The shipwreck QB1 off Qaitbay Fort (Alexandria)
Centre d'Études Alexandrines (USR 3134 of CNRS)
final report

The site of the shipwreck QB1 is located to the north of Qaitbay Fort, at a depth of between 9 and 12 m. Heading north from the underwater site of Qaitbay, one crosses a stretch of sand roughly 120 m (8 to 10 m deep) before reaching a rocky zone on which the wreck QB1 lies. The hard limestone bedrock is covered with concretions. The rocky surface is deeply furrowed, with sandy pockets and numerous cavities. On the northern edge of the area with the densest presence of amphora remains, there is a rocky plateau 2.5 m high (summit 9 m / base 11.5 m BSL) forming a small cliff. Likewise, to the south-east of the site, the rock rises up to about 8 m and stands above the sandy bottom that runs around the southern edge (10 m). The site was first noted in 1997 and its central part was explored in 1997-1998[1]. One hundred and seventy amphora fragments were drawn under water and plotted on a chart referenced to geometric coordinates

Whereas the work of 1997-1998 was part of a survey of the area of the ancient lighthouse and the exterior of the Eastern Harbour, the resumption of the study of QB1 in 2015 aimed at completing and clarifying the documentation in order to develop an archaeological publication. In order to build up a detailed representation of the site, that is, of the relief and the arrangement of the objects, complete and systematic photographic coverage of the site was undertaken (**fig. 1**). This led to the composition of a photogrammetric overview, in the same manner as performed for the ongoing survey of the monumental underwater site of Qaitbay.

Nothing of the ship itself remains: the wood of the hull has not been preserved. The wreck is identified by its cargo of amphorae (**fig. 2-4**), mostly Lamboglia 2 type (1st century BC) with a few Dressel 6A. Other types of amphorae are also present on the site. These cover a period of several centuries, some being prior to the sinking of the boat, others later. Certain may be contemporary with the wreck.

The study zone in 1997-1998 (fig. 1, blue border) was found covered in concretions (18 m N/S x 25 m E/W approx.). Certain elements were cleaned as a means of identifying and evaluating the state of the site. Thanks to two topographic points that remained in place on the

[1] J.-Y. EMPEREUR, *BCH* 122, 1998, p. 615; *BCH* 123, 1999, p. 546-547.

eastern edge, the reference points and axes established in 2015 were referenced to the previous chart. Outside this "central" zone of the shipwreck, and apart from a few elements situated to the north-west and to the south, the zone that is richest in archaeological material appears to extend over 40-odd metres to the south-east. Following on from the spring campaign of 2015 when 60 amphora fragments were photographed and charted, and 15 were lifted for examination, the autumn campaign of 2015 saw the drawing of the remaining 45 on the seabed and the documentation of 9 new fragments.

During the 2016 spring campaign we managed to carry out a reconnaissance and a thorough evaluation of a sector running roughly 50 m E/W x 30 m N/S situated to the east of the central part of the shipwreck and the south-eastern zone that was studied in 2015. This revealed a significant quantity of stones of different dimensions but largely geologically homogenous scattered over a wide surface area. These are perhaps the ship's ballast stones, though this theory requires further study. There are scarcely any amphorae in this part. After cleaning some of the objects and stones in this extensive zone, a more limited area was defined that could be comprehensively documented. Within this sector each stone and each object was cleaned. The different types of amphora represented were very close to those found in the rest of the site. The presence of two fragments of *dolium* was recorded (**fig. 5**).

The campaigns of 2015 and 2016 led to the selection of a series of objects that were lifted for study. They correspond to two large groups. The first is composed of amphorae, the majority being Lamboglia 2. These amphorae, which constitute the bulk of the wreck's cargo, present a variety of forms and, potentially, origin of production, although the great majority are of Adriatic origin. These are objects that have been previously cleaned, documented and plotted on a geo-referenced chart during the campaigns of 2016, 2015, 1998 and 1997. The second group is composed of certain stones of small dimensions that are found over a large part of the site and whose geological origin we hope to determine. A few other objects complete the list (fragments of *dolium*, nails, amphora necks of other types). Thirty-five objects were lifted for restoration, study and chemical analysis.

Full publication is under preparation and should be completed during 2017.

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Figures

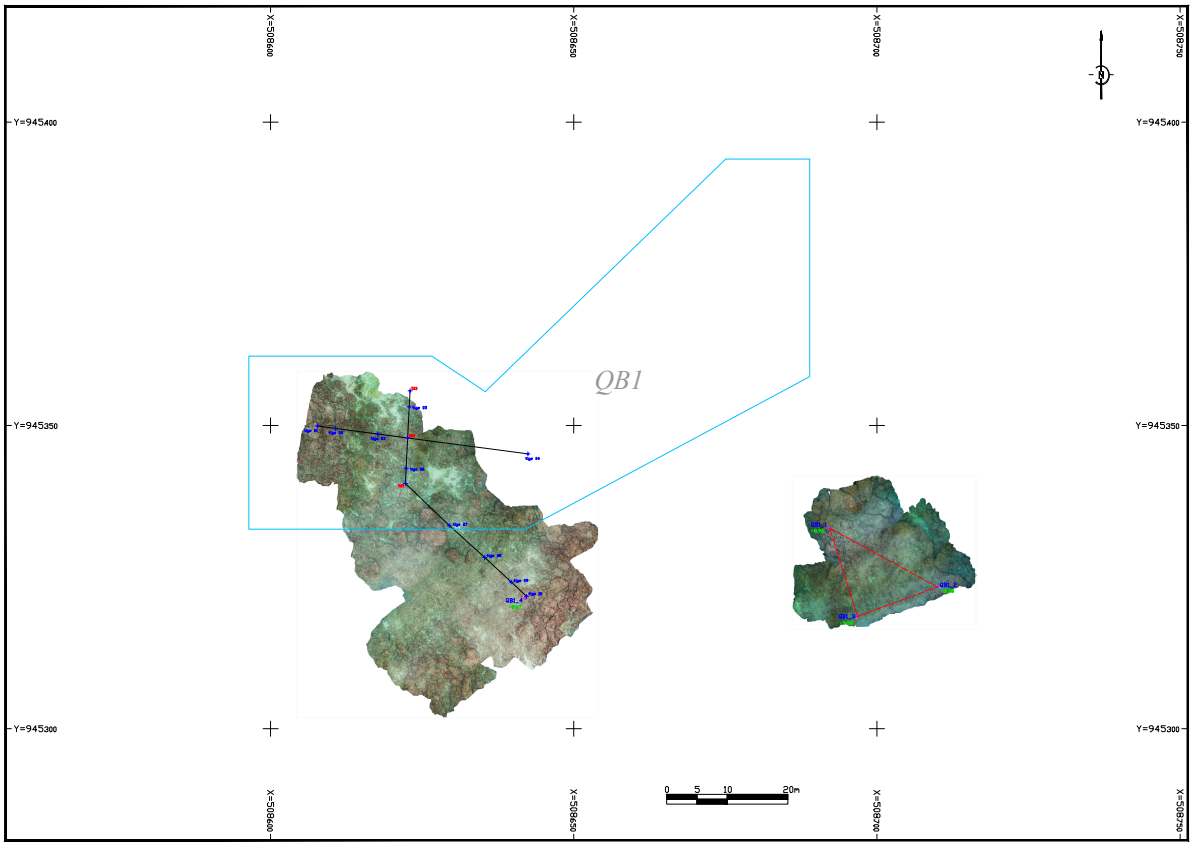

Fig. 1: Digital model of part of the surface of the shipwreck QB1. CEAlex/CNRS archives

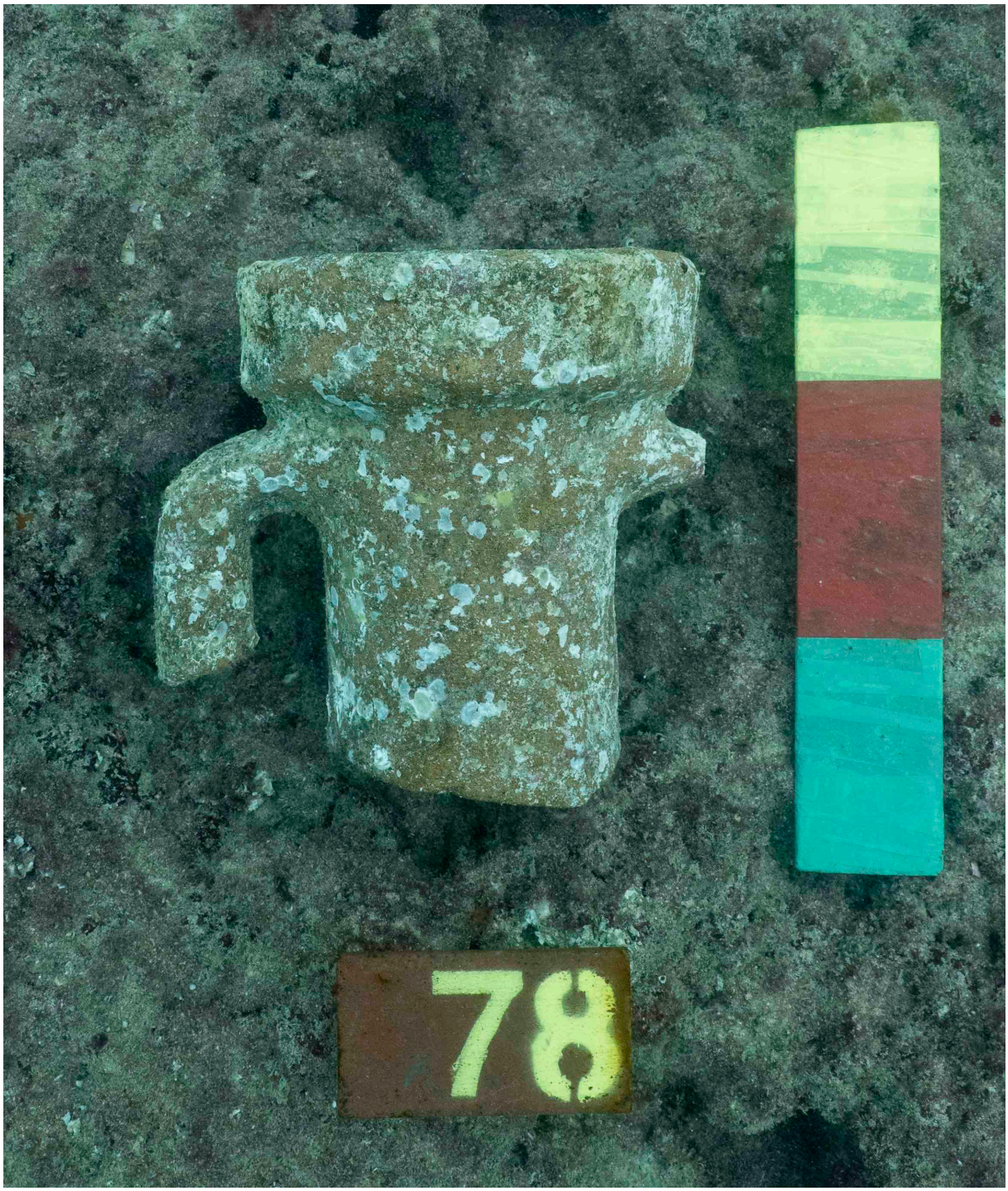

Fig. 2: QB1 shipwreck: object n° 78, Lamboglia 2 amphora neck (2016 excavations). P. Soubias, CEAlex/CNRS archives

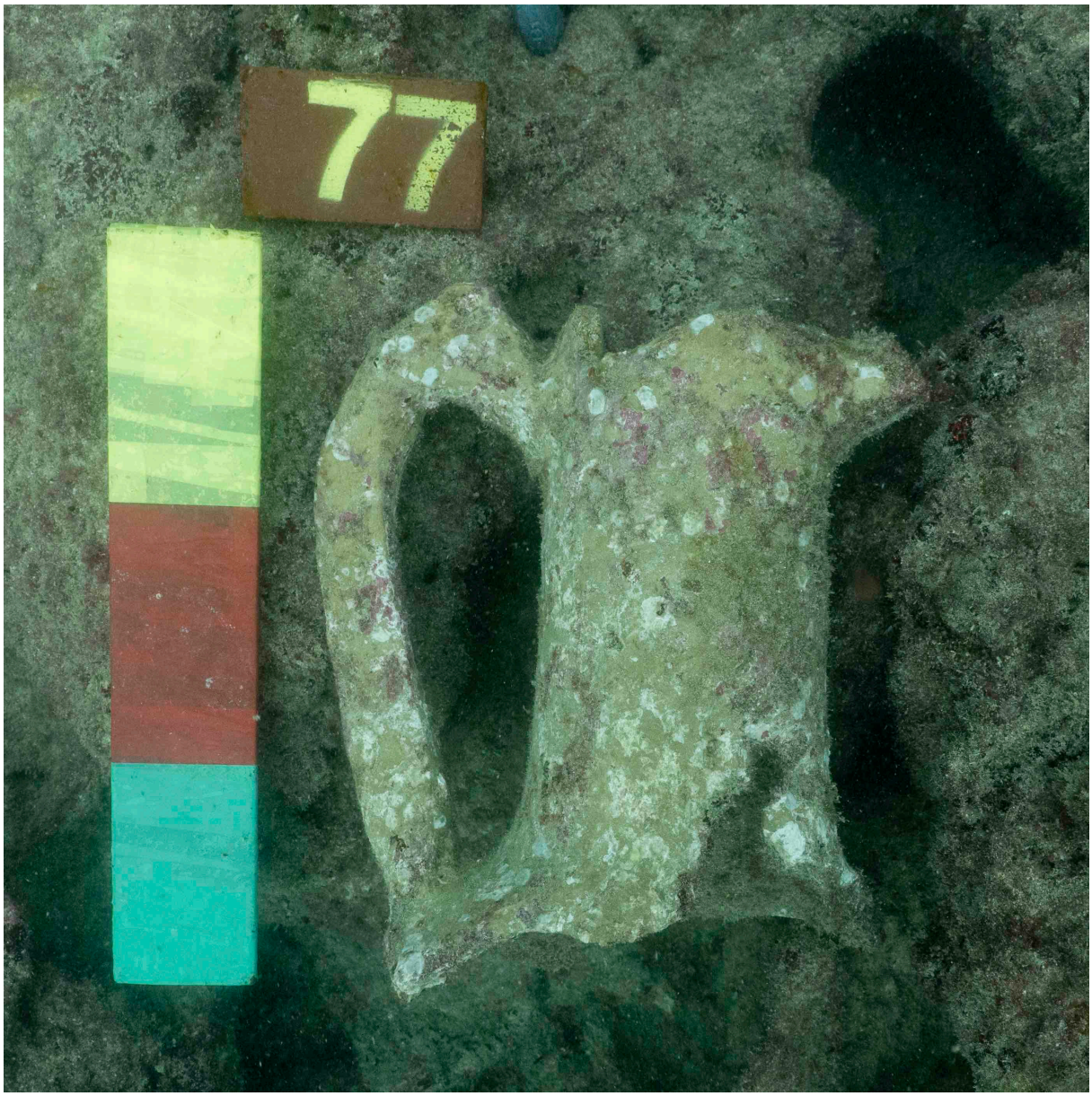

Fig. 3: QB1 shipwreck: object n° 77, Rhodian amphora neck (2016 excavations). P. Soubias, CEAlex/CNRS archives

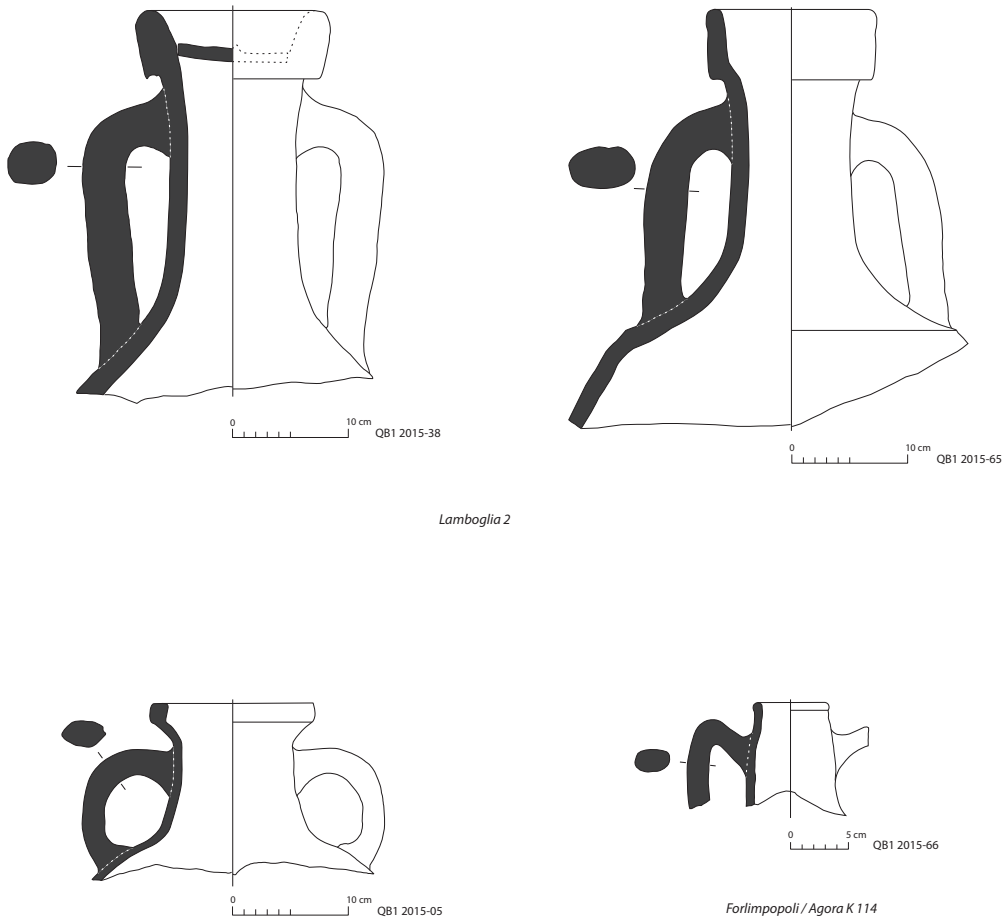

Fig. 4: QB1 shipwreck: object n° 38, Lamboglia 2 amphora neck (2015 excavations); object n° 65, Lamboglia 2 amphora neck (2015 excavations); object n° 05, African amphora neck (2015 excavations); object n° 66, Forlimpopoli amphora neck (2015 excavations). CEAlex/CNRS archives

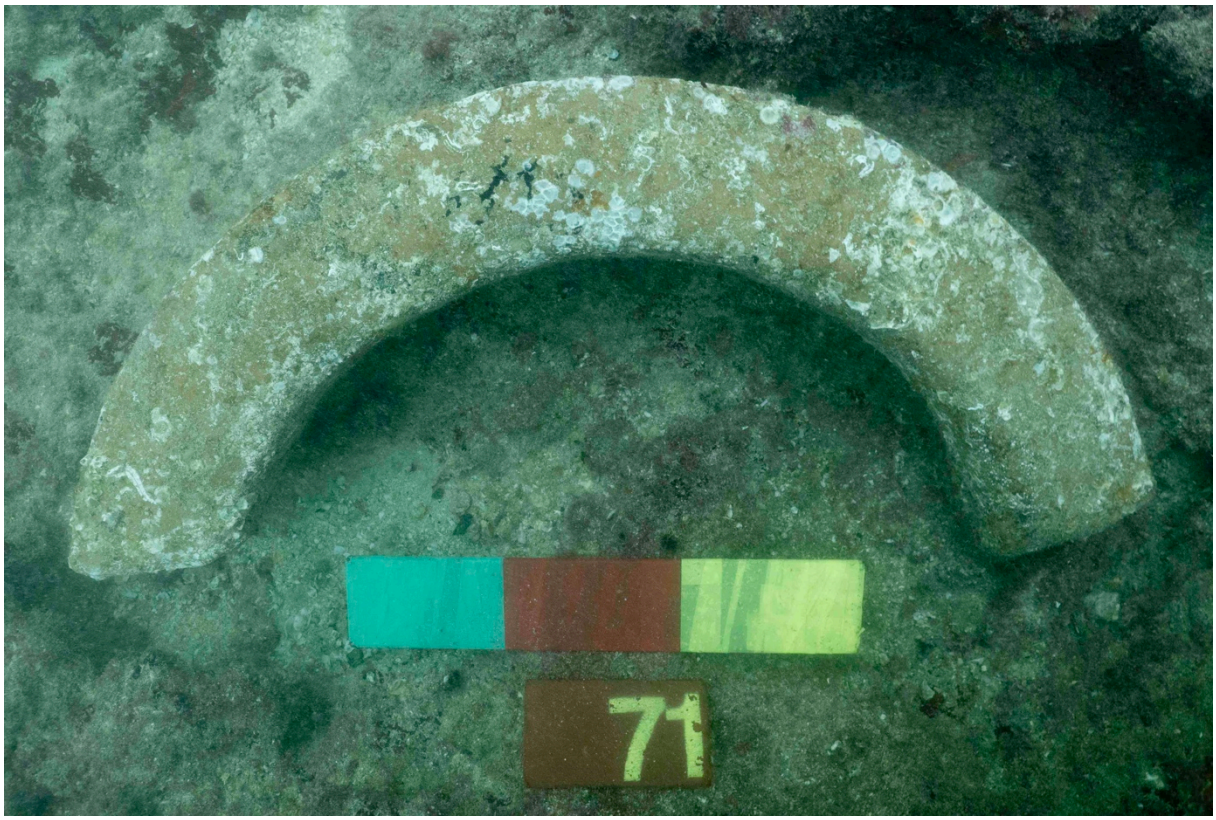

Fig. 5: QB1 shipwreck: object n°71, rim fragment of *dolium* (2016 excavations). P. Soubias, CEAlex/CNRS archives