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# PHARAONIC POTTERY FROM SHEIKH ABD EL-GURNA

Teodozja Izabela Rzeuska, Mariola Orzechowska

The pottery from the 11th-Dynasty Tomb no. 1152<sup>1</sup> came from the fill in the corridor leading to the inner room<sup>2</sup> and from in front of the tomb. The material is heavily disturbed due to repeated reuse of the tomb, thus it has been treated as coming from a single archaeological context. It has been designated as "Pharaonic" for it covers a time horizon from the Middle Kingdom (earliest identified period) to

Hellenistic times, with the biggest and best preserved set coming from the Third Intermediate Period and Late Period.

All diagnostic fragments were recorded. Fabrics were classified as Nile silt (N) and marl (M) clays according to the Vienna System of clay classification;<sup>3</sup> fabrics not classified in this system were designated with the letter "P" (G) and a successive number.<sup>4</sup>

## MIDDLE KINGDOM - NEW KINGDOM

The oldest pottery in this assemblage, represented by small and usually worn sherds, comes from the early Middle Kingdom, that is, the late 11th and early 12th Dynasty. The most numerous forms include: beer jars with rounded bodies, mainly bases (red slipped on the outer surface, wheelmade, N B2 or N C clay) and carinated bowls (red slipped with cut base, N B1). Also from the period are

sherds of small jars with dots attached under the rim (N B2, red slipped outside) [*Fig. 1:1*], small plates with straight or everted rim (N B1, uncoated or red slipped, max. dia. 10-14 cm) and medium-size plates [*Figs. 1:4,5*], and fragments of spouted deep and large bowls (red slipped, N C), as well as a jar with incised wavy line decoration [*Fig. 1:3*].<sup>5</sup> The group also includes what is probably the rim of a *zir*

- 1 PM I/2, 668, map no. 5; H.E. Winlock, W.E. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius, part I* (New York 1926), 10-11, Pl. 1.
- 2 The presented material comes from the top layers of the fill in the corridor, which has been excavated for about half its length, cf. report by T. Górecki in this volume.
- 3 H.Å. Nordström and J. Bourriau, "Ceramic technology: Clays and fabrics", in: Do. Arnold, J. Bourriau, *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Pottery* (Mainz 1993), 168-186.
- 4 Seven such fabrics have been recorded to date. Petrographic examinations are planned to identify the source of the clay in these cases.
- 5 While decoration of this type on Elephantine does not occur prior to the 13th Dynasty, territorially closer parallels, from Dendera, for example, classify these pots with early Middle Kingdom material, cf. S. Marchand, "Fouilles récentes dans la zone urbaine de Dendera: La céramique de la fin de l'Ancien Empire au début de la XIIe dynastie", *CCE* 7 (2003), 221-238, Figs. 44-48.

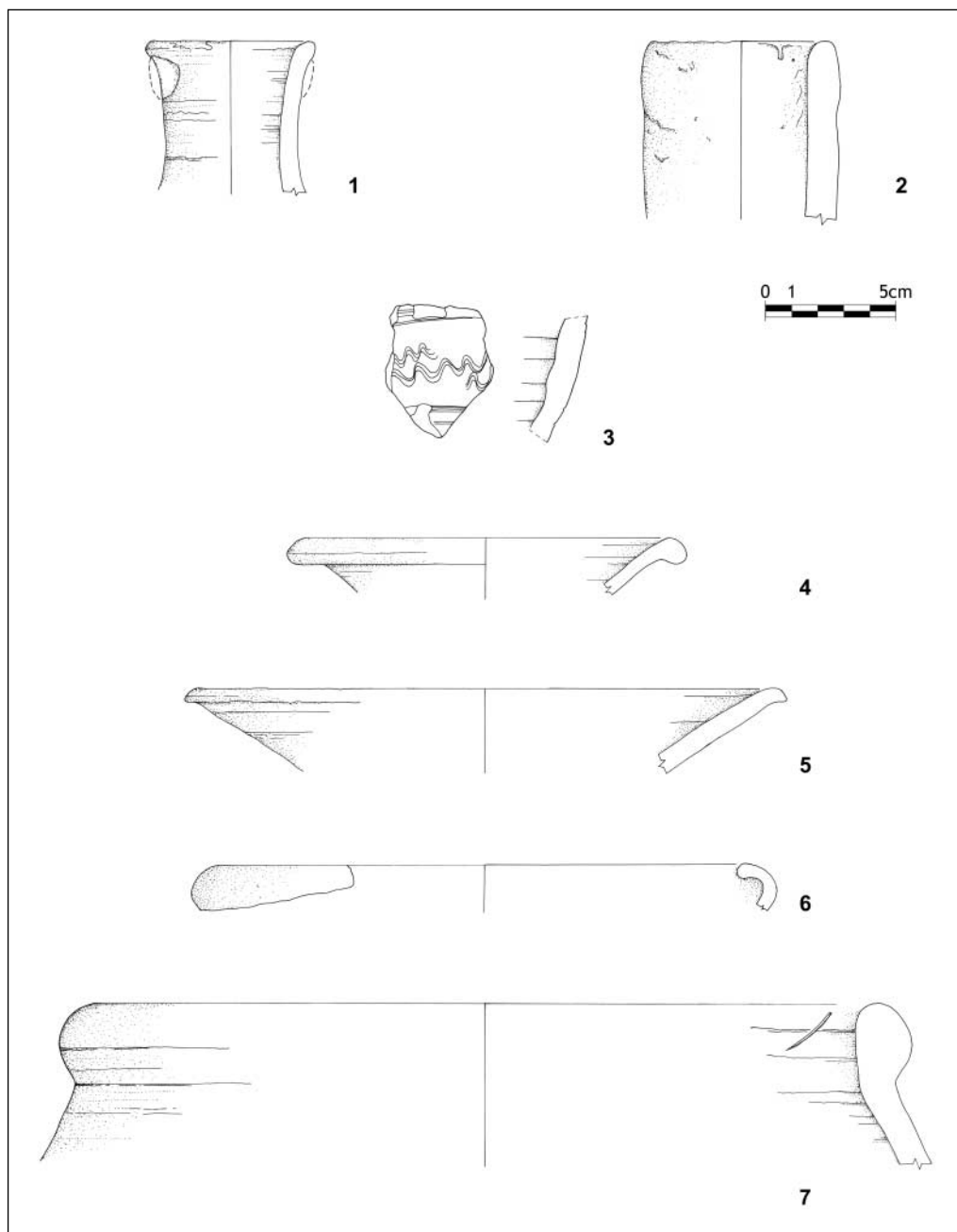


Fig. 1. Early Middle Kingdom Pottery: 1 - jar G.04-54, rim  $\varnothing$  6 cm; 2 - bread mould G.04-107, rim  $\varnothing$  6 cm; 3 - jar G.04-61, self-slip; 4 - plate G.04-32, rim  $\varnothing$  14 cm; 5 - plate G.04-34 (NB2), rim  $\varnothing$  22 cm; 6 - bowl G.04-17, rim  $\varnothing$  19.5 cm; 7 - zir G.04-35, self-slip, rim  $\varnothing$  30 cm (Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

(M C1, rim wheel-made hand-made, strike-shaped pot-mark incised prior to firing) [Fig. 1:7].<sup>6</sup> Bread moulds are rare [Fig. 1:2]; wall thickness of c. 1.5 cm and rim diameters of 6-7 cm place this type in the early Middle Kingdom. Thin-walled hemispherical drinking cups are absent from the assemblage, presumably because of their fragility. This pottery should be seen as dating the construction and the first burials made in it.

The late 12th Dynasty is represented by just one bowl fragment (N B1, uncoated) [Fig. 1:6] and the late Middle Kingdom (late 13th Dynasty) is equally poorly represented.<sup>7</sup> This period is exemplified by bowls and plates ornamented with white dots (N B1, uncoated) [Fig. 2:12]. The closest parallels from Assasif date these sherds to the Middle Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Beer jars with a characteristic "cattle" mouth (N C, red slipped exterior) [Fig. 2:9], mainly rims and bases, come from the same period. They have ovoid bodies and thick bases with scraped bottom. A few censers

(like Fig. 2:10, which is of N B1, uncoated) with traces of burning on the inside were identified. Whitewashing on some sherds could be proof of ritual practices connected with the cult of the dead.<sup>9</sup> Bread moulds (N B2, sandy, mould-made) [Fig. 2:8] from this period have thinner walls and narrower bases than the more ancient examples. Plates with straight rims are typical of the period; they are made of N B1 or N B2, red slipped or uncoated, in a smaller and bigger variant [Fig. 2:11,13].

Vessels with red slipped and burnished surface, mainly sherds of jars, bowls and stands, are the most numerous [Fig. 3:14-18]. Jars are of medium size, with round or egg-shaped body. No. 14 is a ritual *hs* vessel. Open forms are slipped and burnished on the inside, rims are straight or modeled, the bowl itself carinated. Medium-size stands are dated by numerous parallels from the Theban Necropolis to the Second Intermediate Period. All the vessels were made of a very sandy variant of N B1, lacking any organic temper whatsoever.<sup>10</sup>

- 6 B. Bader, *Typologie und Chronologie der Mergel C-Ton Keramik, Materialien zum Binnenhandels des Mittleren Reiches und der Zweite Zwischenzeit, Tell el-Dab'a XIII* (Wien 2001), 158-160. Our fragment is too small for absolutely sure classification; it corresponds most probably to type 57a or 57b, both dated to the early through late 12th Dynasty.
- 7 This pottery is identical to the assemblage characteristic of the 2nd and 3rd phases at Dra' Abu el-Naga, cf. A. Seiler, "Bemerkungen zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches in Theben, Erste Ergebnisse der Bearbeitung der Keramik aus Area H", in: D. Polz, A. Seiler, *Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Dra' Abu el-Naga, SDAIK 23* (Mainz am Rhein 2003), 52-62.
- 8 Pottery from Tomb V, cf. D. Arnold, J. Settgast, "Vierter Bericht über die vom Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo im Assasif unternommenen Arbeiten", *MDAIK 25* (1969), 13, Pl. IIIa; Do. Arnold, "Die Keramik", in: D. Arnold, J. Settgast, "Zweiter Bericht über die vom Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo im Assasif unternommenen Arbeiten", *MDAIK 21* (1966), 93, Pl. XXc (Plate no. K 2194). What is intriguing is that plates with similar decoration (white dots and cross) from Dendera are earlier, that is, from the First Intermediate Period-11th Dynasty (phase 3); cf. Marchand, *op. cit.*, 216-218, Figs. 51-52, Pl. 3a.
- 9 Whitewashing of vessels is ritual in character; it is found on vessels used in the cult of the dead, among others, cf. L.C. Hulin, "Pottery Cult Vessels from the Workmen's Village", in: Barry J. Kemp et al., *Amarna Reports I* (London 1984), 165-177; T.I. Rzeuska, "Some Remarks on the Old Kingdom White Painted Funerary Cult Pottery from West Saqqara", *Proceedings of the Second Central European Conference of Young Egyptologist, Egypt 2001*, ed. by J. Pozińska-Grzybowska (Warsaw 2004), 125-134.
- 10 From the tomb of Majit, cf. Do. Arnold, "Weiteres zur Keramik, Saff el-Dawāba 1970/71", *MDAIK 28* (1972), Taf. XXa,b.

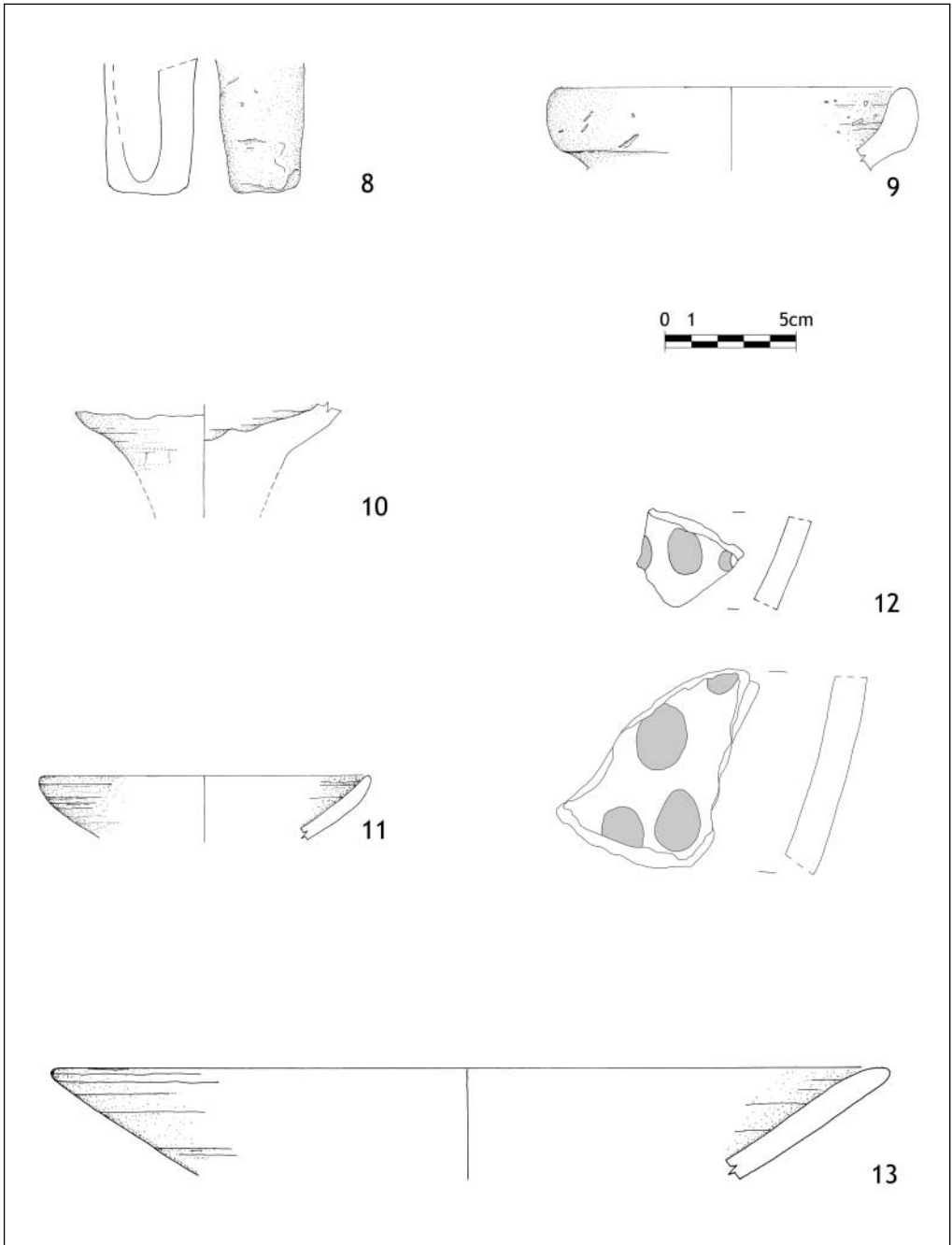


Fig. 2. Late Middle Kingdom Pottery: 8 – bread mould G.04-63, base  $\varnothing$  3 cm; 9 – beer jar G.04-41, rim  $\varnothing$  12.5 cm; 10 – footed censer G.04-108; 11 – plate G.04-36, rim  $\varnothing$  12 cm; 12 – plate G.04-57; 13 – plate G.04-31, rim  $\varnothing$  23 cm (Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

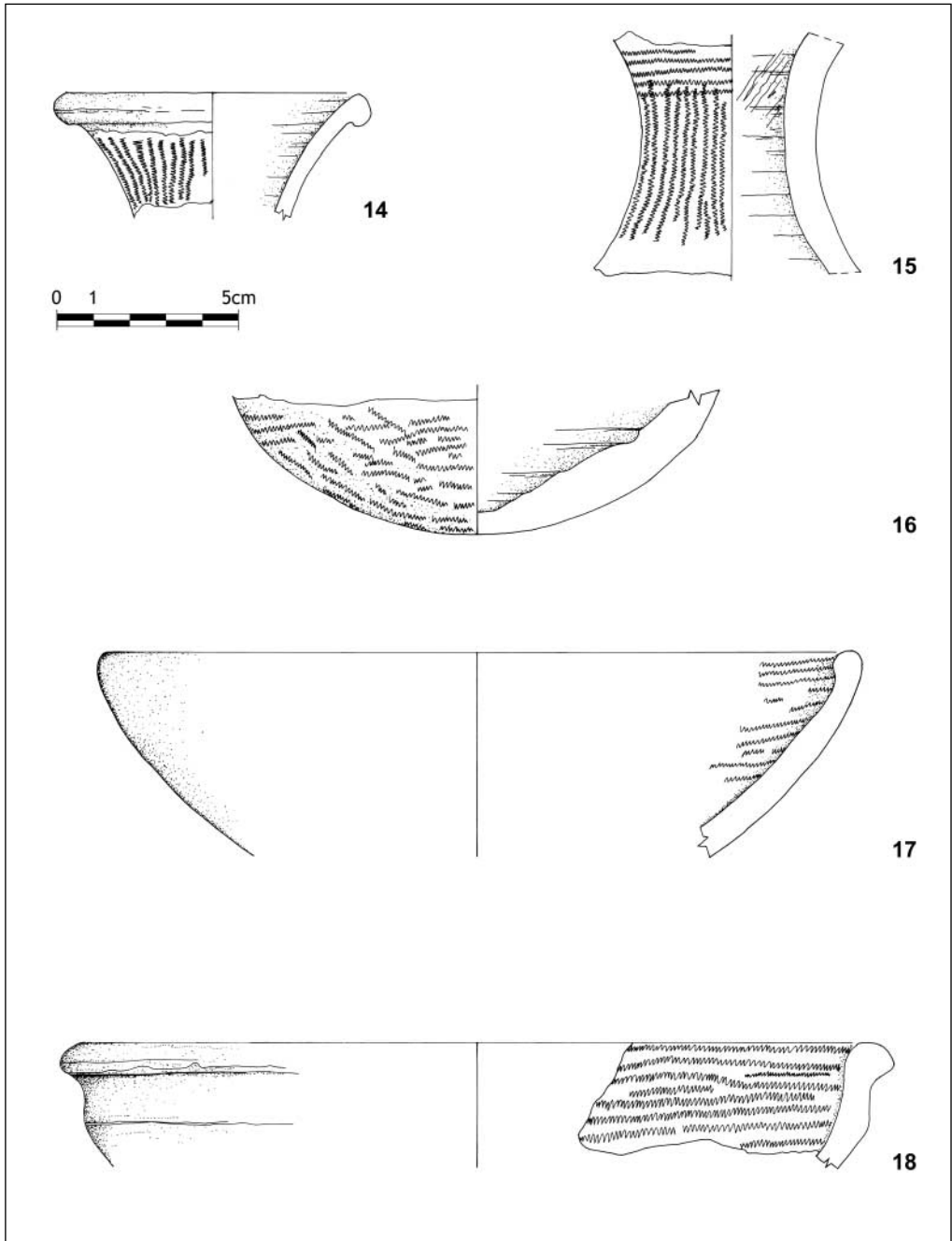


Fig. 3. Second Intermediate Period: 14 – jar G.04-6, rim  $\varnothing$  8 cm; 15 – pot-stand G.04-71, pres. height 6.5 cm; 16 – jar G.04-74; 17 – bowl G.04-72; 18 – bowl G.04-15, rim  $\varnothing$  21 cm (Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

Interestingly, while interpretation is difficult, it seems that the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period pottery served ritual purposes connected with the cult of the dead rather than with the burial itself.<sup>11</sup> Possibly the sherds represent a time when the dead buried earlier in the tomb were venerated.

Pottery from the New Kingdom is relatively less numerous, the repertoire being limited to beer jars (cut base, N E fine, uncoated), plates (N E fine uncoated, base cut)

and carinated footed bowl. No decorated pottery has been found to date.

The handmade model of a bed for a concubine (G.04-105, N B1, red slipped) is among the most interesting finds so far. According to G. Pinch's typology, the object belongs to type 6A, i.e., a set composed of a detached figurine and bed.<sup>12</sup> Bed models usually measure 10-20 cm; our fragment is 7.8 x 8.5 x 3.4 cm, making it one of the bigger variants. Based on parallels, it can be assigned to the New Kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

(T.I. Rz.)

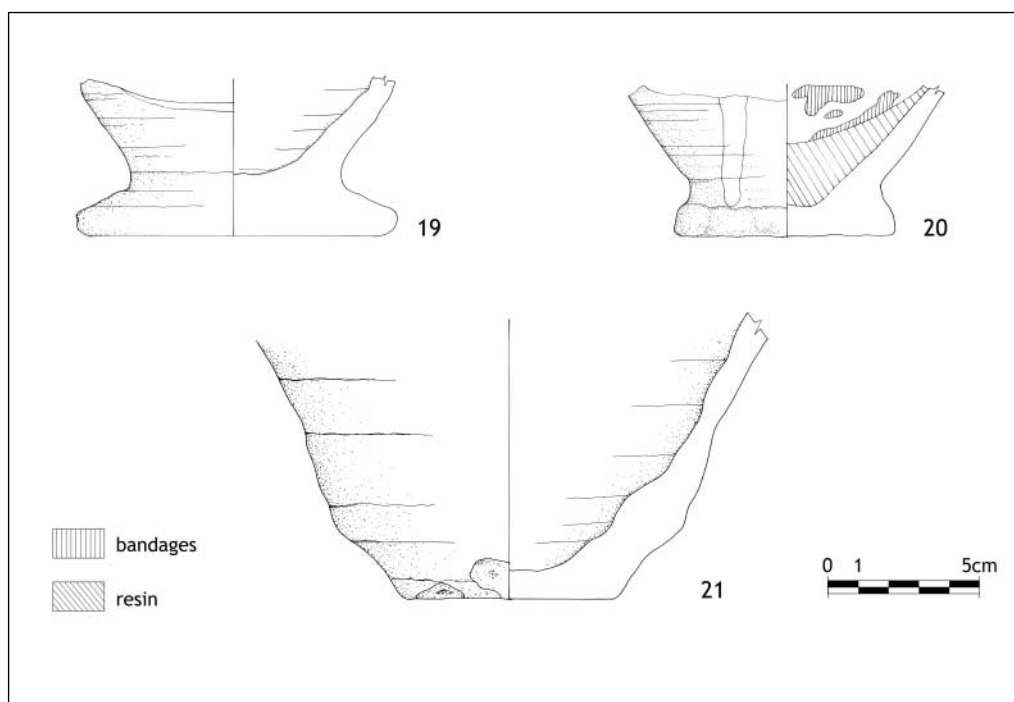


Fig. 4. Late Third Intermediate Period: 19 – bowl/censer G.04-109 (NE1), rim  $\varnothing$  9.6 cm; 20 – bowl G.04-90, rim  $\varnothing$  7.4 cm; 21 – beer jar G.04-50, (NE), base  $\varnothing$  7 cm (Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

11 A. Seiler, "Archäologisch faßbare Kultpraktiken in Grabkontexten der frühen 18. Dynastie in Dra' Abu el-Naga/Theben", in: Thebanische Beamtennekropolen, eds. J. Assman, E. Dziobek, H. Guksch, F. Kamp, SAGA 12 (Heidelberg 1995), 187.

12 G. Pinch, Votive offering to Hathor (Oxford 1993), 207.

13 Mummies and Magic. The Funerary Arts of Ancient Egypt, eds. S. d'Auria, P. Lacovara, C.H. Roehring (Boston 1992), 137; Pinch, loc. cit.

## LATE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD – LATE PERIOD

The Third Intermediate Period (23rd-24th Dynasty) is represented by a highly characteristic bowl with straight walls on a flat ledged foot, made of N B2 or N E1, uncoated [Fig. 4:19,20].<sup>14</sup> One sherd has traces of red slip inside, another of resin-coating or secondary burning, confirming that these vessels were used as censers. One vessel [Fig. 4:20] was found filled with resin and pieces of bandages, presumably left from the mummification process. All the vessels were apparently connected with cult activities, presumably burial (remains of embalming) and cult of the dead (censer).<sup>15</sup> Two bottoms of beer jars (N B2

or N E) [Fig. 4:21] are dated to the Late Third Intermediate Period-Early Saite.<sup>16</sup> These jars are smaller than earlier ones and do not have the characteristic finger traces near the bottom left by the potter removing the vessel off the wheel.

One fragment has an intriguing hole made intentionally in the base before firing. Such vessels are known primarily from New Kingdom contexts; it might be that they remained common in the later period as well. Similar vessels from Amarna were found in 25th Dynasty contexts.<sup>17</sup>

Pottery of the Late Period is represented mainly by large storage jars of various types,

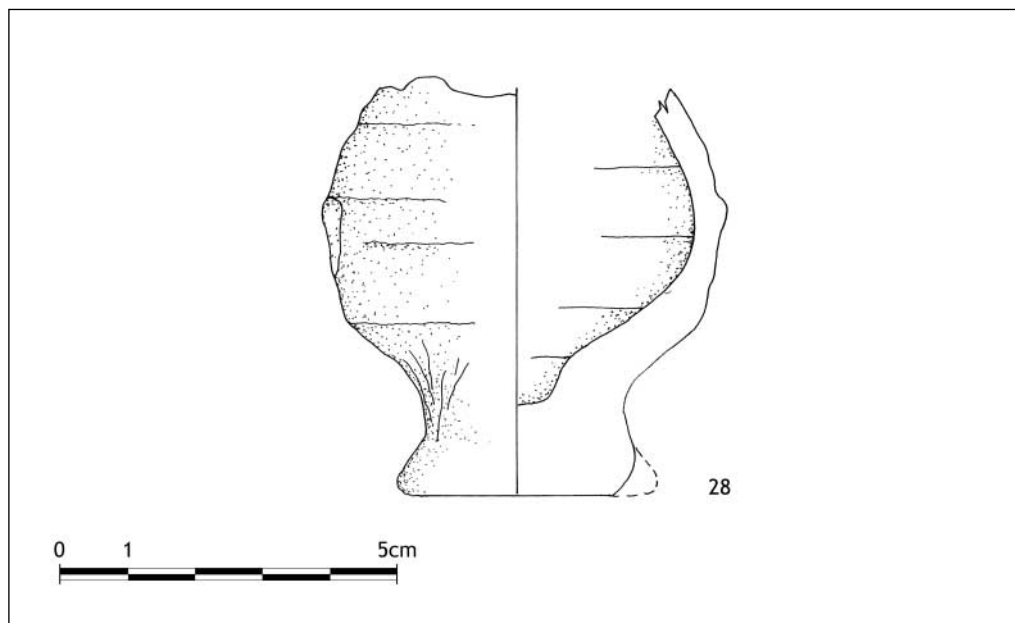


Fig. 6. Late Period goblet – G.04-83 (NB-E1), uncoated, rim  $\varnothing$  5 cm  
(Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

14 D. Aston, *Egyptian Pottery of the Late New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (Twelfth-Seventh Centuries B.C.)* (Heidelberg 1996), Figs. 160 and 162.

15 This is proved by numerous *ushabti* and pieces of coffin(s?) from the period.

16 Aston, *op. cit.*, 50.

17 French, *op. cit.*, 159.



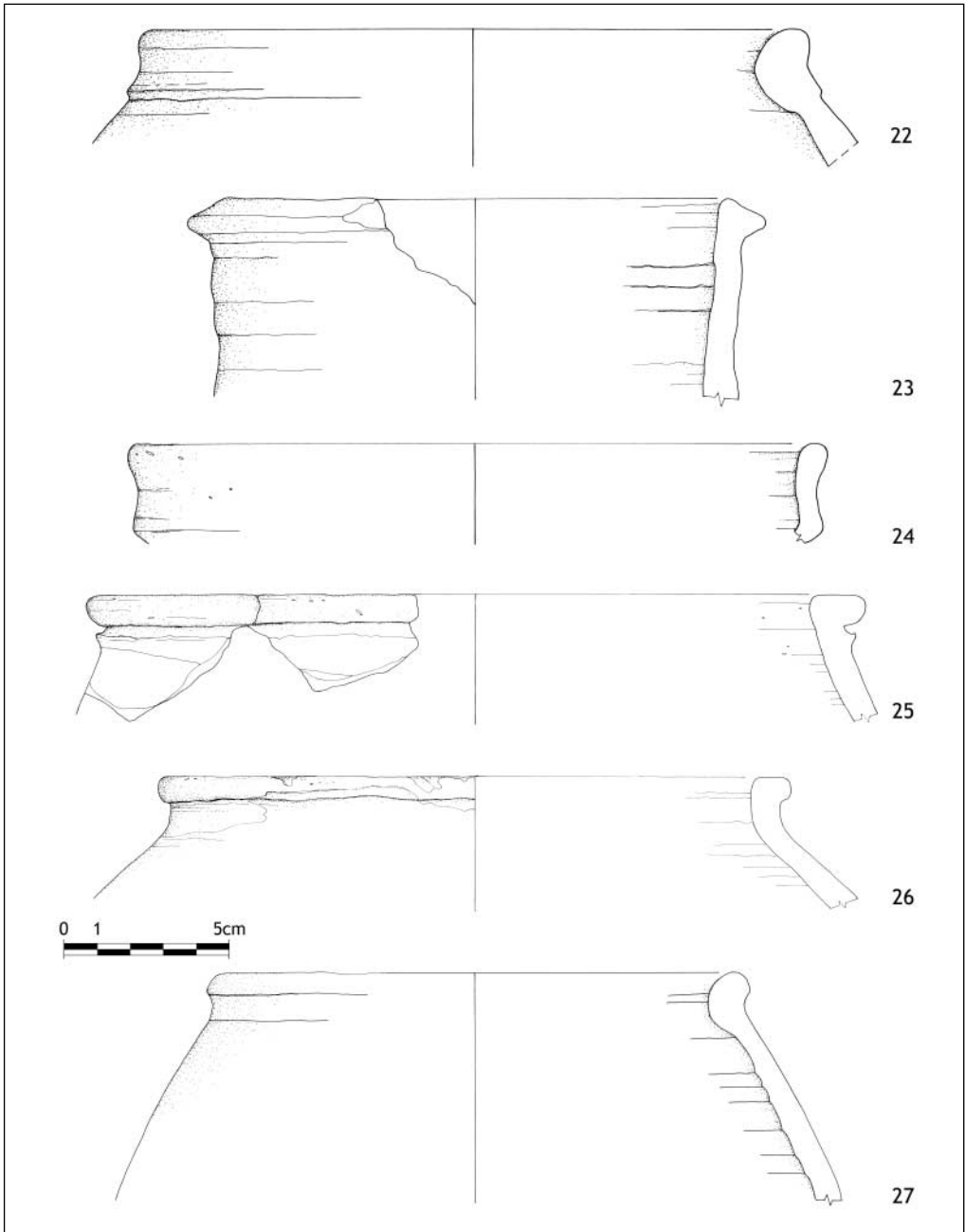


Fig. 5. Late Third Intermediate Period: 22 – jar G.04-10, uncoated, rim  $\varnothing$  19 cm; 23 – jar G.04-95, rim  $\varnothing$  15 cm; 24 – bowl G.04-12, self-slip, rim  $\varnothing$  20 cm; 25 – jar G.04.01, white slip, rim  $\varnothing$  30 cm; 26 – jar G.04-08, white slip, rim  $\varnothing$  23 cm; 27 – jar G.04-103 (P (G) 7 clay), white slip, rim  $\varnothing$  20 cm (Drawing T.I. Rzeuska, M. Orzechowska)

e.g. with modeled rim (P (G) 4 clay and N B2) [Fig. 5:22-23] and tall neckless examples (P (G) 2 clay) [Fig. 5:24]. Vessels of this type are dated to the 25th-26th Dynasty.<sup>18</sup> These vessels were furnished with handles (which have been lost in our case). Small goblets are another form that

is characteristic of the period [Fig. 6].<sup>19</sup> Equally typical are white slipped jars (N B2 and P (G) 7 clay) [Fig. 5:25-27]. One sherd bears a potter's mark which was incised after of firing; it is preserved fragmentarily. Parallel examples are known from Deir el-Medina.<sup>20</sup> (M.O.)

18 P. French, "Late Dynastic Pottery from the vicinity of the South Tombs", in: B. Kemp, *Amarna Reports III* (London 1986), Fig. 9.12, No. SJ5.9.3(J).

19 P. Rose, "The Pottery", in: ed. N. Strudwick, *The Tombs of Amenhotep, Khnumose and Amenmose at Thebes* (Oxford 1996), Pl. 68, nos. 130-1.

20 G. Castel, D. Meeks, *Deir el-Medineh 1970*, Fasc. I. *Gournet Mar'e Nord* (Le Caire 1980), Pl. XIXb, No. 51.