revetment(?): six fragments, one layer of plaster. A very similar pattern can be found in a painting discovered *in situ* over the rectangular pool in the *tepidarium* of the Imperial Baths (**Fig. 3a-b**);
- narrow black and cherry red spirals forming a pattern on a dark yellow background: eight fragments. A similar, if not identical, motif – black spirals on a dark yellow background – appeared on a block with remains of a painting discovered in the debris in the vestibule of the Theater Building (here the spirals form a wave motif, cf. *infra* **Fig. 5**) and on more than ten fragments in the assemblage found in auditorium E (cf. *infra*);
- a single fairly small fragment with the 'wave' motif in black and cherry red on a yellow background; that motif appears on many fragments discovered in sector G (auditoria A and E, cf. *infra*).

³² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

Apart from that, remains in sector MIX included:

- imitations of stone revetment (imitations of alabaster and *breccia corallina* were identified);
- fragments of vegetal decorations;
- fragments of geometric decorations.

One fairly big fragment is exceptional due to its colours: a pale grey floral motif on a white background in a white frame. It might be a part of a larger composition (**Fig. 4**).

The rubble covering the vestibule of the Theater Building yielded small pieces of plaster³³ and a few blocks with remains of paintings. Three of the blocks (**Fig. 5**) show bits in yellow (background), black and cherry red, and are probably parts of a single composition.³⁴

During campaign 1967, sector MXVI.1 yielded a fragment of a fairly big figural painting – a tiny piece of a face (eye and a part of nose, 0.062m x 0.069m), painted with black and dark red on a white background (**Fig. 6**).³⁵ Taking into consideration the proportions of the face, the head must have represented a nearly real-life size.

Four very small fragments of a larger composition, perhaps a figural scene, were discovered in sector MXVII (campaign 1969). It showed pale green and light yellow leaves and flowers of an ornamental plant painted (very carefully, with ‘shades’) on a black background (**Fig. 7**).

In sector ME,³⁶ explored only a short time, a limestone column painted red *in situ* and an assemblage of architectural limestone decorations were found.³⁷ Apart from that, some chunks of painted plaster were discovered and only one of them (found in debris next to the column) was recovered. It obviously represented an imitation of polychrome marble: dark pink and peach ‘veins’ were marked on a cream-pink background.

The Early Roman villas excavated below the Theater Portico (sector MX) held, apart from the paintings *in situ* described above, some dispersed pieces, perhaps forming decorations of the villas; among others, a fragment of a yellow rusticated panel in a black frame on a white background (sector MX.2.1/73); similar items were found in sector WIN (see *supra*, p. 426).

Remains of another(?) villa with a beautiful mosaic floor³⁸ were discovered in sector MXV and, apart from interesting elements of architectural decoration, more than ten limestone blocks with preserved layers of plaster were found. The blocks were of approximately uniform size (0.70 x 0.50 x 0.40m) and the remains of painted plaster were all irregular pieces without the original edges. All blocks but one had a single coat of plaster, between 2cm and 0.5cm thick. Preserved fragments indicate that it was either stripe decoration or

³³ W. KUBIAK, E. MAKOWIECKA, Polish Excavations at Kom el-Dikka in 1965 and 1966. Preliminary Report, *AfrBull* 22, 1975, pp. 36–37, Fig. 13.

³⁴ Similar motifs and colours appear on many fragments of plaster which come from the assemblages discovered in sector G, see *infra*, **Fig. 15**.

³⁵ Inv. no. SM 1044/67; that fragment shows some resemblance to SA 403/61, see *supra*, p. 426, n. 31.

³⁶ TKACZOW, Topography, Site 32.

³⁷ B. TKACZOW, Architectural Styles of Ancient Alexandria. Elements of architectural decoration from Polish excavations at Kom el-Dikka (1960–1993), *Alexandrie* VIII, Varsovie 2010, pp. 75–76, Pl. XIII/1–2.

³⁸ G. MAJCHEREK, Excavations in Alexandria 1992–1993, *PAM* V (Reports 1993), 1994, pp. 15–18.

monochrome panels surrounded with darker ‘frames’ (**Fig. 8**). The most common colours are white, cream, red and black. It can be concluded that the walls which incorporated the blocks were decorated with paintings which imitated stone revetment. Only one of the blocks³⁹ is probably a part of jamb; there are remains of stripe decoration in cream, light red and black on the wider wall, and plaster painted blue on the narrow wall.

A 95-piece assemblage, registered as ‘TR 1973-4’ comes from the layers ‘over-the-pelta mosaic’ belonging to a Roman villa, the so-called house *gamma*.⁴⁰ The layers covering the mosaic contained, among others, limestone rubble, most probably from the houses in the surrounding area which were ruined at the same time as the Roman villas including house *gamma*.

Eight groups of a similar or identical decoration were distinguished; it is possible that the whole assemblage were part of a decoration of a single house.

As many as four groups can be associated with ceiling decoration (or beams where the walls connect with the ceiling?); it is suggested by the marks left by beams found in three groups. Decoration of these fragments consists of concentric circles in different colours, probably laid out in a row. Three types of different composition and colour were distinguished:

- green, yellow and black circles, 0.18m in diameter; nine fragments including two matching pieces – one with the original edge (**Fig. 9**);
- black, white and cherry red circles, 0.12m in diameter; two types of composition (six and seven pieces); in both cases there was one fragment with the original edge. It is possible that the centres of the circles were fragments of a white spiral on a cream background with a cherry red contour; five such pieces were identified;
- orange circles with a cream centre on a light red background, 0.18m in diameter; five fragments including two with the original edge;
- stripe decoration painted white, light yellow, red and black; 30 identified fragments including 13 with the original edge (**Fig. 10**). Three pieces display preserved frame which was formed with the black stripe, it might have been a ‘coffer’ decoration(?).

The other fragments belong to wall decoration. Three types of stripe decoration and two types of imitation of stone revetment were distinguished.

Stripe decoration:

- red, orange and cream stripes six pieces, lack of the original edges. It is difficult to confirm if they can be associated with ceiling decorations described above (circles of identical colours);
- yellow, green, grey and cherry red stripes of different width: five fragments, only one layer of plaster;
- stripes in pink, grey and white as well as in yellow and grey – nine badly preserved pieces.

³⁹ Limestone inventory 240X.

⁴⁰ M. RODZIEWICZ, Un quartier d’habitation gréco-romain à Kôm el-Dikka, *EtudTrav IX*, 1976, pp. 186–189, Fig. 22; ID., *Alexandrie III*, p. 45, Fig. 38.

Imitations of stone revetment consist solely of very small fragments with only one layer of plaster:

- dark red spots on a cream-yellow background (*breccia corallina?*); nine pieces including seven with white stripes (frames of the panels?);
- dark pink and cherry red spots on a pale pink background (porphyry or Aswan granite?); 32 fragments including 19 with remains of white and grey ‘frames’ (**Fig. 11**).

Fragments from sectors W1 and W1N form a separate assemblage – in this group the context might suggest that they belonged to decoration of the houses in these sectors (cf. *supra*). There is an exceptional specimen among those fragments, a fairly small piece which was a part of a larger scene. It was found in debris filling the well in room H6 in a Late Roman house H. The item displays a part of a naked male silhouette (**Fig. 12**) turned back – the torso with a part of a shoulder and a small fragment of the head. The torso, which is very muscular, is painted pink.⁴¹

Different places in the Imperial Baths and Cistern (sectors AN, K, O and ‘68’) contained isolated pieces of painted plaster. Some of the fragments, registered in the main inventory, were transferred to the Graeco-Roman Museum,⁴² and the rest were left in the field storehouses. This group comprises some big pieces, possibly parts of figural paintings (**Fig. 13**), many of them are coated with several layers of plaster with completely different images, which means that the decoration of the walls was changed repeatedly. The fragments, similarly to the ones from auditoria A and E, could have come from decorations of large edifices situated in the vicinity of Kom el-Dikka.

Excavations in sector G in 1987, which were performed in one of the discovered auditoria (auditorium A) in the layer of debris filling the ground below previously excavated Arab burials,⁴³ resulted in a discovery of a big assemblage of painted plaster (more than 100 fragments). The context of the find indicates that they certainly did not belong to the decoration of the auditorium.⁴⁴ Most of them had several layers of plaster, frequently of different type of decoration.

Decorations of the fragments show a great variety. Some groups representing the same pattern were distinguished, for instance:

- imitation of stone revetment (straight and wavy dark red narrow lines on a cream background); identical pattern is found on a big fragment discovered in auditorium E (**Fig. 14a-b**). Similar pictures can be seen on several layers of that plaster;

⁴¹ Inv. no. W1N/ 4312/92.

⁴² Inv. nos O/1069/68, O/1070/68, ‘68’/1151/69 and SK/1138/69.

⁴³ Z. KISS, Les auditoria romains tardifs, [in:] Z. KISS *et al.*, Fouilles polonaises à Kôm el-Dikka (1986–1987), *Alexandrie VII*, Varsovie 2000, pp. 15–23.

⁴⁴ Fragments of plaster painted red, found later in lower layers, could have belonged to that decoration, see: TKACZOW, *EtudTrav XVII*, 1995, p. 320.

- fragments of identical colours: black, cherry red and pink patterns on a yellow background (**Fig. 15**). Identical motifs can be seen on many items from auditorium E.

Even these two groups seem to indicate that the pieces of plaster found in both auditoria might have come from a single edifice.

Apart from that, the assemblage from auditorium A includes fragments of floral decorations and figural scenes.

Excavations in sector F (*loci* FW and FS) during campaign 2009 brought an addition of a large number of plaster pieces, mostly very fragmented. Nevertheless, several types of decoration (perhaps parts of a single picture) were distinguished:

- different varieties of stripe decoration in a wide range of colours;
- imitations of stone revetment (recognized as the *brocatello*, *rosso antico*, *giallo antico* porphyry, and Aswan granite during preliminary identification);
- fragments of a larger composition? Green leaves and branches on a yellow background;
- a few fragments of a figurative composition(?).

In the same year in sector G, nearly 500 fragments of painted plaster were discovered in the filling of the southern part of auditorium E. Many of them were quite large and generally were coated with several layers. Repetitive decoration motifs might suggest that the plaster come from rebuilding or demolition of a large edifice located nearby, especially that, as mentioned above, this assemblage has a lot in common with the one from auditorium A and, moreover, a similar deposit was discovered next to auditorium P, at the back of the Imperial Baths.⁴⁵

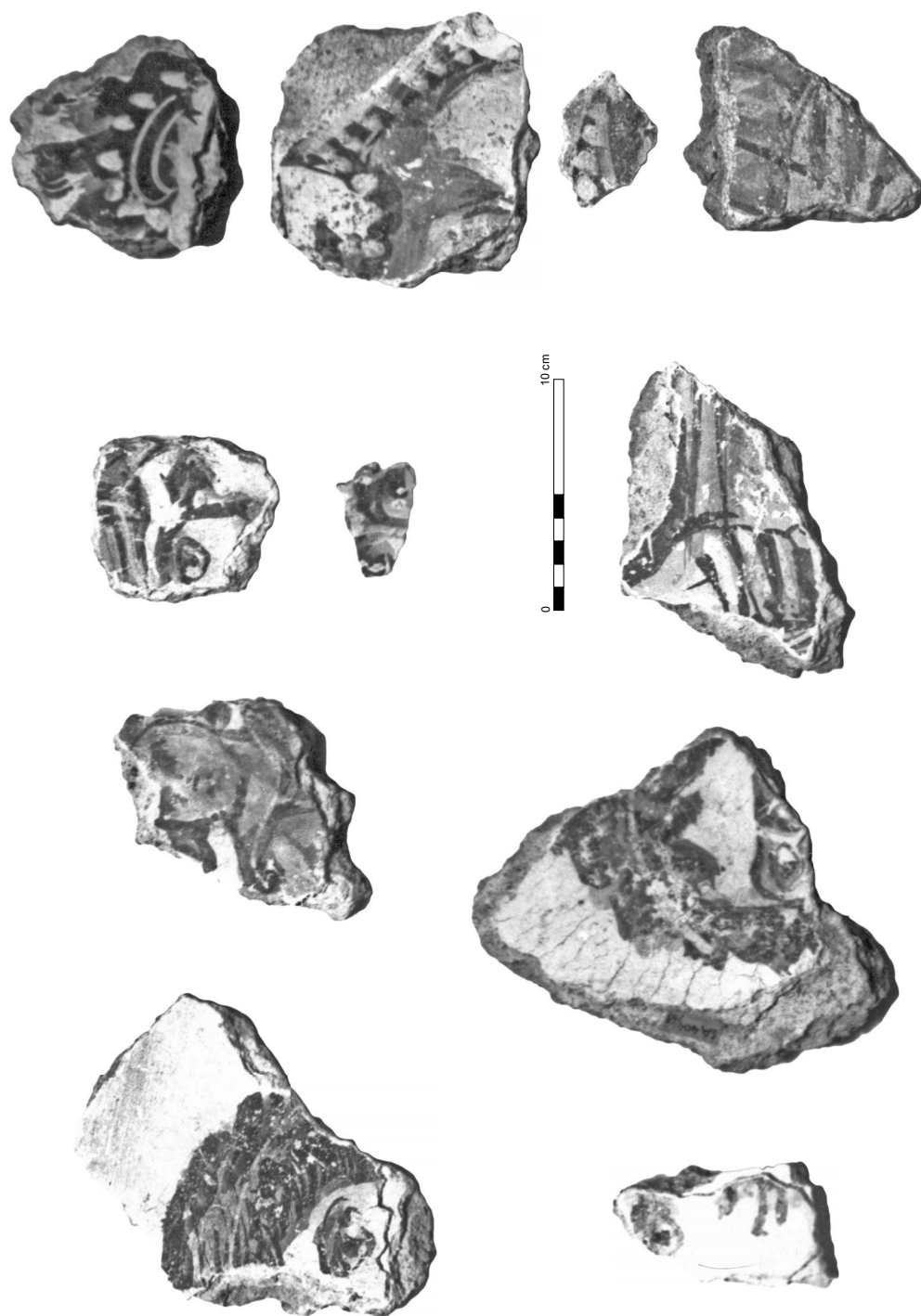
Apart from plaster of similar or identical decoration and colours as the fragments from auditorium A, the assemblage in auditorium E also contained:

- imitations of porphyry and *africano* revetments;
- a fragment of a hand;
- two fragments with remains of an inscription.

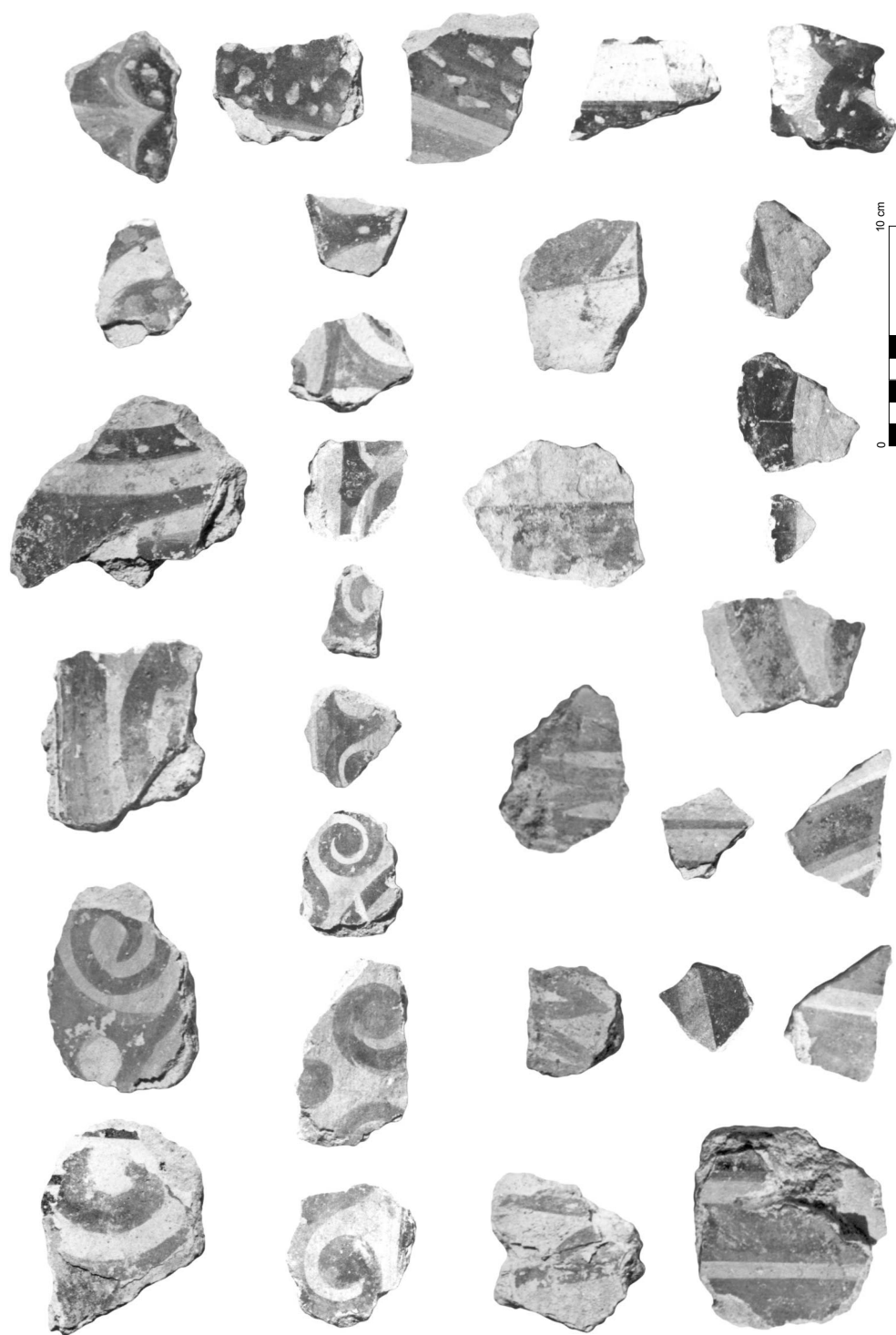
Many fragments represent pieces of larger compositions, possibly figure scenes, which will be subjected to detailed study in the future.

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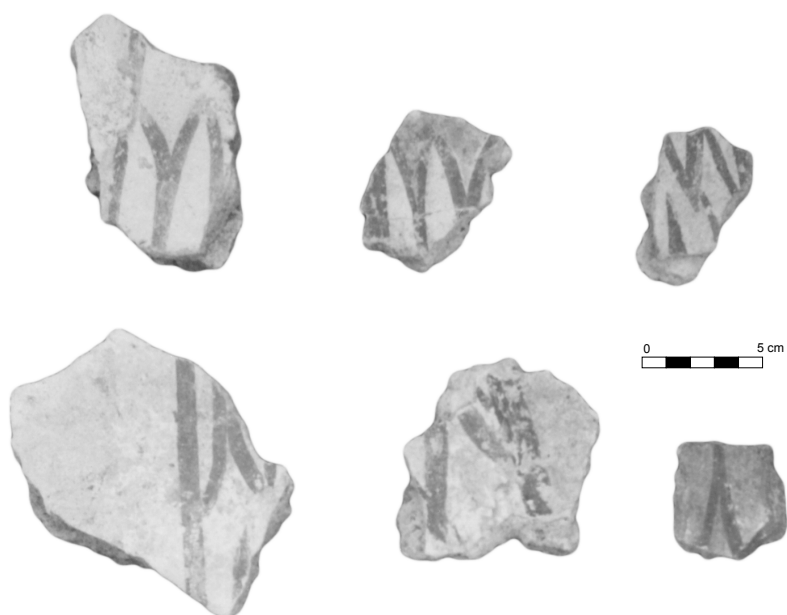
⁴⁵ G. MAJCHEREK, Alexandria. Kom el-Dikka. Excavations 2008/2009, *PAM XXI* (Reports 2008–2009), 2010, pp. 35–36; K. JUCHNIEWICZ, K. LACH, Appendix, *PAM XXI* (Reports 2008–2009), 2010, pp. 43–47, Figs 15–17.



1. Assemblage of painted plaster form sector A, campaigns 1960–61 (Phot. W. Jerke).



2. Assemblage of painted plaster from sector MIX, campaigns 1964-65 (Phot. W. Jerke).

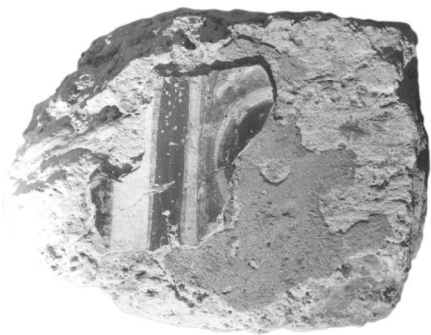


a



b

3a. Fragments from sector MIX; imitation of colour marble revetment (Phot. R. Meszka); b. Remains of a mural painting imitating colour marble revetment found at the *tepidarium* in the Imperial Baths (Phot. W. Jerke).



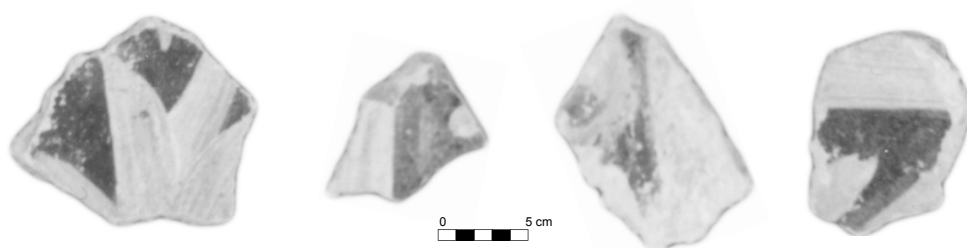
5. Three blocks with remains of painted plaster found in debris at the vestibule of the Theatre Building (Phot. A. Dziewanowski).



6. Sector MXVI. Fragment of a face; inv. no. SM 1044/67 (Phot. W. Jerke).

4. Sector MIX. Fragment of a bigger composition (Phot. W. Jerke).

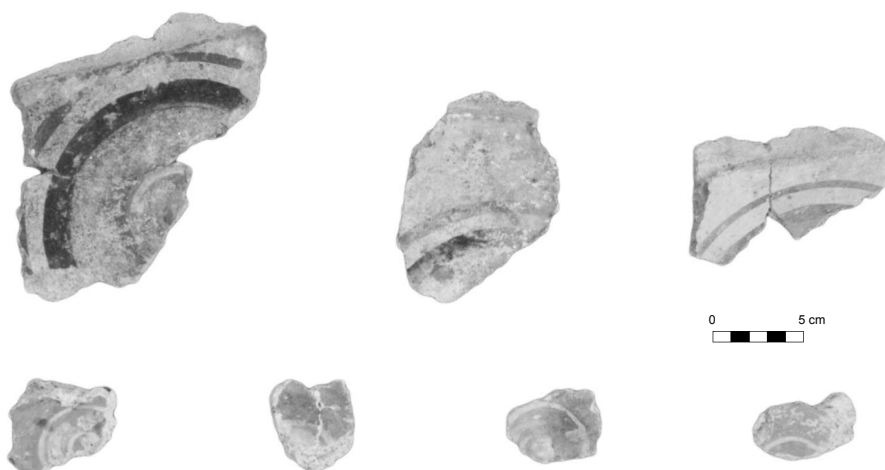




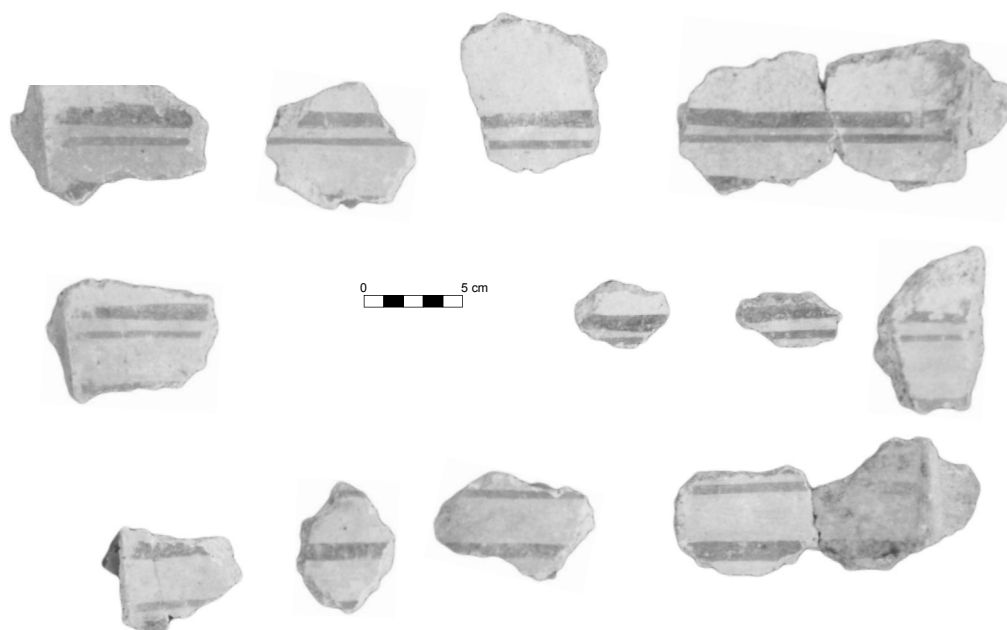
7. Sector MXVII. Fragments of a larger composition – small leaves and flowers (Phot. R. Meszka).



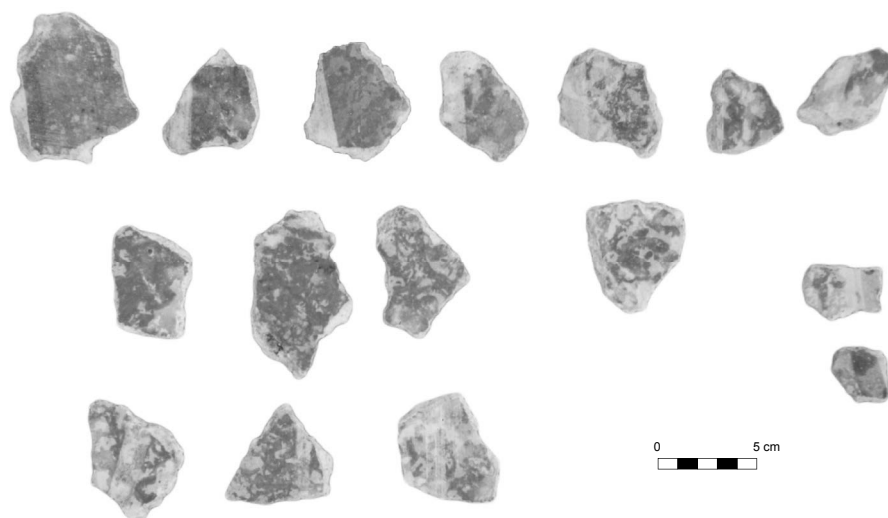
8. Sector MXV. Blocks with remains of painted plaster; scale = 25cm (Phot. W. Jerke).



9. Sondage TR. Fragments of a ceiling decoration (Phot. R. Meszka).



10. Sondage TR. Fragments of a ceiling decoration (Phot. R. Meszka).



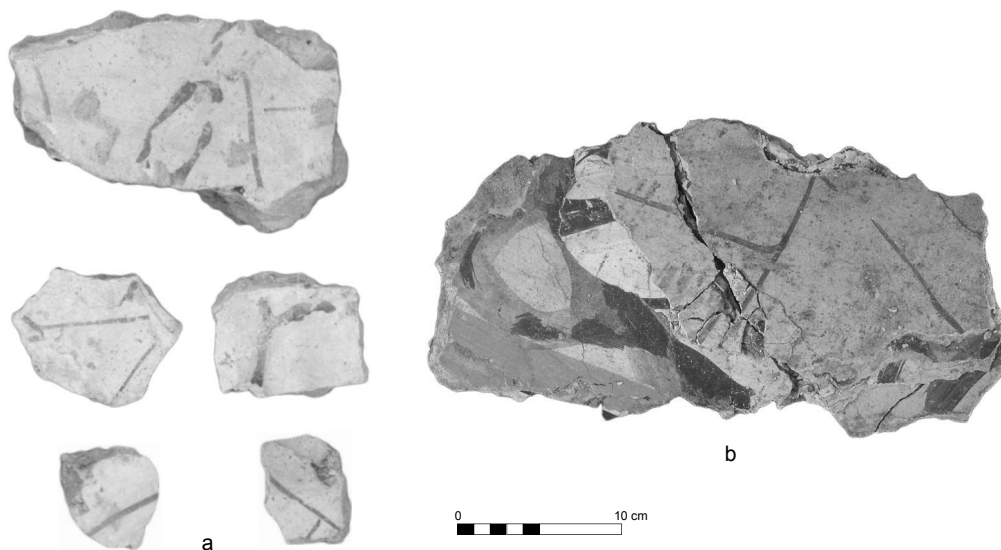
11. Sondage TR. Fragments of plaster imitating porphyry or granite revetment (Phot. R. Meszka).



12. Fragment of figural scene
– silhouette of an ‘athlete’,
inv. no. 4312/92 (Phot. W. Jerke).



13. Fragments of larger figural paintings found without context
in the vicinity of the Imperial Baths (Phot. R. Meszka).

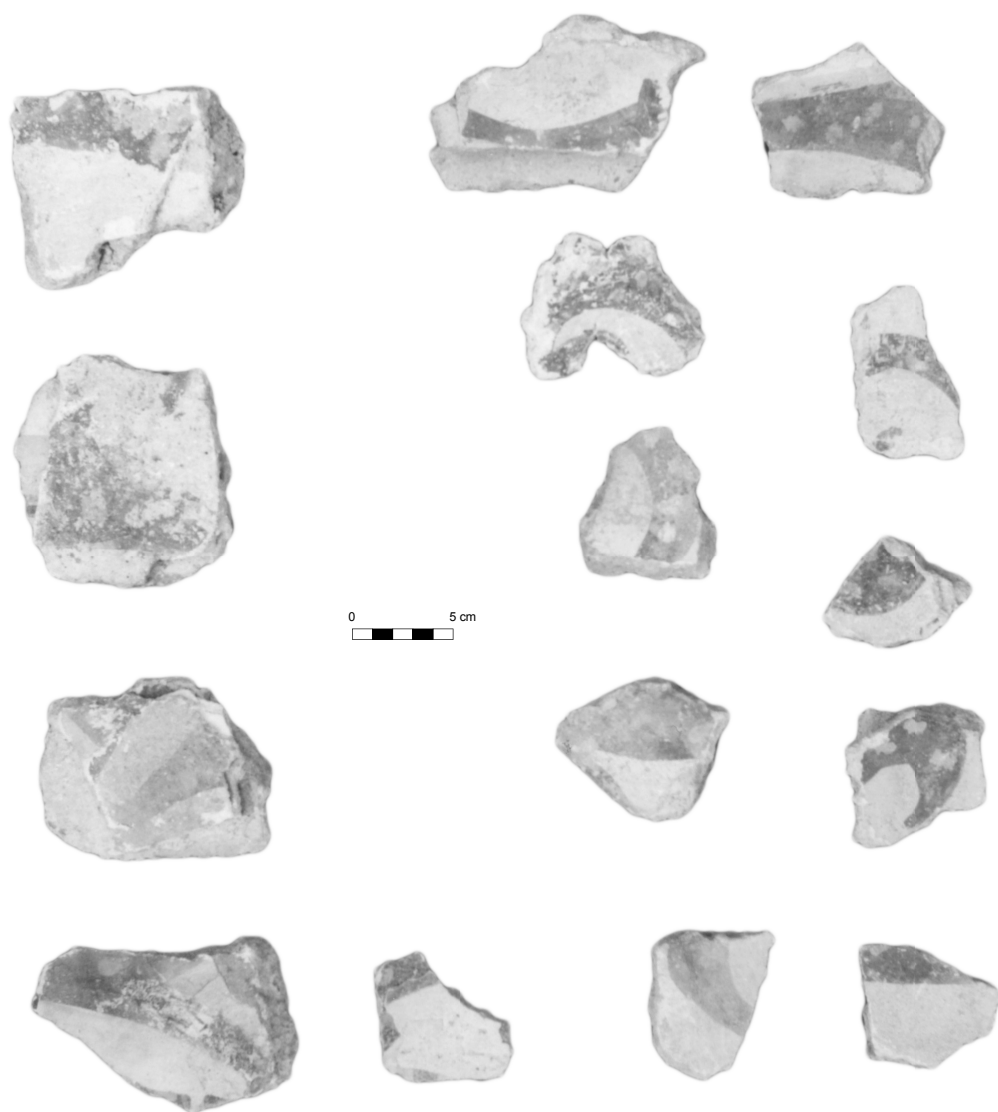


a

b



14a-b. Sector G. a. Fragments from auditorium A, campaign 1987 (Phot. R. Meszka); b. fragment from auditorium E,
campaign 2009 – imitation of colour marble revetment; other layers of plaster display different patterns
(Phot. G. Majcherek).



15. Sector G, auditorium A, campaign 1987. Fragments of one composition(?) (Phot. R. Meszka).