

Information On Romans In Amarna

- The area was also occupied during later Roman and early Christian times, excavations to the south of the city have found several structures from this period
- Though Akhet-Aten was occupied for only a handful of years by the Egyptians, there have also been monastic settlements and roman camps, and part of the site is still unexcavated beneath modern cultivation closer to the Nile.
- The site was abandoned: apart from a small Roman fort
- Column Q: Date (if non-Eighteenth Dynasty)
In addition to Eighteenth Dynasty objects, a number of objects of other dates appear in the corpus, particularly of the Roman period. The dates provided by the excavators have been followed: the accuracy of these has not been confirmed.
- Roman Glass

Jane Faiers

A relatively small, but varied, collection of Roman glassware was recovered from the Kom el-Nana monastery complex. This was recorded between 2003 and 2006, and a monograph on the work, entitled 'Late Roman glassware and pottery at Amarna and related studies', is now in preparation.

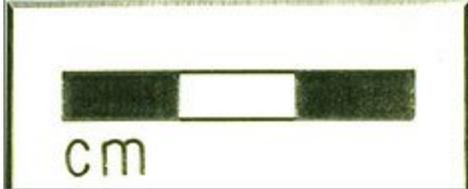
The vessel forms are surprisingly varied with some showing extreme delicacy in their making and decoration. The colours of the glass ranged from a very dark blue through light blue and shades of green, sea-green, brown, pale-yellow and clear. Applied decoration was mainly in shades of blue, with one beaker sherd having red streaks included as the glass was blown.

Forms include dishes, bowls, platters and goblets, flagons, flasks, lamp bases and one part of a bangle. No complete form has so far been found. The glass lamps possibly would have fitted into a form of chandelier made of iron.

Apart from the bangle, which was of moulded glass, all other identified pieces were of blown glass.

A selection of the glassware is illustrated below.





- Roman wall paintings from Kom el-Nana

Gillian Pyke

During the 2000 season at the late Roman monastery complex at Kom el-Nana, the rear part of a church was excavated: the apse, narrow flanking rooms and the end of the probable nave. Fallen fragments of painted wall plaster were found in the fill of the apse (see the plan of the church and location of the plaster fragments).

Thanks to the careful retrieval of the pieces, it was possible to reconstruct them over several study seasons, and to determine the nature of the decoration. The scene is important as it is relatively well dated and the fact that it is fallen has allowed the techniques of its execution to be studied.



View of the east end of the church within the Kom el-Nana monastery, at the end of the 2000 season. The painted plaster originated from within the apse. The main part of the church, lying to the west, remains unexcavated.

Reconstructing the painted scene



Recovering the plaster fragments. There are here being placed on wooden trays before being taken back to the expedition house for conservation and study. Before the walls

collapsed, the floor of the church had already been removed, so the rubble lay directly on desert sand.

The apse scene consists of a bipartite representation of the ascension of Christ, the lower register showing the twelve apostles and Virgin Mary, and the upper depicting Christ triumphant on a chariot. The lower register is the better preserved. The figures of John, James, Andrew and Bartholomew can be identified by the legends between their feet, while the figure of Peter holds the keys of the gates of Heaven. The apostles wear pale red, gold and green cloaks, probably alternating, which is unevenly divided so that one hem crosses the body diagonally, while the other falls vertically from the apostle's left elbow. This garment is worn over a tunic with a black stripe (*clavus*) on each side. The pale blue stripes on the tunic probably represent gathers. The hem of the garment consists of a wavy line, and there are Coptic crosses in each corner of the garment. On his feet, each apostle wears white footwear with a black heel and toe, the latter with a black tongue along the top of the foot. This style of dress has its origins in the secular clothing of the middle and upper classes of the Roman Empire at the time that Christ and the apostles lived.



Reconstructed fragments of a painted wall plaster from the apse showing a figure of the apostle Andrew. [Click here for a line drawing.](#)

Apart from Peter, and perhaps Andrew, each apostle probably held a rolled scroll. This iconographic item is more usually held by prophets, but the apostles are similarly depicted in a comparable scene at Bawit, and another at Naqlun. The various positions of the arms of the figures suggest that they were in relatively active poses.



Reconstructed fragments of painted wall plaster from the apse showing figures of the apostles John and James. [Click here for a line drawing.](#)

A few small fragments of a dark red garment have been tentatively attributed to the Virgin Mary, who characteristically wears a long robe that covers her body from head to foot. It is unfortunately impossible to determine her pose from these few fragments. Comparable scenes from Bawit and elsewhere show her either with both arms raised in an *orans* (praise) position, or seated on a throne with the infant Christ.

The upper register is very poorly preserved, but one of the chariot wheels survives, as well as part of the white cloak, tunic and red staff/sceptre of Christ and the golden mandorla surrounding him. The wheel is unusual in being shown in its entirety, rather than consisting of only the part appearing below the mandorla. Its green colour and construction, with only four spokes, is also uncharacteristic. The appearance of Christ in a white garment is similarly unusual, but might have its origin in the description of an enthroned figure whose garment was 'as white as snow' in the vision of Daniel (Daniel 7:9). In scenes of this type, Christ is characteristically shown holding a codex in the left hand, and with his right raised in benediction, and no parallels could be found for Christ holding a staff or sceptre. Other possible elements of the scene include the lozenge shaped figures in red, with a central bar, which might perhaps be an impressionistic rendering of the eyes that appear on the wings of the four beasts of the Apocalypse.

The painted scene was probably located above the level of the niches, the *in situ* plaster around and below which was grey and undecorated. It was painted onto an area of plaster that had been specially prepared to receive it, consisting of two layers of mud plaster, with two layers of white plaster above. The uppermost plaster layer comprised a thin layer of fine white plaster to provide a smooth surface on which the artist painted the scene. Traces of red and white paint between the first and second mud plaster layers suggest that the scene was mapped out before the white plaster was applied.

The pigments used in the painting were all locally available, giving a palette consisting of: black, white, red, pale blue, green, golden yellow, and white. Various shades were achieved by mixing the pigments. The paint was applied using at least two brush widths, the wider used for blocks of colour, being the width of the wide stripes on the cloaks. The

narrow brush was used for outlining the figures and garments, and for details such as the facial features. The painting style and pigments used in the faces of the apostles, especially the use of impressionistic red strokes for the lips, nostrils and eyes, and combination of flesh tone and olive green for shading on the faces is very similar to that on a scene from Bawit. This might perhaps suggest that the artist at least had knowledge of the Bawit paintings, or was himself responsible for some of them.

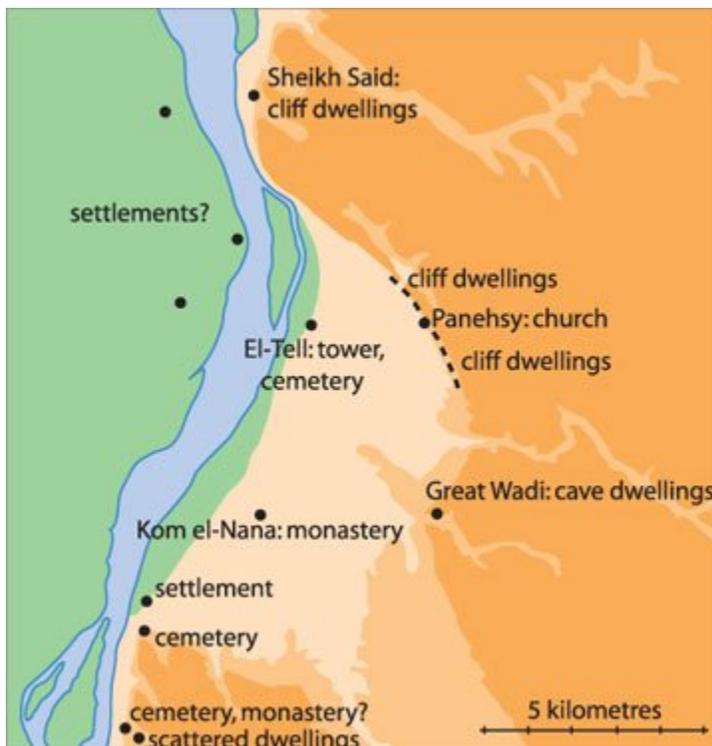
- A small part of the North Suburb (T34.3) had been built over in the Late Roman Period by a well-constructed brick tower and ancillary structures that might have been a guard tower, perhaps connected with a monastery. The surrounding area had also served as a cemetery of the same period.



- Path between tombs 5 and 6. Note the remains of stone huts of the Christian community who lived here in the Late Roman Period (5th/6th centuries AD)
- The period of the 5th and 6th centuries AD saw a second major human occupation of the Amarna plain. At this time Egypt was ruled from Constantinople (Istanbul) as a province of the Byzantine Empire. Christianity had become the official religion. In Egypt the population was swept up in an enthusiasm for the monastic way of life. Middle Egypt was perfect for this. The proximity of desert and cliffs on the eastern side of the river gave the sense of austere retreat without inflicting too much privation, and the many ancient tombs, quarries and natural caves offered shelters that could be improved and converted into dwellings and even churches. On the flat strip of desert many small monasteries of mud brick were also constructed. By the time of the Arab conquest (639–641 AD) the monastic enthusiasm was probably waning, and many of the sites seem to have been abandoned around this time.

Amarna participated in this colonisation of the desert. There were villages in the places where some of the modern villages are, but specifically monastic establishments appeared on the flat desert and in the cliffs. The principal example of the former is Kom el-Nana where a small monastery was built over the remains of an enclosure of the Amarna Period. Excavations were carried out here in the 1990s and in 2000. One discovery was the apse of the monastic church which yielded a mass of fragments of [painted wall plaster](#).

Towards the northern end of the Amarna plain small huts of dry-stone construction were built in an extended line in the face of the cliffs, with a particular concentration in front of the North Tombs of the Amarna Period. These have been planned in outline by the expedition. One of the tombs (no. 6, belonging to Panehsy, one of Akhenaten's chief priests) was converted into a church. In 2007 this aspect of its history was made the subject of a field survey by Gillian Pyke.



All info compiled by Conor P