

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 2

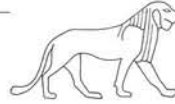
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Front Cover: Ceramic statue of the goddess Beset from Kawa.

Introduction

Vivian Davies

Members will note that this second issue of *Sudan & Nubia* is already considerably larger than the first, a clear signal, I am pleased to say, both of our Society's commitment to fieldwork and of the growing interest in Middle Nile archaeology in general. With the four-year programme of survey in the Northern Dongola Reach completed, we began last season a significant new project at Kawa (see Derek Welsby below), a major Pharaonic and Kushite cult-centre and one of the most important archaeological sites in the Sudanese Nile Valley, now threatened by modern development. At the same time our interest in the hydrological research on the Nile palaeochannels in the Dongola Reach continues (Mark Macklin and Jamie Woodward), and we have also supported archaeological survey both in the Bayuda desert in advance of the building of a new road (Michael Mallinson, Laurence Smith and Dorian Fuller) and at the site of Kurgus, the point where the Egyptians appear to have marked the southern boundary of their empire in the New Kingdom (Vivian Davies and Isabella Welsby Sjöström).

Among our guest contributors, two of our Sudanese colleagues report on valuable rescue projects, one on a site affected by the building of the Shendi-Atbara road (Abdel Rahman Ali Mohamed), the other in the area of the Fourth Cataract, where a new dam is being planned (Mahmoud el-Tayeb). Also under threat is the site of Soniyat in the Debba Bend, now very plausibly identified by a Polish expedition as the 'Tergedum' mentioned in Book II of Pliny's *Natural History* (Bogdan Zurawski). Rescue is also very much the theme of the Egypt Exploration Society's latest excavations at Qasr Ibrim, the last remaining site in Egyptian Nubia, where an unexpected rise in the level of Lake Nasser/Lake Nubia is damaging strata previously thought to be safe, necessitating urgent work on those areas (Pamela Rose and David Edwards). Fortunately there is no such threat to the Wadi Howar, a long dried-up tributary of the Nile, evocatively known as 'the Yellow Nile', where a German research project is producing fascinating new data on changes in environment and shifts in settlement patterns (Birgit Keding). A different kind of research, on the records of an important early traveller, is represented in our final paper (John Ruffle). Lord Prudhoe, its main subject, will be familiar to many of our readers for his association with the two great lion sculptures from Gebel Barkal, which now grace the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery of the British Museum.

The Fourth Cataract Archaeological Survey Project, Kareima - Abu Hamed Section. Comments on the ceramic assemblage of the first season (1996)

Mahmoud el-Tayeb

The Fourth Cataract Archaeological Survey project was created in 1996 by the Gdansk Archaeological Museum (GAM), Poland. The project is the first and to-date only response to an appeal issued in 1992 (repeated in 1994) by the late Prof. A. El-Hakem, then Director of the Sudan Antiquities Service, for international intervention to rescue monuments and archaeological sites threatened by flooding from the Nile due to the building of the Hamdab Dam.

The GAM has been granted a concession area on the right bank of the river between Kareima and Abu-Hamed,

about 250 km in length. The expedition consisted of four archaeologists: Henryk Paner, project director; Elzbieta Kolosowska, Zbigniew Borowski, Mahmoud el-Tayeb; Andrzej Blazynski, ethnographer; and Adam Kamrowski, photographer and technical assistant. Two seasons of fieldwork (January-February 1996 and January-February 1997) have been conducted; a third one is planned for November 1998. The results of this work will be published in a comprehensive volume, now in preparation. Thus this brief article is an introduction intended to shed some light on both the work that is underway in this remote area and in particular on its pottery assemblage, with special concentration on the post-Meroitic pottery of the first season.

During the first two seasons an area of about 60km long was surveyed from Kareima up to the Fourth Cataract (Fig. 1). In total approximately 152 sites representing different cultural periods, from Palaeolithic to Early Islamic, were registered in the area examined. The finds include rock drawings, ample quantities of lithic material, stone structures, habitation sites, settlements and cemeteries. A substantial amount of ceramic material was collected during the first two seasons of this survey. The ceramic assemblage

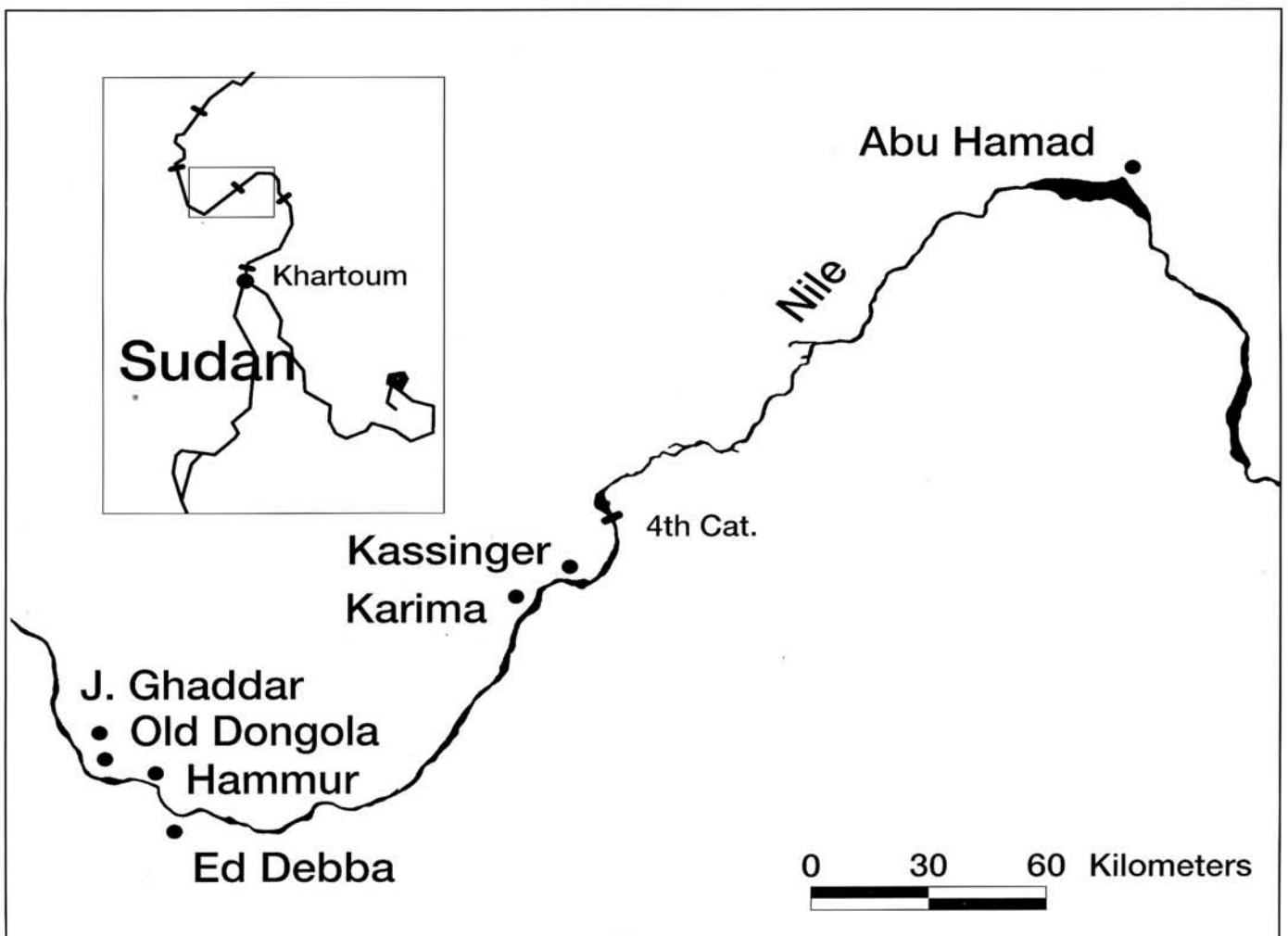


Figure 1. The southern Dongola Reach, the concession of the GAM, and the area surveyed by GAM in 1996/97.



covers a space of time from as early as the Mesolithic up to the Early Islamic period. It is worth noting that neither typical Napatan nor Meroitic pottery was clearly observed amongst this material. However, the revelation of these two seasons was the discovery of some sites containing pottery sherds of black-topped type, probably of Early or Middle Kerma date. It is noteworthy that this type of pottery - especially bowls - is quite common on sites of Early and Middle Kerma periods (see Dunham 1982, 141, fig. 272; Gratien 1978, 178). However, only further investigation in this area can confirm both the existence of Kerma Culture in the Fourth Cataract region and consequently the extension of its southern limit to that area, as already assumed by a number of scholars (for instance, see Gratien 1978, 282). Another type which was also found in this area is pottery decorated with incised lines in various combinations, from simple horizontal to combined geometric design (Plate 1, Colour Plate XXX). This later collection could be attributed to the Pan-grave culture. If this is the case, then these sites would need extensive exploration because, thus far, they would be the only sites that provide evidence for the existence of this culture south of the Second Cataract. Consequently our knowledge of the southern frontier of the Pan-Grave culture would have to be revised.¹

The ceramic collection of the first season consists of two groups. The first group contains pottery sherds from surface scatters which in this part of the surveyed area is dominated by Neolithic, Christian and post-Meroitic pottery. Mostly, this group is composed of clearly recognisable and characteristic sherds, such as rims, body sherds, and bases. The second group includes complete vessels dated to the post-Meroitic period.

Neolithic sherds are distinguished mainly by three types of decoration. These are impressed dots and incised and wavy line patterns (Plates 2 and 3). The first two types are notably more dominant in this area. Similar types of decoration have been found at various sites in central Sudan. The first of these to come to light were from Khartoum and Shaheinab (Arkell 1949; 1953; 1961, 24-35). They have also been found at Geili and Kadero, north of Khartoum (Caneva 1991, 6-14; Krzyzaniak 1984; 1990; 1992), at El-Kadada, north of Shendi (Geus 1984), and from the Atbara area (Haaland 1987, 66, fig. 7). The most southerly extent of these types of decoration has been recorded at Rabak (*ibid.*, 71, fig. 8) and El-Kawa (Mahmoud 1996). Both sites lie south of Khartoum, on the right bank of the White Nile.

The Christian pottery collected from this area is dominated by common types of wheel-made, pale red ware known also from other sites in the northern province. Another type of red hand-made ware, similar to the one

¹ Detailed analyses of the pottery of the earlier periods, by E. Kolosowska and M. Daszkiewicz, is expected to be published soon in the forthcoming volume of *Archéologie du Nil Moyen*.

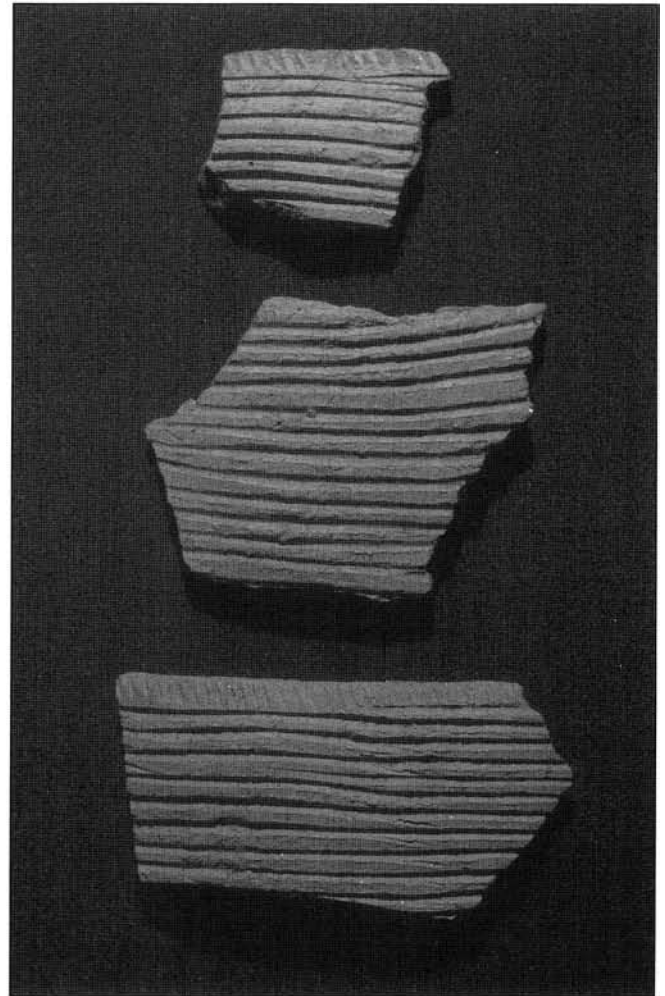


Plate 1. Incised sherds, from the 4th Cataract.

classified by Adams as 'domestic pottery' was also found among the surface scatter (Adams 1986, 161, Part I, fig. 72, OA D III; Part II, 421-32). Even though the existence of painted pottery was noted, very few sherds of this type were found, but none of them is paralleled at Old Dongola or even among the Ghazali pottery.

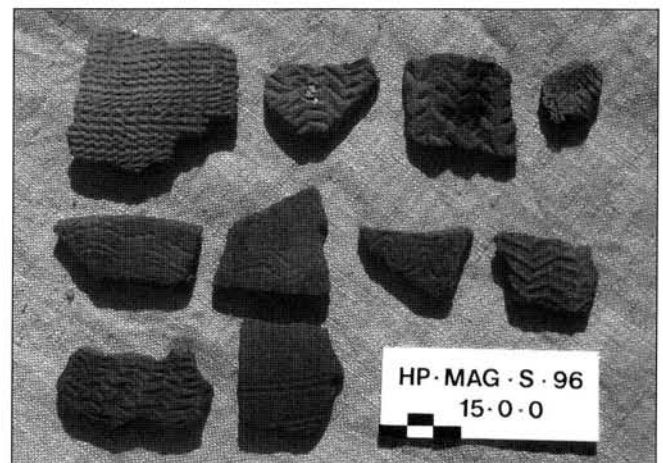


Plate 2. Wavy line pottery sherds.

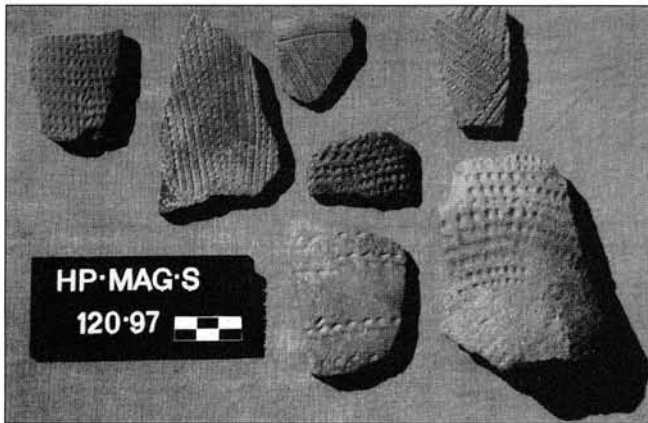


Plate 3. Sherds with patterns of impressed dots.

The surface scatter of the post-Meroitic pottery consists mainly of hand-made red ware, mostly fragments of bowls, or large to medium-sized beer jars often decorated with mat-impressed pattern and red slipped zig-zag stripes. All are of common types well known in the central Sudan (for further details, see Garstang *et al.* 1911; Shinnie 1954, 66–85; Lenoble 1992, 79–97; figs I, II, III, IV; 1994, 53–88).

The second group of the ceramic collection consists of fourteen complete vessels of red and red brown ware (Figs 2 and 3), only one of which is a hand-made item. The entire collection came from Tumulus 1 at site 45. (Site 45 consists of a group of five tumuli of post-Meroitic date, located on the northern fringes of the recent village of El-Kassinger Bahary North about 20 km upstream from Karima). Eight of these vessels were placed in the western part of the burial chamber, whilst a separate niche hewn into the eastern wall of the rectangular shaft of the tomb was constructed especially to contain a further six vessels: two bowls, two cups, and two medium-sized beer jars.

Nearly half of these objects are wheel-made bowls of hard red ware, covered with red slip inside and out, and decorated with very distinctive grooves encircling the rim and mid-body (Figs 2, 3 nos 1, 10, 12, 13, 14) with the exception of two bowls (2 and 11), which are not decorated.



Plate 4. A bowl from Tu.1, Southern Cemetery, Jebel Ghaddar.

Although this type of bowl can, in general, be attributed to the same family as the X-group pottery, a closer examination reveals that it is a distinct type of pottery not known as yet in other parts of Nubia (for further information, see Adams's classification, in particular group NII ware R25 and NII RI; in Adams 1986, 459, fig 263, 461, fig. 265, 467–70). The only examples of similar bowls, known to us thus far, are from the southern cemetery of Jebel Ghaddar in Old Dongola (Mahmoud 1994, 65–79), and the cemetery at Hammur (El-Abbassia) some distance south of Old Dongola (Zurawski 1998) (Fig. 1). The similarity between the three collections (Kassinger, Jebel Ghaddar, and Hammur; see Plate 4, Colour Plates XXXI and XXXII), in fabric, form, size, surface treatment and decoration leads one to assume that they probably share the same production origin. However, the provenance of this type of pottery is undoubtedly between the Third and Fourth Cataracts.

Amongst the vessels are two wheel-made cups of medium red ware, nos 3 and 4. They are distinguished by their plain rims and rounded sides. They are most probably of late Meroitic origin as they do not resemble the well-known types of cups from this period (post-Meroitic/ X-group). This assumption seems to agree with Adams group NI (Adams 1986, 50, fig. 19/9). For further comparisons see also Meroitic cups from Griffith's excavations at Faras (1924, pls XXX, XLV/6).

Vessel no. 7 (Fig. 3/7) is of a very special interest. It is a small pot with rounded profile and out-flared rim. Its body is covered with red slip, and decorated with two parallel white stripes on two sides along the body starting just under rim. The rim itself is decorated by four groups of four white notches. A pot of strikingly similar form was found at the South Cemetery of Jebel Ghaddar (Mahmoud 1994, 68, fig. 2: T1/j). Although the two pots differ in decoration, their form and size are almost identical. It is worth mentioning that both vessels are of a rare type, having a unique pattern of decoration.

The large vessels of this collection consist of four beer jars (Figs 2/5, 2/6; 3/8, 3/9):

Beer jar no. 6 is a medium-size hand-made beer jar, light brown in colour, with a narrow mouth and short neck. The neck and shoulder of the vessel are both slipped and its body is covered with mat-impressed decoration. This type of beer jar has been found at various sites in Upper Nubia, where it stands as evidence for the spread of the southern tradition of pottery making. However, it is the standard type of beer jar for the area between the above mentioned cataracts (see Grzymski 1991; Osama and Bandi 1993, 324–27; Mahmoud 1994).

Jar no. 5 is a medium-size, wheel-made vessel, pink in colour. It is decorated with two horizontal grooves encircling the upper part of the body. Its neck (above the collar) was lost in antiquity and replaced with one made of leather, which in turn disintegrated when the niche was opened.

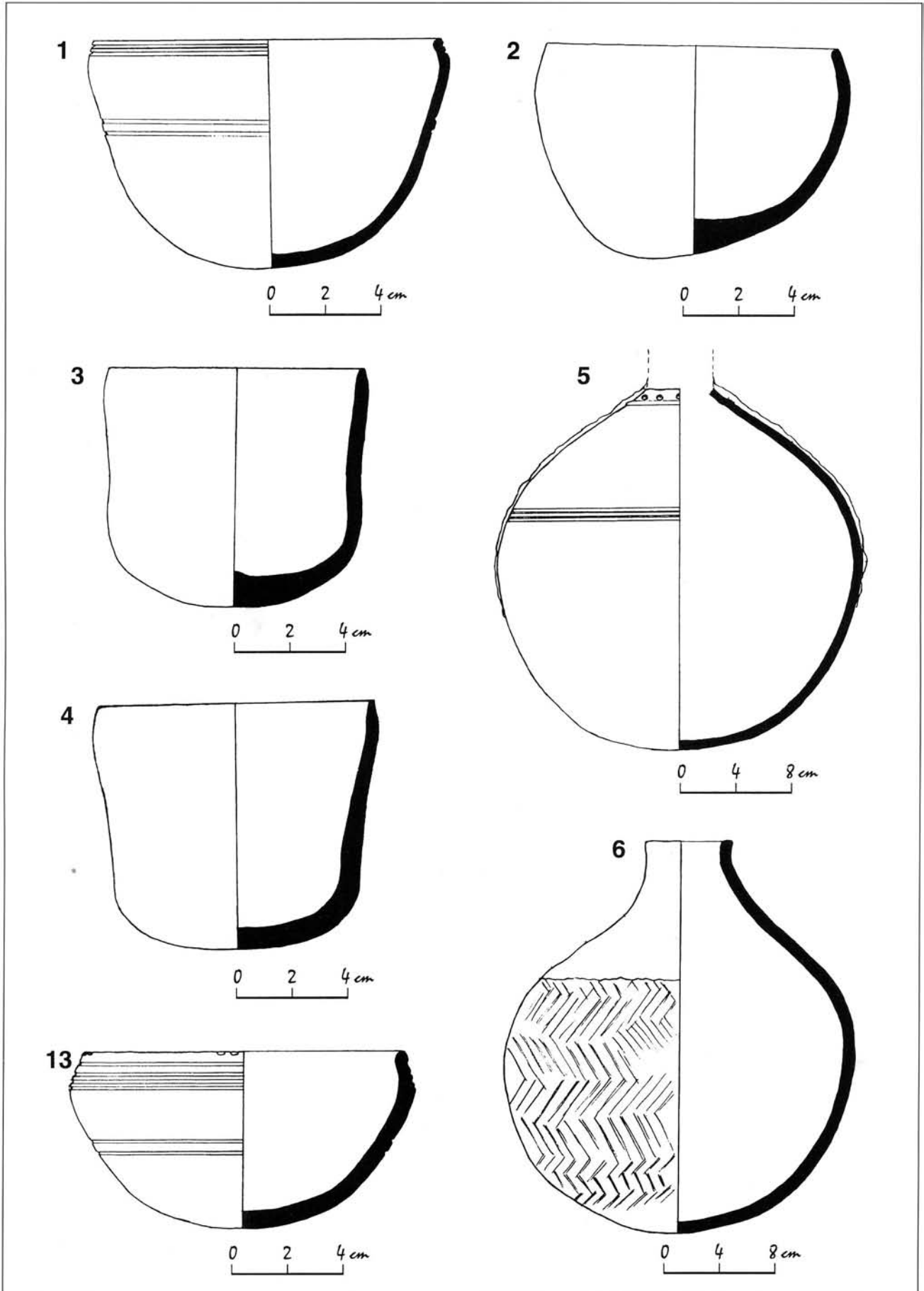


Figure 2. Pottery vessels, Tu.1, site 45, Kassinger.

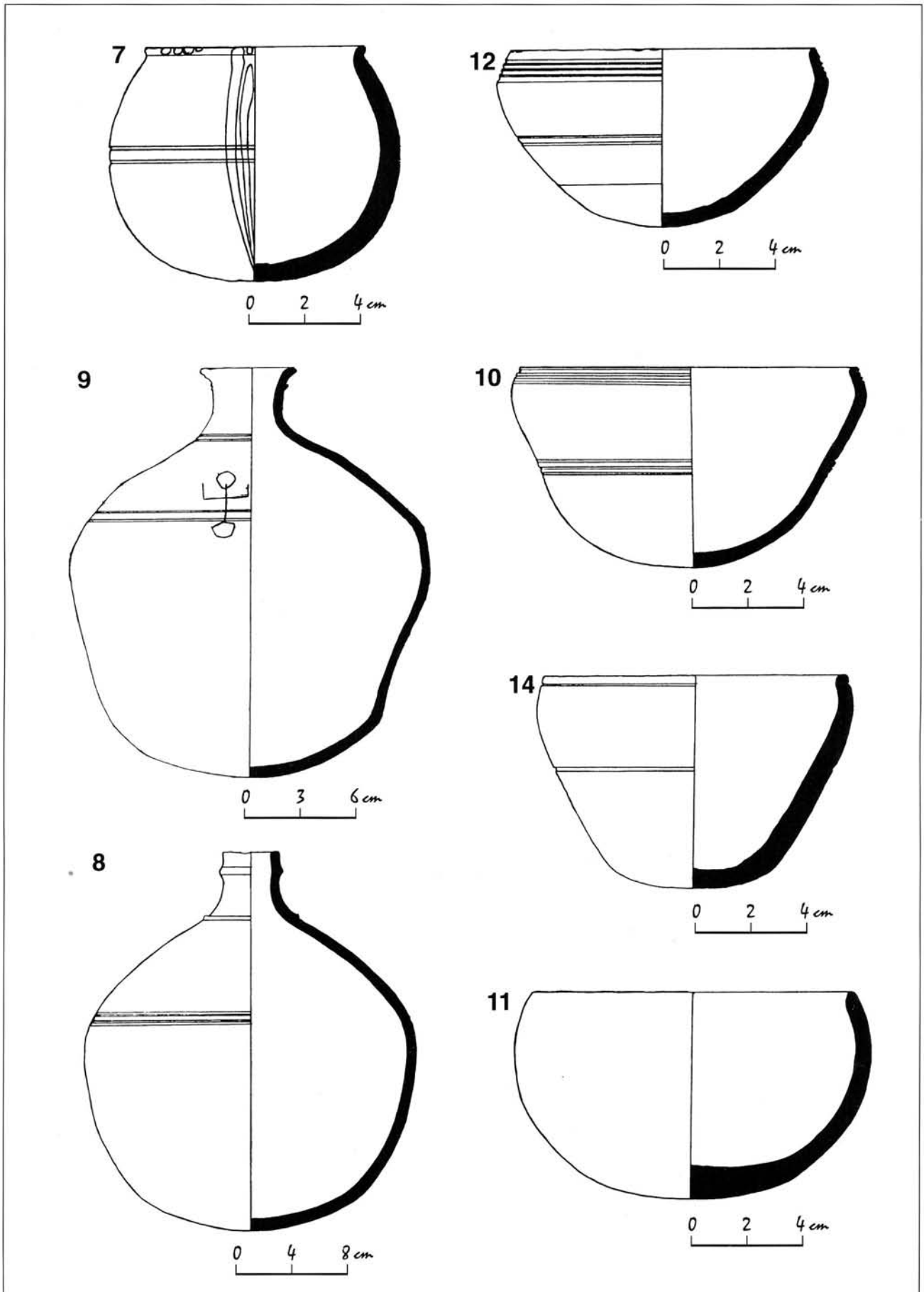


Figure 3. Pottery vessels, Tu. 1, site 45, Kassinger.



Bottle no. 8 is a globular shaped medium-sized, wheel-made bottle, with a short narrow neck above a collar that terminates at a modelled rim. It is decorated also in the same manner as jar no. 5. Although there is a little difference in size between the two vessels, both are of the same type of pottery. This type, which is highly uncommon in the area of Dongola Reach, resembles the late Meroitic pottery with very strong Roman influence which is quite conspicuous at Lower Nubian sites, for instance at Faras (Griffith 1924), Ballana and Qustul (Emery and Kirwan 1938; Török 1988, pl. 18, vessels 30a, 30b, pl. 20, vessel 29), and at Firka (Kirwan 1939).

Jar no. 9 is the largest vessel in this collection. It is a wheel-made jar with a slightly elongated body, which shows signs of some kind of deformation resulting from the weight of the upper part of the vessel. Its most characteristic features are its short neck and wide mouth with everted rim. The decoration of this jar also consists of the same pattern as in the case of the two previous vessels, although the grooves of jar no. 9 were roughly done at the base of the neck and at the shoulder level, where the potter left his mark as well (Colour Plate XXXIII). The nearest known example of this type of jar comes from chance finds from Humbukol village in the Old Dongola area (Grzymski 1989, 75, 90 pl. XIV, 91 pl. XV). Further examples are known from the Romano-Nubian cemetery at Karanog, excavated by Woolley and MacIver (1911, pls. 71/ G. 201, 79/ G. 134), and also from the Oxford excavations of the Meroitic cemetery at Faras (Griffith 1924; see also Williams 1991, 235, fig. 103/f; 364, fig. 176/d). It seems that these three large jars (nos 5, 8, and 9) are a development of earlier types of Meroitic storage jars. However, it is possible that the production of pottery bottles, type no. 5 and 8, ceased towards the end of the post-Meroitic period (around the 2nd half of the 5th century), when it was replaced by a coarser hand-made type of jar (see jar no. 6), whilst modified production of the largest type of jar (no. 9) survived in the area of Old Dongola down to the early Christian period (for comparison with Christian jars, see Godlewski 1991, 93–95, 98, pl. IIa).

The pottery recovered from Tumulus 1 at site 45 is of particular interest due to the rare composition of the assemblage. Firstly, this collection shows the existence of two cultural traditions, from the south and north, side by side in one grave (a tradition also observed in a number of sites relating to this period, for instance at the cemetery of Jebel Ghaddar at Old Dongola or the transitional cemetery of El-Kadada). This is represented by the mat-impressed beer jar no. 6, while the northern influence cannot be mistaken in the wheel-made vessels nos 5, 7, 8, 9, as well as the cups nos 3 and 4. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this composition obviously stands as a link between the Meroitic and post-Meroitic cultures, for there is no doubt that six vessels out of the fourteen in this collection have their origins in

Meroitic tradition. Nonetheless, here we should be careful as these six objects may have been acquired from a plundered late Meroitic grave, or most probably were imported from the north. Further excavation at the nearby cemetery would probably help clarify this matter.

The continuation of survey work in this area will shed more light on the cultural material of the Fourth Cataract region, especially on the pottery of the area, which requires more detailed study and investigation. Until then the preceding comments – especially the first part of them – should be taken cautiously, as the material of this area is almost unknown and has never previously been studied.

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Plate XXXI. A bowl from Tu.1, site 45, Kassinger.



Plate XXXIII. Wheel-made beer jar no. 9 from Tu.1 at Kassinger.



Plate XXX. Black-topped sherds with geometrical incised decoration, from the 4th Cataract.



Plate XXXII. A bowl from Tu.4 at Hammur-Abbassia.