

2.xii.74

Dear Mr. Chittick,

The envelope with drawings and slides of your Aksum glass, plastered with stamps of odd denominations, reached me shortly after I sent my last letter. I have been pondering the stuff for a few days, and now here are what comments I can provide. I observe that, apart from the xeroxed copies, you have sent me two sheets which look more like originals: the piece of tracing paper with the goblets from Tomb GT II (11), and the piece of plastic sheeting with inked drawing of the fr. with red arcading, [769/74]. Please tell me if you want either these or the slides back.

The goblets from GT II (11) must I suppose be 3rd-early 4th century, to judge by the foot-treatment, and the shallow dish with cut decoration & inscription [440/74] is also at home there. Both seem comparable to the Egyptian finds - no doubt Harden has already said as much. I strongly suspect that the other complete vessels are Islamic, though nobody seems to be able to put his finger on them. The narrow-necked flask with white patterns looks Islamic (unless by any chance it's 1st c. A.D.) The purple goblet going with it, [757/74] is a puzzle - not one of the normal Late Roman examples of the shape of c. 4th c. A.D., and I suspect much later. I have two parallels for the curious foot-treatment from Istanbul (Saraçhane dig); one is from a context of first half 12th century, the other I think from a comparable level, and both look like imports. If they are survival-pieces (as is quite probable), it's unlikely that they are any earlier than 8th century, since we have plenty of material (all different) from the earlier periods. Yet one still hankers for a late 4th/5th century dating on general form. No further thoughts on the beakers with little pierced knobs (as [430/74]), except that again they may be much later than expected. The fr. with red paint arcading seems Islamic again (unless perchance it's another early Roman piece). Harden's date for the handles 68/74 and 763/74 looks right; the little ear-shaped lamp(?) - handles of which you have so many could go on right through the Middle Ages. 668/73 I take to be the rim of a narrow-necked flask, probably 5th or 6th century. The millefiori looks 1st A.D.

It's all very intriguing but very puzzling. This export glass is more fancy than the general run on an Egyptian or Palestinian site, and correspondingly more difficult to place. You'll see that I'm floundering - it's infuriating not to be able to give you something more concrete.

The 'ear-plugs' (beads, or whatever they are) are not known to me from elsewhere, but our Egyptian experts claim that rather similar trinkets turn up in alabaster in Nubia, if that's worth anything. You will probably know what they mean.

I've investigated fares from Toronto to Addis Ababa, and am quoted \$892 for an excursion return - less than I had feared. I await further news on this from you.

(Off to Prestwick on the 12th.)

My kind regards,  
John Hayes