

ULI ISLAND

PRELIMINARY REPORT

Włodzimierz Godlewski, Artur Obłuski, Dobrochna Zielińska

Working within the framework of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project, an expedition from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University investigated Uli Island in the region of the Fourth Cataract in the period between February 8 and March 31, 2004.¹ The work was done in close cooperation with the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) and Dr. Salah Mohamed Ahmed in particular.

- 1 The team consisted of current members of the Old Dongola and Banganarti expeditions: Prof. Dr. Włodzimierz Godlewski, Dr. Bogdan Żurawski, Mrs. Edyta Klimaszewska-Drabot, Mr. Artur Obłuski, Mr. Piotr Osypiński, Ms Dobrochna Zielińska, archaeologists; and Mrs. Marta Osypińska, archaeozoologist. Ms Habab Idris Ahmed representing the NCAM assisted the expedition most efficiently.

FOURTH CATARACT – ULI ISLAND
SUDAN

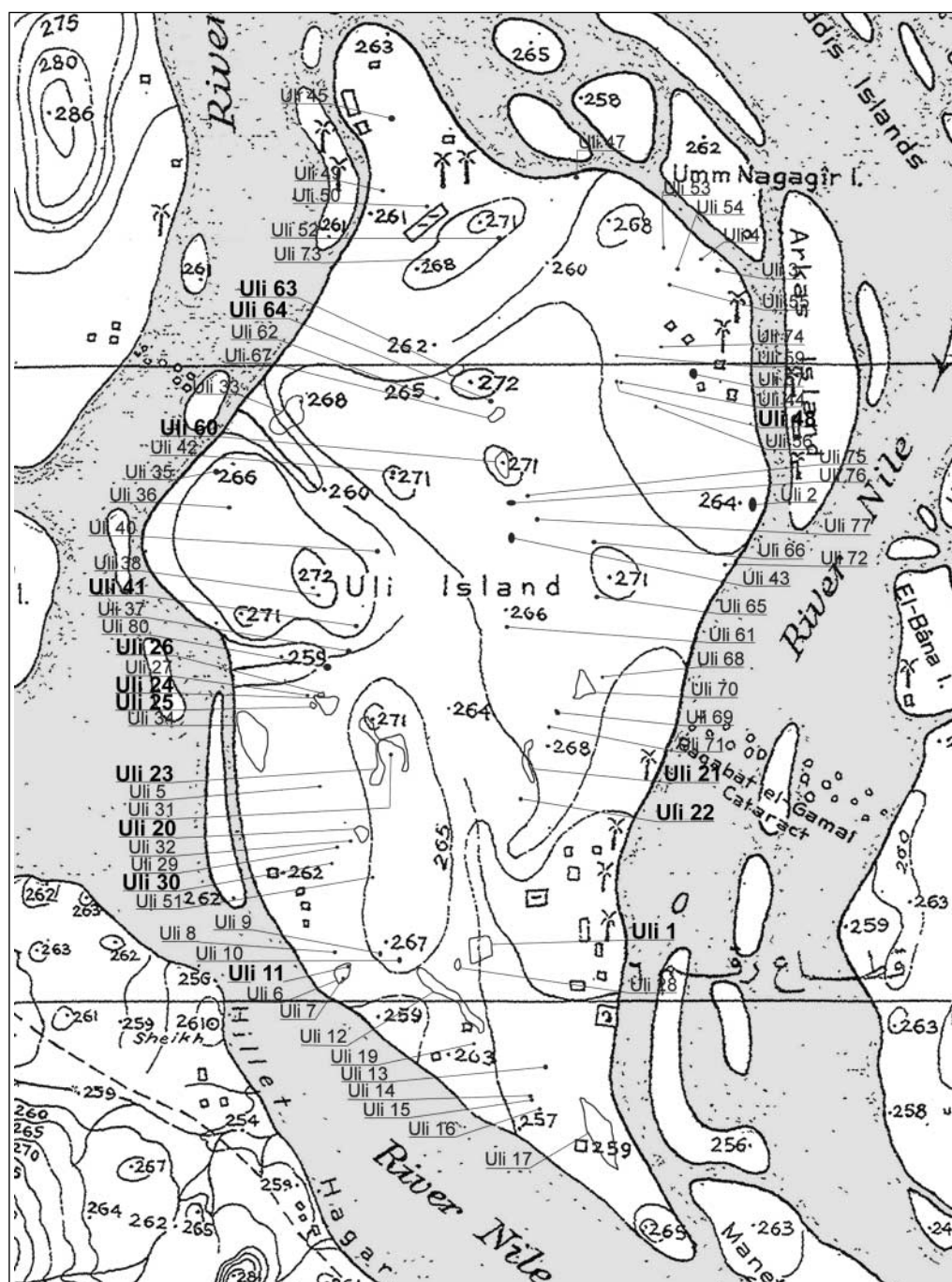


Fig. 1. Uli Island, Localization of recorded sites (sites in bold are discussed in this report)
(Map NCAM, updated by P. Osypiński)

ISLAND SURVEY

A survey of the island resulted in over 77 sites being recorded, site categories including groups of graves, single graves, scatters of potsherds and stone artifacts (presumably reflecting temporary camps rather than settlements), and rock pictures. No monumental architecture other than modern was recorded. Earlier investigations of the island² had already identified some sites. A provisional chronology of recorded sites ranged from the Neolithic through the Kerma Horizon and the end of the New Kingdom/beginning of Napata Period to the Post-Meroitic and the Makurian king-

dom, the latter two following a thousand-year hiatus. No Meroitic remains whatsoever were observed [Fig. 1].

Early remains were preserved on the surface only on the two rocky plateaus in the central and southern parts of the island. The flat sandy valley between them did not commence to be used before the Post-Meroitic period at the earliest. This is to be accounted for by geological observations indicating a division of the land into smaller units, especially at times of high water levels, in the early historical periods from the Neolithic to early Napatan.

EXCAVATIONS

Evidence of the earliest human activity on Uli Island, from the Middle Paleolithic and Neolithic, came in the form of scatters of stone artifacts and potsherds, identified during a survey of the island. Both categories were collected and are reported on in this volume.³ None of the sites from this period provided any testimony of burial practices.

KERMA HORIZON GRAVES

Limited excavations were conducted on selected grave sites located on the central plateau: Uli 60, 63 and 64 in the west and center, and Uli 21 and 22 in the east. The graves occurred either singly or in groups of 10-12 [Fig. 2] and were all of similar construction: round cairns of stone measuring from 1.50 to 2.50 m across, from 0.40 to 0.60 m high depending on the state of preservation. The bodies were buried in

round shallow pits. The skeletons lay mostly in contracted position. With the exception of grave T.3 in the Uli 22 cluster, where the head was oriented to the north, all the bodies were placed with the head due south. In a few cases, there was evidence of rope-wrapped shrouds made of leather. No grave goods of any kind were found. Occasional traces of post-burial penetration should be attributed to animals rather than humans.

Sherds collected from the surface bore incised or impressed geometrical decoration. Whole pots could be reconstructed, suggesting intentional breaking during funerary ceremonies rather than later grave penetration. Their pottery decoration bears a distinct resemblance to Kerma period wares, thus attributing the burials provisionally to the Kerma Horizon.

One of the Kerma-Horizon graves on the plateau (T.2 in the Uli 60 cluster) was

2 By an Italian expedition working at Karima, cf. S. Donadoni, "A survey north of the Fourth Cataract", in: *Der Antike Sudan* 5 (1995), 10-22, and by teams from the NCAM and from the University of Old Dongola in Karima.

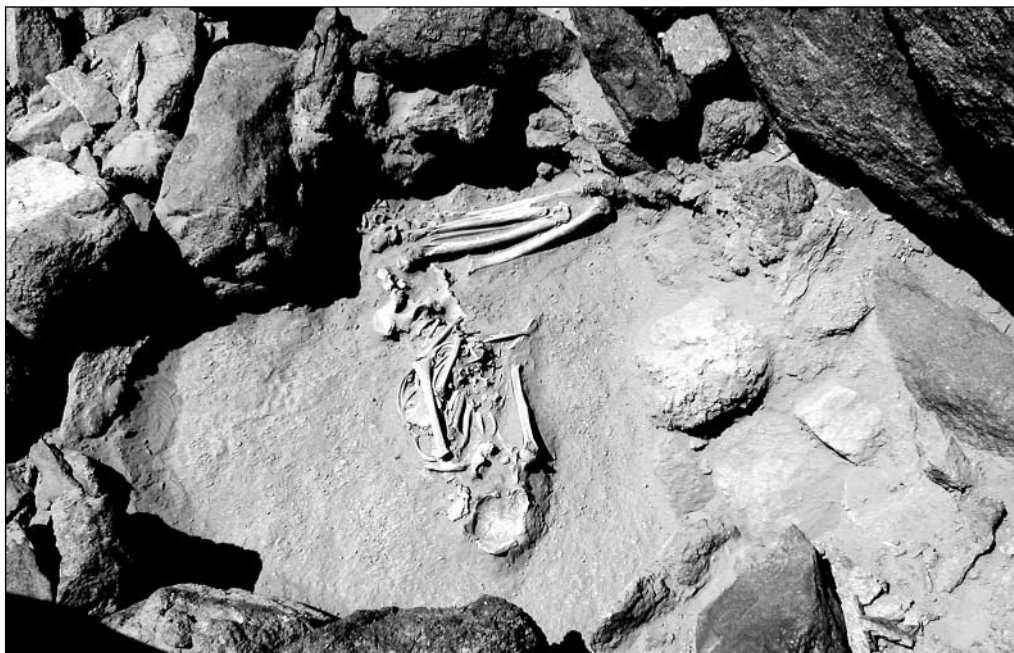
3 For the stone artifacts, see communication by P. Osypiński appended to this report. For the pottery, see the contribution by E. Klimaszewska-Drabot in this volume, 357-368. She has also provided all the pottery dates presented in this report.



Fig. 2. Site Uli 63. Graves T.2-T.9 (Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 3. Site Uli 23. The superstructure of T.4. (Photo W. Godlewski)



*Fig. 4. Site Uli 23. The burial chambers of Graves T.1 (top) and T.11 (bottom)
(Photo W. Godlewski)*

reused for burial in Christian times. Inside the stone ring, a low rectangular structure was observed. The body had been buried in a shallow pit, lying on its back, hands on the pelvis, the head oriented to the west.

Most of the tombs on the smaller plateau in the southern part of the island were situated in the shadow of monumental rocks, sometimes in groups of 3-4 tombs. One of the more fully investigated grave sites there was Uli 23. The stone cairns were mostly circular (although a few rectangular ones were observed), running from c. 1.50 to 2.00 m across and preserved to a height of 0.40 m [Fig. 5]. Often they were flat in the center and filled in with sand. The pits were shallow, either circular or rectangular, lined with slabs and filled in with dust [Fig. 4]. Wherever found undisturbed (most were definitely penetrated, although rather by animals than by humans), the skeletons were in contracted position with heads turned

either to the north or to the south. Exceptions included graves T.10 and T.11 in this cluster, where the heads pointed respectively to the east and west, and T.6, where the head was to the north but the body was extended on its back. Obviously, there were no strictly enforced customs de-



Fig. 5. *Black-tapped wheel-made bowl from grave U23.T.1 (Photo A. Obłuski)*



Fig. 6. *Site Uli 24. Tumuli 1-3 (Photo W. Godlewski)*

termining body position at burial during this period.

In some of the grave pits, hand-made bowls were discovered next to the face of the buried individual. In one case (T.4 in the Uli 23 cluster), there were three pots: two bowls and one small wheel-made jar. The pottery, both from the pits and scattered on the ground around the tombs, especially the hand-made bowls, revealed many similarities with the Kerma tradition. One of the bowls, found inside grave T.1 of the Uli 23 cluster, was a black-topped wheel-made red ware vessel [Fig. 5]. Based on the ceramic evidence, the tombs on the smaller southern plateau were tentatively attributed to the Late New Kingdom/Napata periods.

POST-MEROITIC TUMULI

Four tumuli from the Post-Meroitic period (Uli 24-Uli 25), erected on the western side of a small mound rising from the valley floor, were investigated and in three cases found to be looted. One was fully preserved but there can be no doubt that the Uli tumuli belonged to rather poor people.

Rings of stones encircled sand-filled centers covering the grave pits, which were shallow and had burial chambers at the bottom in the case of Tumuli 1-2 (Uli 24) [Fig. 6]. The fourth tumulus (Uli 25) had a much deeper pit (2.20 m) and a burial chamber off its southwestern side [Fig. 7]. The burial chamber yielded different kinds of beads (made of semi-precious stones, bone, glass, ostrich eggshells and faience), two earrings, one ring, arrowheads and a stone archer's ring. The two small bottles and one bowl, all hand-made, were found on the surface in the western part of the tumulus, in what is presumed to be the original position [Fig. 8]. The grave goods from the disturbed burial chambers of the other tumuli recorded a similar repertory, but without the archer's rings: mostly beads

and arrowheads, and broken bowls and bottles.

CEMETERIES FROM KINGDOM OF MAKURIA TIMES

Two cemeteries dating from the times of the Kingdom of Makuria were recorded in the southern part of the island. The first (Uli 1) covered an extended territory, encroached upon today by modern buildings. All the tombs were rectangular constructions of stones. The bodies were laid on their backs in deep and narrow pits, the head pointing to the west. A surface scattering of red brick and lime plaster west of the cemetery was suggestive of a settlement, but archaeological testing brought to light no preserved structures, not even traces of foundations. Finds of red bricks, floor tiles and fragments of outside lime wall plastering indicated the presence, but not the exact location of a soundly constructed building, most likely a church. Sherds collected from the cemetery and presumed settlement resembled Dongola wares and could be dated to the Post-Classic Period.

The other Christian cemetery (Uli 25-26, located close to Tumulus 4 on Uli 25) was recorded in the immediate vicinity of a seasonally inhabited campsite. No structure or shelter of any kind was observed, only broken pottery, traces of fires and ash dumps. The two groups of graves were not very numerous. On Uli 24 there were 18 adult burials with well preserved rectangular stone superstructures (2.13-3.05 m in length, 0.90-1.10 m in width [Fig. 9]. Some of the tombs marked children's burials and in these cases the superstructures were correspondingly smaller (1.25-1.56 m long, 0.70-0.85 m wide). The other group (Uli 26) contained 12 children's graves with stone superstructures in good condition (L. 1.00-1.60 m, W. 0.55-0.90 m) [Fig. 10].

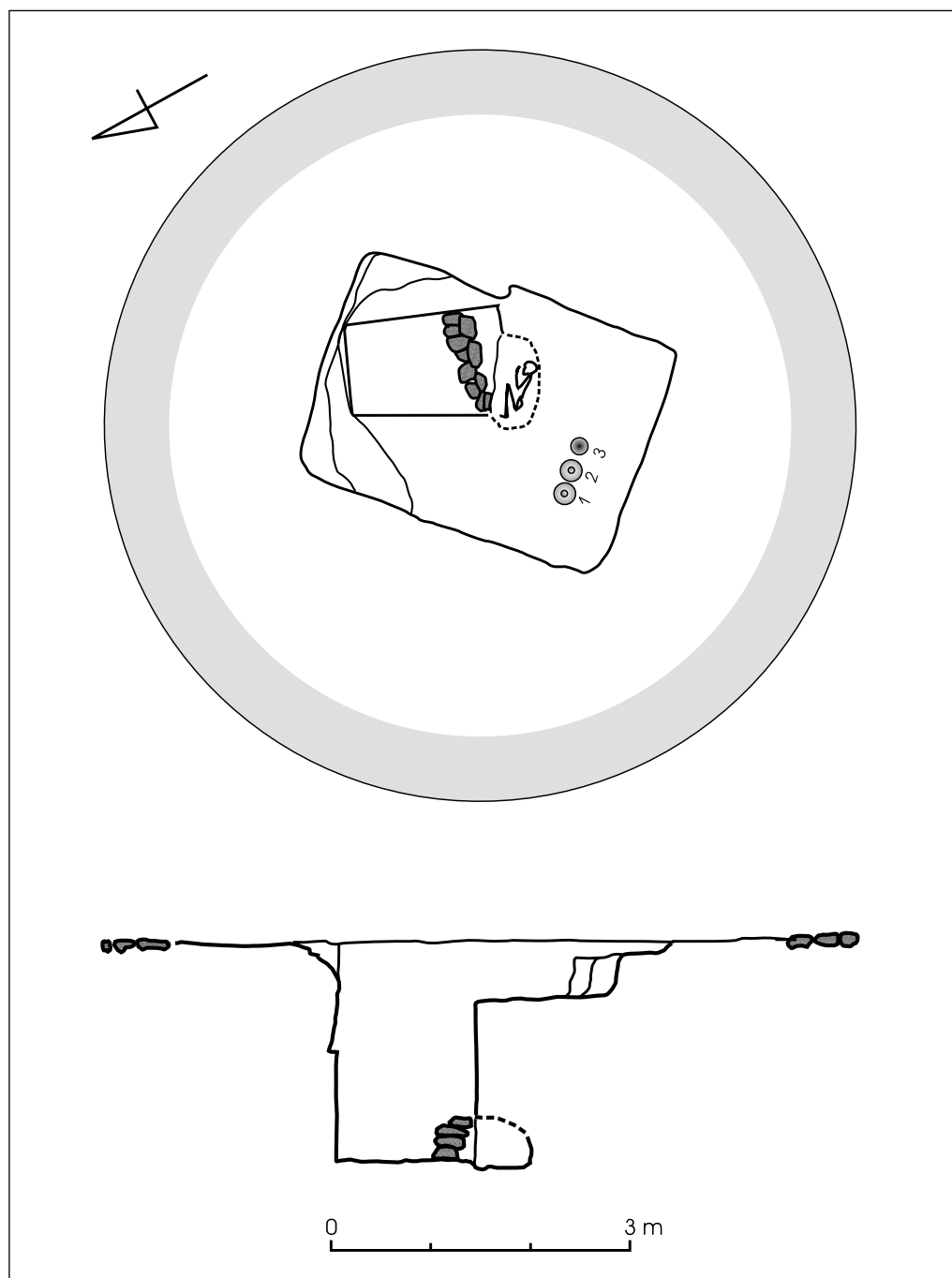


Fig. 7. Site Uli 25. Tumulus 4
(Plan and section W. Godlewski, D. Zielńska)

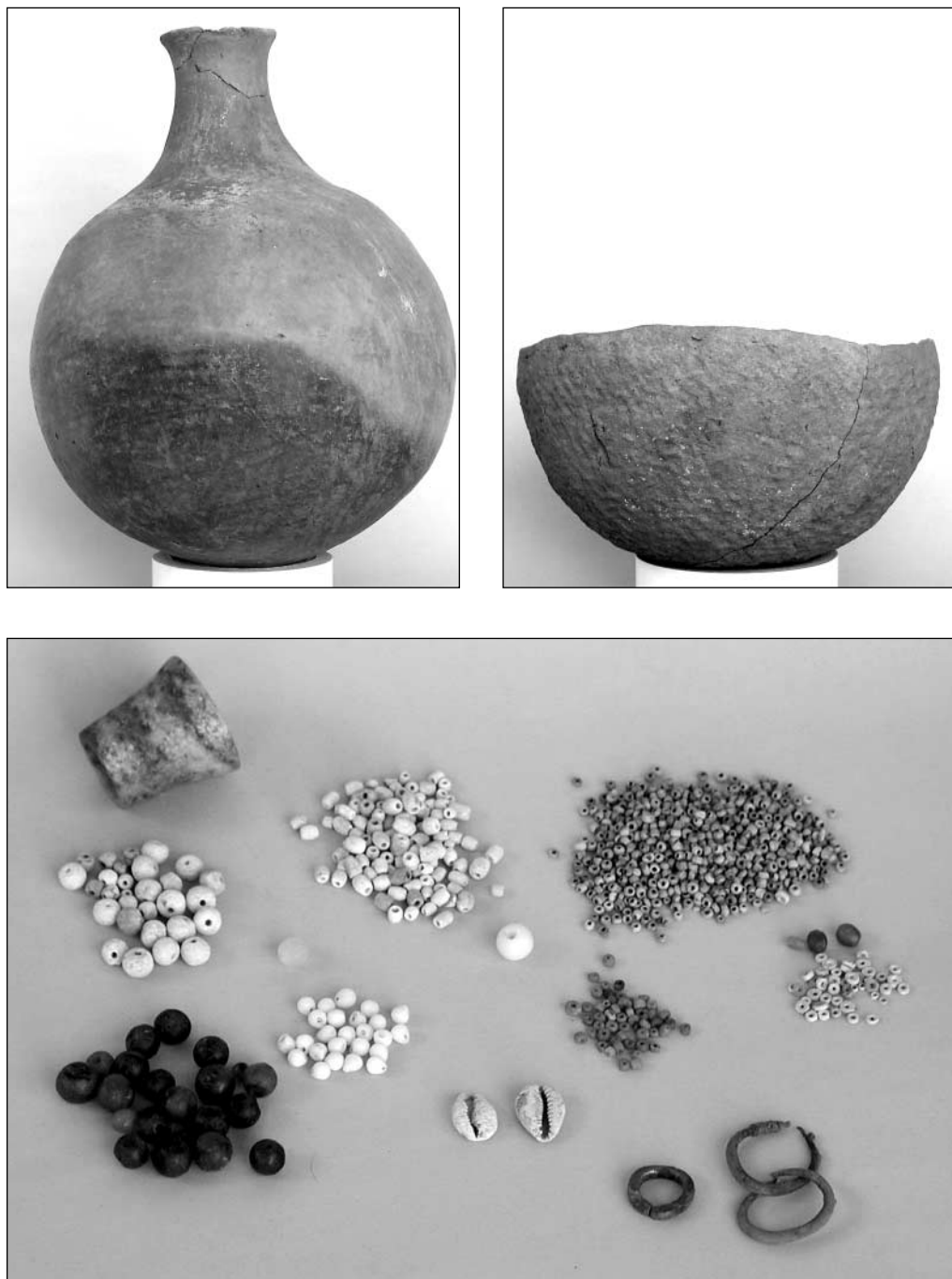


Fig. 8. Grave goods from the burial chamber of Tumulus 4 and pottery found on the surface of the mound (Photo W. Godlewski, A. Obtuski)

The burials were typical of Christian funerary practices: body laid in extended position with the head to the west. The narrow grave pits were rather deep and once the body was placed in them they were half-filled with sand and closed with roughly broken irregular slabs of stone laid flat. The rest of the shaft was then filled with sand and a stone marker of carefully positioned stones was erected on top. The sand between the stones was likely put there intentionally, although later penetration through the cracks between the stones cannot be excluded.

In the times of the Makuria kingdom, Uli Island seems to have been much more densely populated than in earlier periods, most probably approaching modern population figures.

MODERN PERIOD

Two vast Muslim cemeteries situated in the northern and southern ends of the



Fig. 9. Site Uli 25. The superstructure of grave T.10 (Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 10. Site Uli 26. Children's tombs (Photo W. Godlewski)



*Fig. 11. The muslim cemetery at Al-Bideri
(Photo W. Godlewski)*



*Fig. 12. Houses in the village of Al-Gurer
(Photo W. Godlewski)*

island, lying close to the modern villages, are most probably of modern age. Nonetheless, the presence of a *qubba* in the northern cemetery would suggest a fairly long period of use for this site [Fig. 11]

The expedition also made an effort to document conditions of life on the island today. The architecture of the abandoned

modern houses was documented, including the wall paintings and graffiti left on the walls [Fig. 12].

Rock drawings of animals and people, and in one case a cross, were noted on more than a dozen sites.⁴ Rock bells with clear evidence of use were observed in two places.

4 Cf. See, M. Osypińska's report on these drawings in the appendix below, 355-356

APPENDIX 1

STONE ARTIFACTS FROM ULI ISLAND

Piotr Osypiński

A survey of Uli Island revealed 19 sites of apparently occupational character with stone artifacts lying on the surface. Surface scatters of pottery were frequently identifiable, providing provisional dating of these sites to the Neolithic and in some case the Kerma Horizon. Not one Neolithic-period

cemetery was identified, indicating that occupation at this time must have been of a temporary nature. A few sites could be identified as representing the Middle Paleolithic period.

The following is a presentation of selected material from some of these sites.

ULI 11: LATE NEOLITHIC / KERMA HORIZON SETTLEMENT

RAW MATERIAL	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	L	W	TH	FIG.
Agate	Concretion					
Chert	Core	Levallois for flake	59	48	16	<i>Fig.13:a</i>
Chert	Tool	Denticulate	47	26	23	<i>Fig.13:b</i>
Chert	Flake	Splintered	48	40	19	
Chert	Flake	Cortical butt	21	37	6	
Chert	Flake	Cortical butt	27	29	6	
Chert	Flake	Cortical butt	36	35	11	
Chert	Flake	Flat butt	27	32	12	
Chert	Flake	Flat butt	44	28	9	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	39	19	6	
Chert	Flake	Fragment				
Chert	Flake	Fragment				
Chert	Flake	Fragment				
Chert	Flake	Fragment, burnt				

Mixed, two-phase assemblage. The Levallois core and some of the flakes, especially those with prepared butts, come from the Middle Paleolithic (rather later than earlier to judge by their size and raw material). The remaining products are connected with Late Neolithic and even Kerma Horizon occupation

(provisional dating based on pottery evidence). The only tool is a massive denticulate made from a pebble without any chronologically distinctive features. The presence of splintered products in the context of an assemblage of late prehistoric date is notable (e.g. Uli 6, Uli 10).

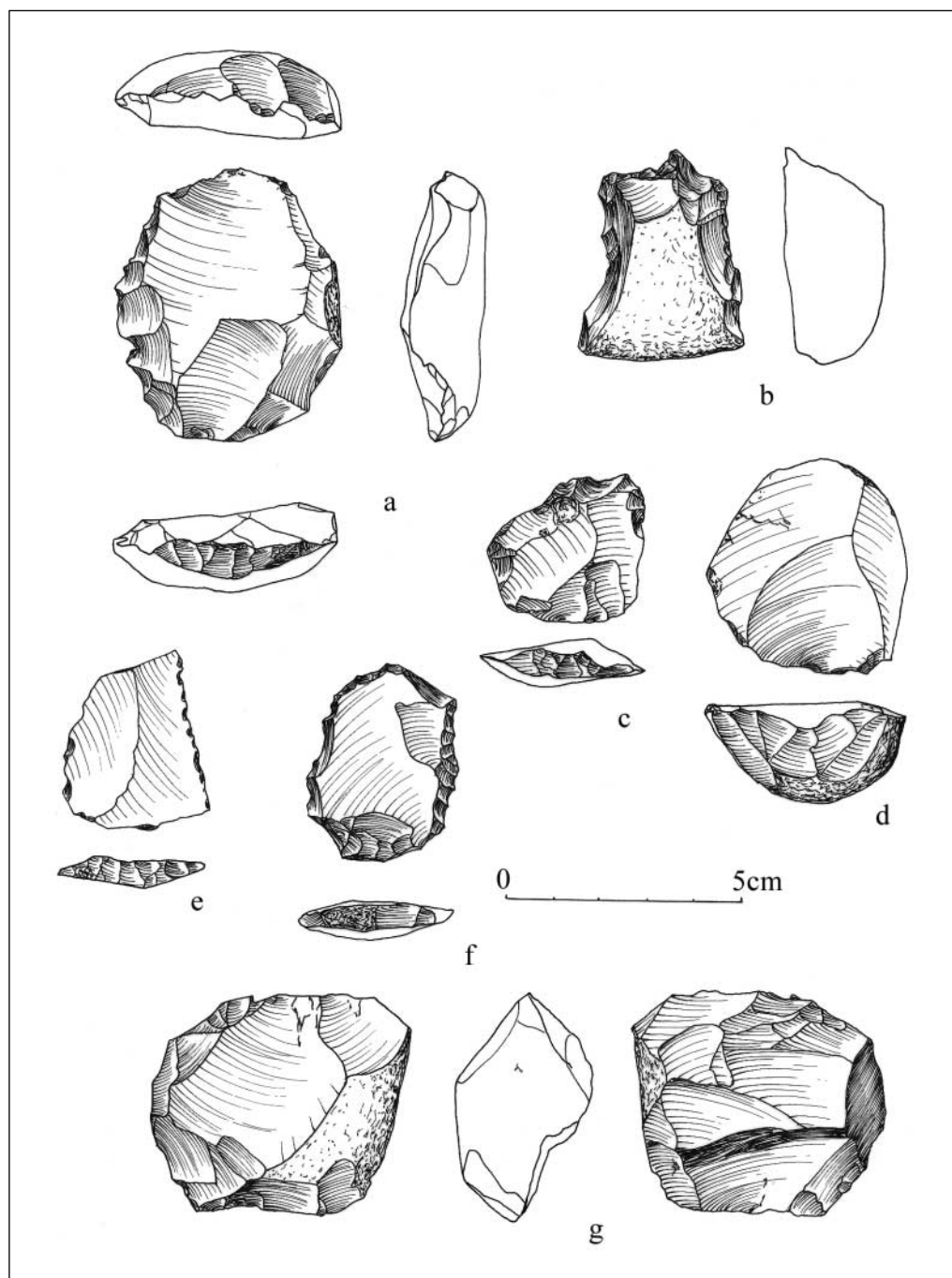


Fig. 13. Selection of stone artifacts from Uli Island: a - Uli 11/1; b - Uli 11/2; c - Uli 41/1; d - Uli 48/1; e - Uli 58/3; f - Uli 58/2; g - Uli 58/1 (Drawing P. Osypiński)

ULI 41: MIDDLE PALEOLITHIC CAMPSITE

RAW MATERIAL	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	L	W	TH	FIG.
Quartz	Flake	Proximal fragment; prepared butt	(31)	36	10	
Quartz	Flake	Fragment	(47)	20	7	
Quartz	Flake	Fragment	(37)	46	12	
Volcanic rock	Flake	Prepared butt	56	26	7	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt; denticulate retouch	31	34	7	<i>Fig.13:c</i>
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	32	26	6	
Jasper	Core	Single-platform, initial	45	20	21	
Flint	Flake	Cortical butt	30	33	6	
Flint	Flake	Edge butt; use retouch	35	18	4	

All flake products bear evidence of discoidal processing. Platform preforming not very exacting, but usually faceted, unless cortical surfaces are in evidence. These features date the assemblage to the Middle Paleolithic,

a later phase to judge by the variety of raw material used.

The single-platform core and elongated flake may reflect a later (Neolithic ?) intrusion.

ULI 48: MIDDLE PALEOLITHIC CAMPSITE

RAW MATERIAL	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	L	W	TH	FIG.
Quartz	Flake	Flat butt	52	47	10	
Flint	Flake	Flat butt	37	29	18	
Flint	Flake	Flat butt	33	30	12	
Flint	Flake	Flat butt	33	29	14	
Flint	Flake	Fragment	(30)	35	9	
Flint	Flake	Fragment	(35)	24	10	
Flint	Flake	Cortical butt	43	31	13	
Flint	Flake	Cortical butt	31	30	7	
Flint	Flake	Cortical butt	35	21	11	
Flint	Flake	Cortical butt	25	35	8	
Flint	Flake	Prepared butt	40	23	3	
Flint	Flake	Prepared butt	26	27	6	
Flint	Flake	Prepared butt	52	33	7	
Flint	Flake	Prepared butt	50	26	8	
Flint	Core	Levallois blade	46	42	21	<i>Fig.13:d</i>
Agate	Core	Discoidal	39	31	11	
Agate	Core	Discoidal	33	32	14	

FOURTH CATARACT – ULI ISLAND

SUDAN

Agate	Flake	Flat butt	40	27	7
Agate	Flake	Flat butt	26	13	4

The set features characteristic discoidal, even Levallois processing. It contains three cores (of which one is a small form from which a triangular blade was struck) and flakes with prepared platforms. The remaining flakes represent early stages in

cortex removing or discoidal exploitation but without platform preparation. The assemblage can be dated to the Middle Paleolithic, and the considerable variety of the raw material points to a later phase of the period.

ULI 58: MIDDLE PALEOLITHIC CAMPSITE

RAW MATERIAL	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	L	W	TH	FIG.
Quartz	Flake	Cortical butt	42	38	13	
Quartz	Flake	Cortical butt	36	38	9	
Basalt?	Core	Discoidal	52	48	17	
Quartzite	Core	Single platform	53	45	35	<i>Fig.13:f</i>
Chert	Core	Discoidal with reversed orientation	49	53	27	<i>Fig.13:g</i>
Chert	Core	Discoidal	46	51	26	
Chert	Flake	Fragment	(32)	24	5	
Chert	Flake	Flat butt	27	23	6	
Chert	Flake	Flat butt	45	19	7	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	19	17	4	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	41	28	7	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	39	37	10	
Chert	Flake	Prepared butt	25	28	5	
Chert	Tool	Flake with prepared butt and denticulate retouch	23	22	4	
Chert	Tool	Flake with prepared butt and denticulate retouch. Broken.	(39)	31	6	<i>Fig.13:e</i>
Chert	Tool	Flake with prepared butt and denticulate retouch	43	31	6	
Chert	Flake	Very worn and patinated	21	29	8	
Volcanic rock	Flake	Very worn and patinated	40	29	7	

The set contains only discoidal products, whether cores, flakes or tools. One of the tools (damaged) could have been a blade. Two of the flakes have very worn edges and are heavily patinated on the surface, indicating another (older?) occupation phase or

entirely different post-depositional processes working on elements of the same (technologically homogeneous) set. Technological features point to a Middle Paleolithic date for the set, a later phase to judge by the variety of raw material.

APPENDIX 2

ROCK DRAWINGS FROM ULI ISLAND

Marta Gauza-Osypińska

Rock petroglyphs were recorded on seven sites identified during the survey of Uli Island. The drawings were fairly legible. Most of them depicted animals. A chronological attribution of the petroglyphs is possible only in the case of Uli 5, where three Greek crosses can be discerned. On the other sites, the representations can be dated only on the grounds of archaeological material from the vicinity and the iconography and style of the representation.

Two representations of cattle were identified on the north face of a small rock formation designated as Uli 30. Both were outlined by picking with a stone on the rock surface. One is 0.46 m long and 0.40 m high [Fig. 14 a], the other 0.31 m long and 0.23 m high [Fig. 14 b].

The figures were depicted facing right. In both cases the back leg, back and neck with head were depicted with a continuous line. In the drawing on the left, the same line went on to depict the front leg. Another line outlined continuously the other front leg, belly and second back leg. The long tail ends in a bunch of hair. The horns are rather massive and curving to the back. In the middle of the body, a wide vertical band connects the back with the belly. The animal is depicted in standing position. In the other figure, the horns are curved up in an arch. The second line marks the head, dewlap, front legs and part of the belly of the animal. The front legs are shown stepping forward.

The two images are likely connected with Kerma-Horizon occupation, a site at-

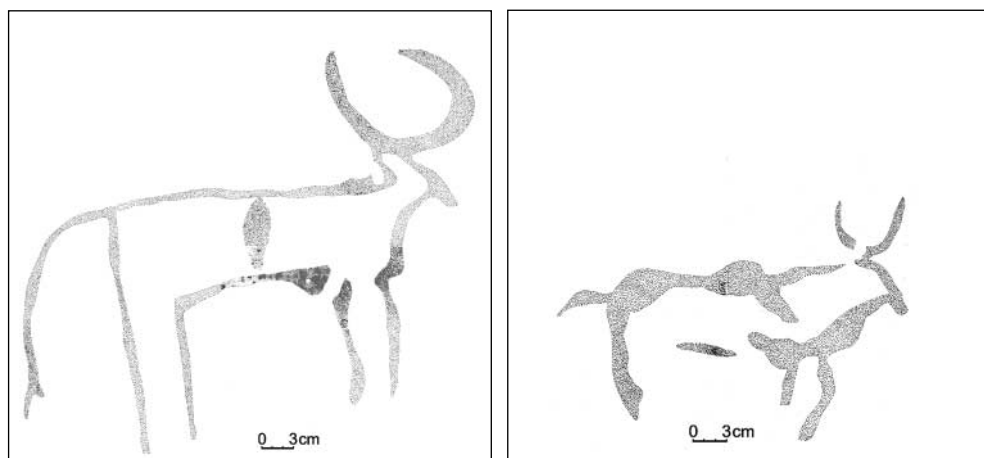


Fig. 14. Uli 30. Rock petroglyphs depicting cattle from Uli Island
(Drawing M. Osypińska)

tributed to this period having been located in the immediate neighborhood.

The species represented in the petroglyphs is African humpback cattle, easily identi-

fiable thanks to the characteristic hump and massive horns. These two features also indicate that most likely the animals depicted in the petroglyphs were meant to be bulls.

NEOLITHIC TO NAPATAN POTTERY FROM ULI ISLAND PRELIMINARY REPORT

Edyta Klimaszewska-Drabot

The surface pottery collection from sites on Uli Island assembled a few hundred potsherds, the number further augmented by pottery assemblages excavated at selected sites.¹ The information provided is of significance not only for the chronology of settlement on the island, but foremost for understanding the ceramic industry develop-

ment in the region. Unfortunately, the material is much degraded and fragmented due to unfavorable atmospheric conditions prevalent on much of the rocky island. The present report is a preliminary discussion of the pottery originating from the earliest periods, that is, from the Neolithic through Kerma-Horizon to Napata.

MESOLITHIC/EARLY NEOLITHIC

Only three sites (Uli 60, 9, 10) yielded Mesolithic/Early Neolithic potsherds and in all the cases, this pottery was no more than a tiny component of the collections. No shape reconstruction was possible due to the fragmentariness of the sherds, but even so, the assemblage can be said to be rather homogeneous.

The fabric appears very hard, heavily mineral-tempered, containing quartz and sand particles of different shape and ranging in size from 0.5 to 5 mm, poorly sorted, and often with impressive quantities of mica inclusions [*Fig. 1*]. A fabric with large bits of organic temper, of which small quan-

ties have been observed by the author on neighboring Saffi Island, was not noted and it should be deemed rare in the region. Neither has it appeared in the area investigated by the Anglo-German expedition (SARS) a little farther upstream.²

In the main, interior surfaces appear to be smoothed, while the exterior bears horizontal rows of impressed 'seed & dots', apparently made with a cord or another tool. This type of decoration is characteristic of the Central Sudan and the Fourth Cataract region, and has been recorded on numerous sites.³ Notably, no examples of wavy line or dotted wavy line sherds have been found.

1 For the Uli Island survey and excavation results, cf. report by W. Godlewski et al. in this volume, 339-350.

2 P. Wolf, "The SARS Anglo-German Expedition at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile: the 2003/04 season", *Sudan&Nubia* 8 (2004), 19.

3 E.g. E. Kołosowska, M. El-Tayeb, "Pottery from the Fourth Cataract Region (Sudan)", *GAMAR* 2 (2003), 118; A.J. Arkell, Shaheinab. An account of the excavation of a Neolithic occupation site carried out for the Sudan Antiquities Service in 1949-50 (London 1953), 69-71; I. Caneva, A. Marks, "More on the Shaqadud Pottery: Evidence for Sahari-Nilotic Connections during the 6th-4th millennium B.C.", *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 4 (1990), 17-19.

LATE NEOLITHIC

The Late Neolithic is also represented on a few sites, separately or associated with sherds of an earlier or later tradition (Uli 6, 9, 10, 15, 20, 33, 34, 36, 49).

The sites are settlements in all likelihood, so the pottery assemblage is rather homogenous. The fabric is better sorted and features a smaller fraction of mineral inclusions than in earlier examples, but it is still a quartz- and mica-rich temper. Fragmentariness is again an issue for shape reconstruction. It seems, nonetheless, that the most popular shape was a fairly large open bowl. Small bowls were extremely rare. Vessels were rather thin walled; good quality examples with walls about 0.5 cm thick are seldom encountered.

The predominant colors of the clay of this pottery were red, brown, gray or black. Surfaces were smoothed inside and out or had simple burnishing outside. Rims were simple, either rounded or plain, very often decorated on top with incised lines: short straight or oblique, cross-hatched, sometimes zigzag [Fig. 2]. The exterior body surface was usually undecorated, rare exceptions including a continuous zigzag pattern [Fig. 2:4] and two instances of impressed parallel dots in bands [Fig. 2:2], which could be the pattern on a typical beaker frequent in the Neolithic grave inventory.⁴ In one case, there was a band of short incised oblique lines below the rim [Fig. 2:1] and in another, a herringbone pattern on the ex-



Fig. 1. Examples of Early Neolithic sherds: 1 - U9.1; 2-5 - U60; 6. U60.5
(Photo A. Obluski)

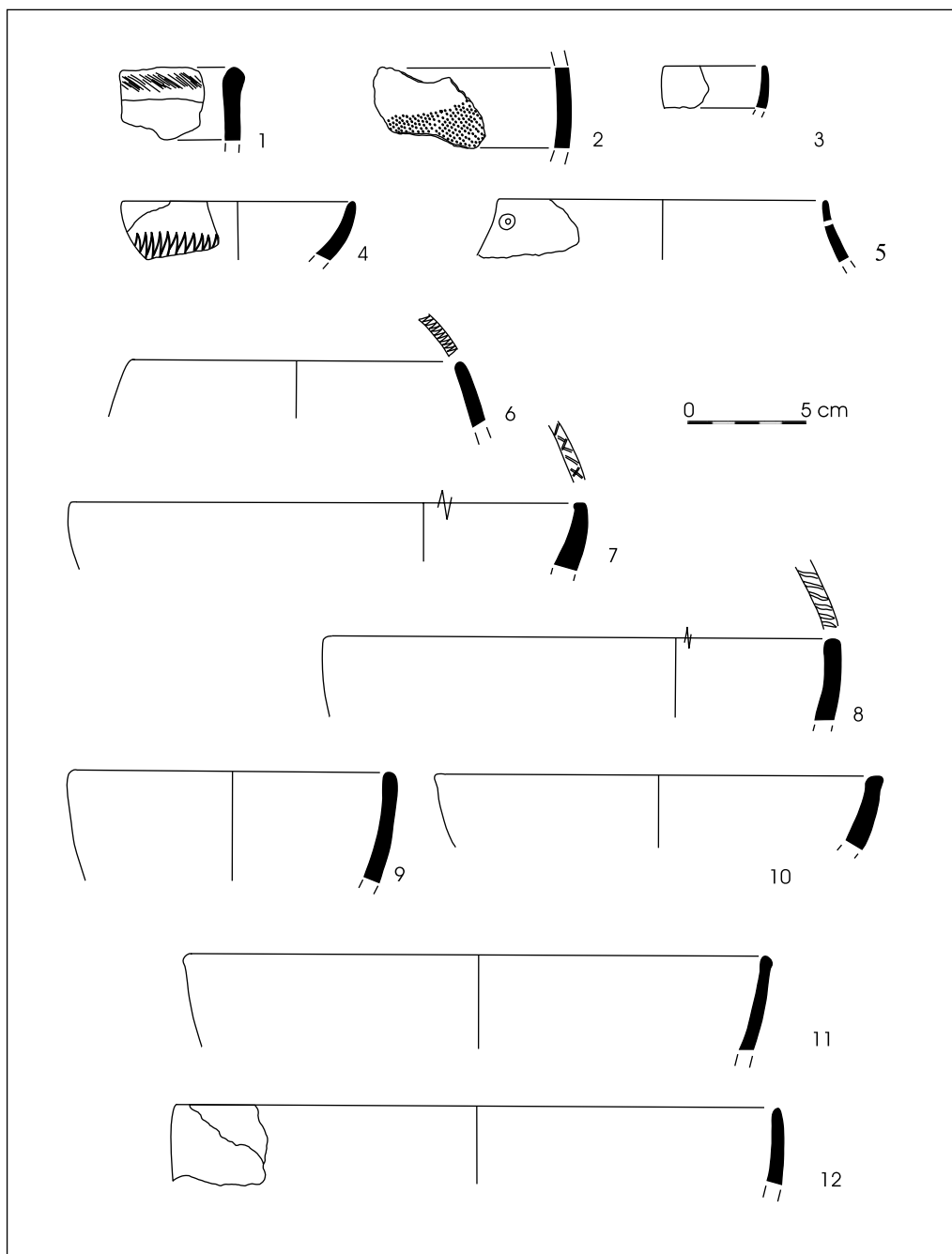


Fig. 2. Neolithic pottery: 1 - U49.1; 2 - U33.7; 3 - U33.2; 4 - U20.9; 5 - U33.4; 6 - U34.7; 7 - U20.7; 8 - U20.4; 9 - U20.12; 10 - U20.10; 11 - U20.11; 12 - U33.5
(Drawing E. Klimaszevska-Drabot)

terior body; a few other vessels featured parallel incised lines.

Only a small percentage of the collection was decorated. Some types, like ripple ware,⁵ which were so characteristic of the period, are absent entirely. The finds from Shaqadud presented a generally similar picture.⁶

While fragmentary and innumerable, the collection clearly corresponds to finds from other regions of Sudan⁷ and the Fourth Cataract region in particular,⁸ at least as far as comparative analysis goes today based on the brief reports that have been published so far.

KERMA PERIOD

Abundant pottery of Kerma Period date appeared on sites: Uli 6, 9, 23, 37, 43, 57, 60, 63, 74, and 80. Chronological attribution to individual phases of Kerma culture is difficult, in view of the provinciality of the Fourth Cataract region as compared to the important centers, like Kerma and Sai in northern Sudan, for which chronological systems have been developed. Local traditions must have impacted local production substantially, while influences from the major centers would have been slow in coming. Since the material is in the main surface collection from settlement sites, its fragmentariness makes any study of it difficult to say the least. Even so, some chronological distinctions based on the standard typology can be made.

Few examples dated to the Ancient Kerma period have been recognized. Indeed, pottery of this date is rare throughout the

Fourth Cataract region.⁹ Sherd U23.8 [Fig. 3:1]. and several similar sherds could be dated to this phase on the basis of the all-over punctate decoration on the exterior. These vases have plain upright walls with occasionally a slight backward kick. All represent fine wares with red-slipped exterior and all-over dotted decoration made with a notched rocker stamp, forming horizontal registers of triangles, rectangles and squares.

Another example [Fig. 3:2] is an open bowl or plate fragment decorated with at least three zones of relief zigzag lines on the exterior. Rows of triangular impressions run around the interior. A similar pattern, but accompanied by incised horizontal lines, occurs on a vessel dated by Privati to the end of the Ancient Kerma period.¹⁰ Interestingly, it is also found in Gash Delta¹¹ and Wadi Howar¹².

4 S. Salvatori, D. Usai, "Cemetery R12 and a possible periodisation of the Nubian Neolithic", *Sudan & Nubia* 8 (2004), 36; J. Reinold, "Néolithique soudanais: les coutumes funéraires", in: ed. V. Davies, *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam* (London 1991), 16-29; M. Chłodnicki, J. Kabaciński, "The Neolithic of the Dongola Reach (Nubia)", *GAMAR* 2 (2003), 58.

5 F. Geus, *Rescuing Sudan Ancient Cultures* (Khartoum 1984), 54-55; Salvatori, Usai, loc. cit.

6 Caneva, Marks, op. cit., 19.

7 Arkell, loc. cit.; Chłodnicki, Kabaciński, loc. cit.; Caneva, Marks, loc. cit.

8 Kołosowska, El-Tayeb, loc. cit.

9 Kołosowska, El-Tayeb, op. cit., 118.

10 B. Privati, "Le matériel céramique", in: Ch. Bonnet, *Le temple principal de la ville de Kerma et son quartier religieux* (Paris 2004) (=Privati 2004), 172, Fig. 134.12.

11 R. Fattovich, "At the periphery of the empire: The Gash Delta (Eastern Sudan)", in: ed. V. Davies, *Egypt and Africa: Nubia from Prehistory to Islam* (London 1991), Fig. 5.2.3.

12 B. Keding, "The Yellow Nile: new data on settlement and the environment in the Sudanese Eastern Sahara", *Sudan & Nubia* 2 (1998), Pl. 5.

Later finds are more frequent. The Middle Kerma period is represented mostly by hemispherical bowls, as is the case in the neighboring Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition (GAME) concession.¹³ The exterior of the vessels is red or brown, roughly smoothed or unsmoothed and decorated with various patterns of incised lines, the latter varying from straight or oblique lines to cross-hatching in different combinations. Zones of ornament appear immediately below the rim or cover the entire surface. Vessel rims are simply rounded or tapered with a few examples showing slight outward eversion [Fig. 3:3].

The Pan-grave style of decoration is also frequent. It comes as incised oblique lines and dots or triangles in registers, usually below the rim, as well as incised straight, contiguous triangular motifs or horizontal lines, all dated to the Middle Kerma/Kerma Classic.¹⁴

Other kinds of ornament, albeit very few, include dotted, probably impressed fish-bone patterns [Fig. 2:5], relief dots below the rim [cf. Fig. 4:4] and zigzag made with a plain-edged rocker stamp.

Few of the sherds could be dated to the Middle or Classical Kerma period. Small fragments of black-topped red wares, of rat-

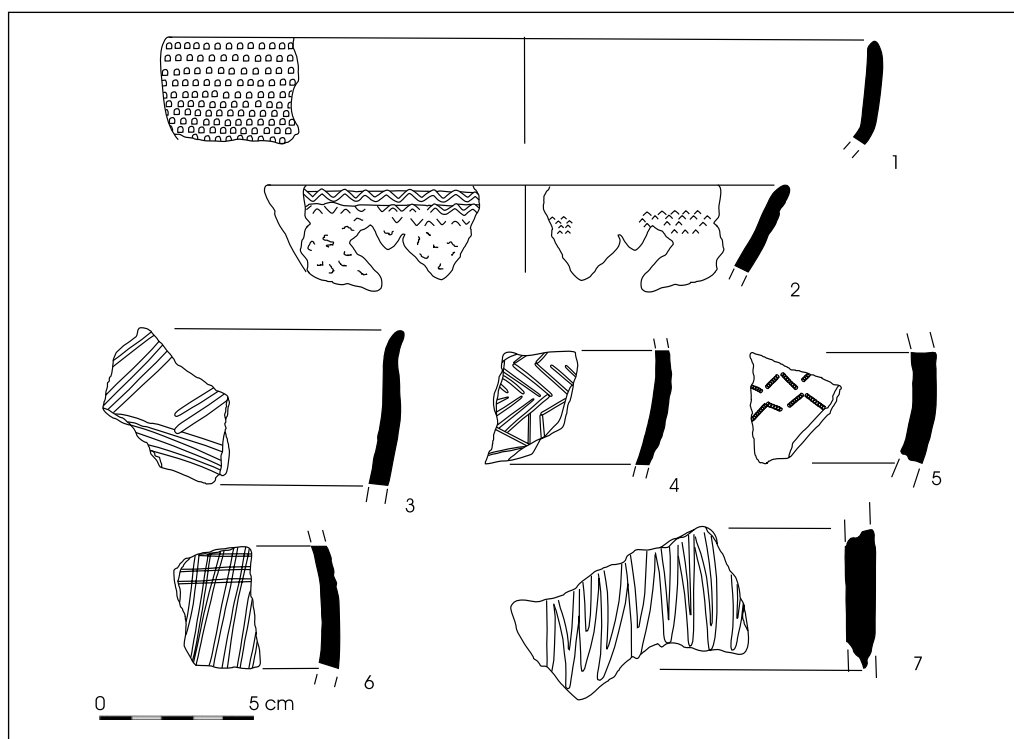


Fig. 3. Kerma-period pottery: 1 - U23.8; 2 - U23.32; 3 - U23.27; 4 - U23.22; 5 - U23.2; 6 - U9.1; 7 - U23.23 (Drawing E. Klimaszevska-Drabot)

¹³ Kołosowska, El-Tayeb, loc. cit.

¹⁴ I. Welsby-Sjöström, "The pottery from the survey", in: D.A. Welsby, *Life on the Desert Edge. Seven Thousand Years of the Settlement in the Northern Dongola Reach, Sudan*, vol. I (London 2001), 246-247: type D43, D58.

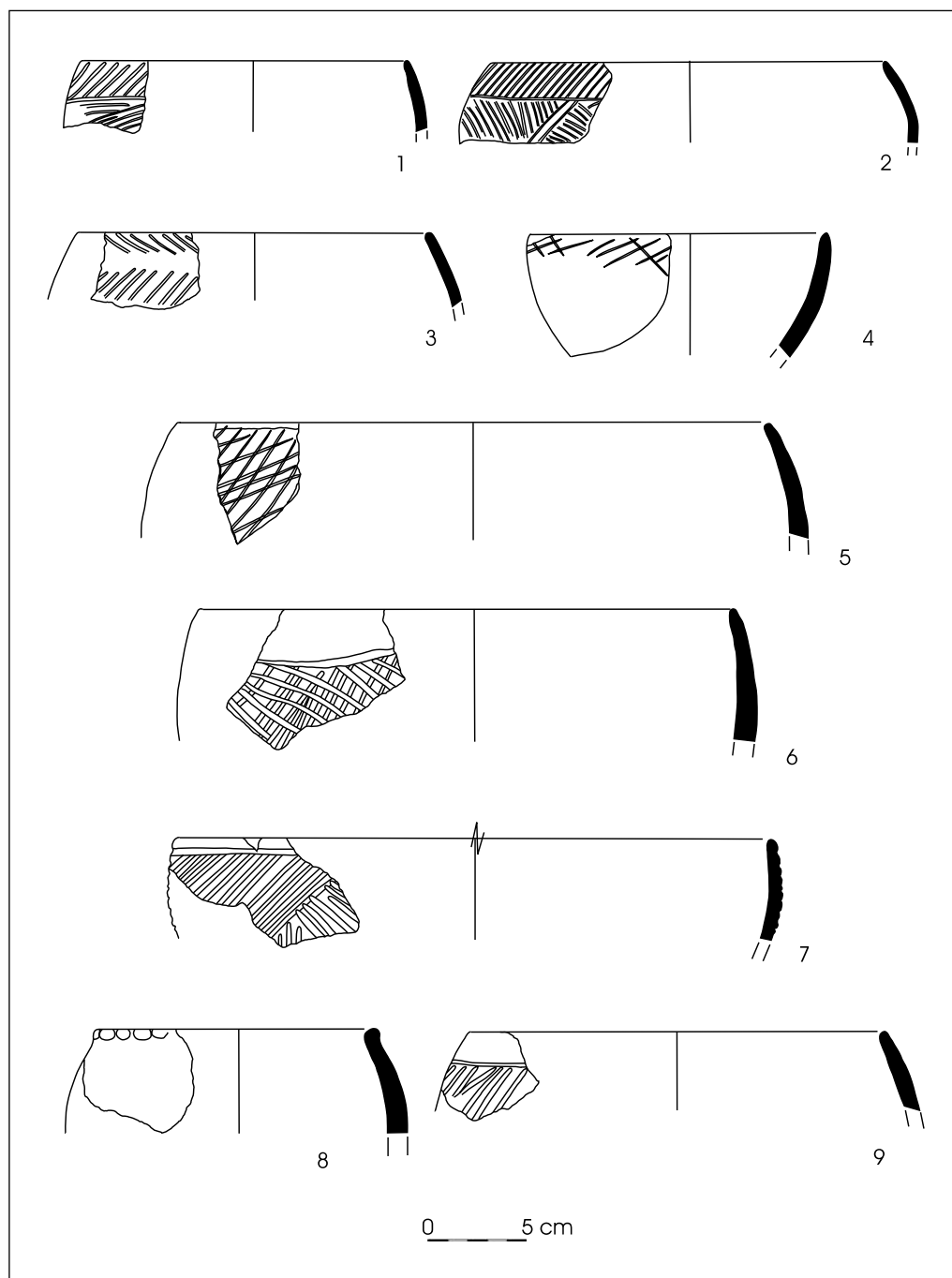


Fig. 4. Kerma-period pottery: 1 – U23.15; 2 – U15.1; 3 – U43.1; 4 – U23.31; 5 – U23.18; 6 – U23.20; 7 – U63.1; 8 – U23.21; 9 – U63.5 (Drawing E. Klimaszewska-Drabot)

her coarse quality, were the standard with only one piece – and it does not look like a local product at all – possibly belonging to the fine, polished ware of the Classical Kerma period [Fig. 5:2]. Among the best preserved fragments was a small, very fine open bowl with tapered rim [Fig. 5:3]. A red slipped open bowl [cf. Fig. 5:1] is more ambiguous in terms of attribution. Vessels of this kind were rare in the Kerma tradition and similar shapes are known to come from the western necropolis in Kerma where Egyptian influence has been noted.¹⁵ The Uli piece could be a local and rather poor imitation.

Unlike the bowls, which are more frequent than other kinds of vessels, few examples of jars have been found. One, in red ware, featuring a globular body and everted rim, bore a repeating dotted pattern on the shoulders and another pattern on the upper body [Fig. 6:2]. Other examples included a black-topped

red-ware jar with slightly everted, rounded rim and short neck [Fig. 6:1] and a wide-mouthed jar with everted rim, decorated with impressions along the rim top and incisions on the shoulders [Fig. 6:3].

Two examples of bigger storage jars come from the surface collection from the cemetery at Uli 60. Their dating, however, is not clear. The red ware jar with short straight neck and slightly everted rim has an impressed pattern running along the rim top and impressed dots horizontally on the neck [Fig. 6:4] (a similar vessel but without decorated rim and with a slightly different pattern on the neck from the cemetery at Kerma belongs to the Classical Kerma period).¹⁶ The other example is a globular storage jar decorated with two rows of slightly oblique marks below the rim and a series of impressed zigzags (like sherd U23.32 [cf. Fig. 3:2]) with incised triangular motifs between two of these ornament lines [Fig. 6:5].

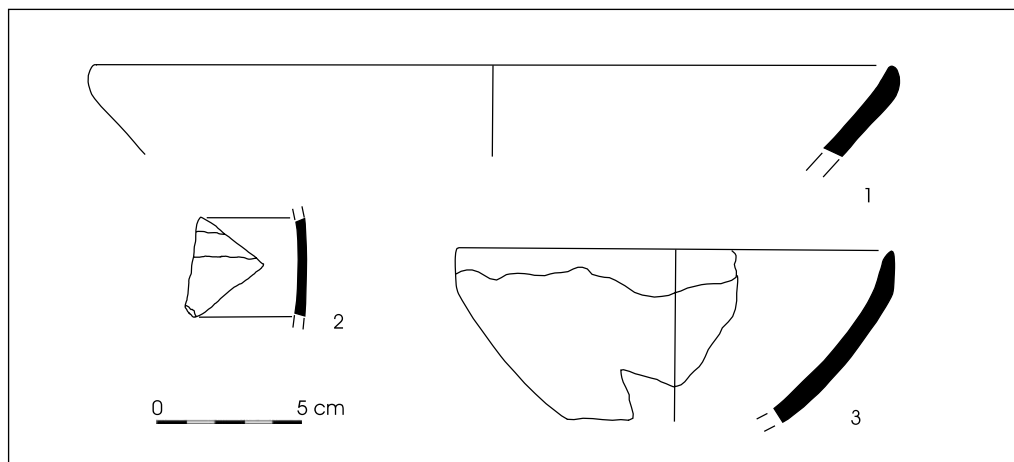


Fig. 5. Kerma-period pottery: 1 - U23.7; 2 - U6.4; 3 - U23.19
(Drawing E. Klimaszewska-Drabot)

15 B. Privati, "Le matériel céramique associé aux édifices funéraires", in: Ch. Bonnet, *Édifices et rites funéraires à Kerma* (Paris 2000) (=Privati 2000), Fig. 137.3.

16 Privati, op. cit., Fig. 131.12.

At the present stage of research, the Kerma-period pottery assemblage from Uli Island does not appear to differ from that generally recognized on the Fourth

Cataract,¹⁷ demonstrating many similarities with finds from further downriver, e.g. Northern Dongola Reach¹⁸ and the city of Kerma.¹⁹

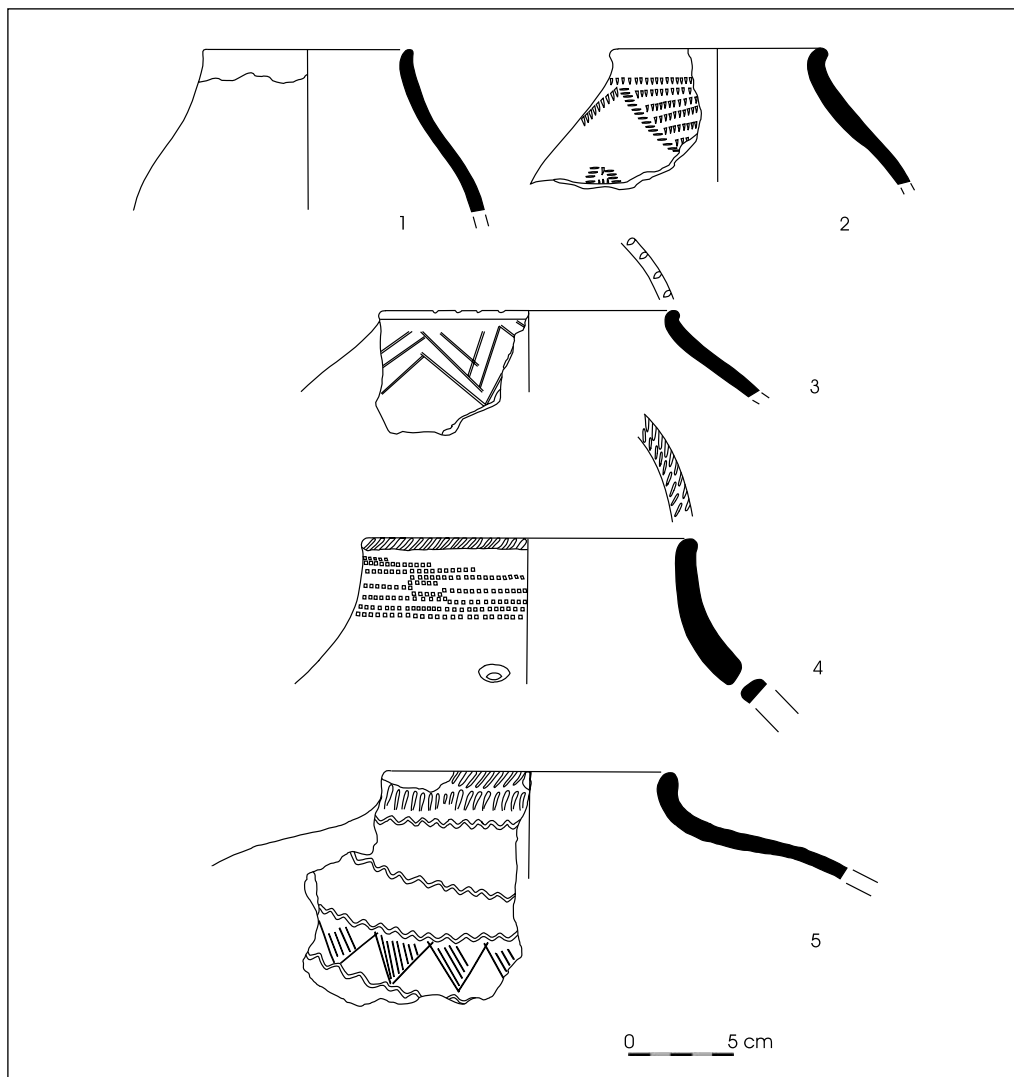


Fig. 6. Kerma-period pottery: 1 – U80.1; 2 – U37.5; 3 – U80.2; 4 – U60.15; 5 – U60.14 (Drawing E. Klimaszevska-Drabot)

17 Kołosowska, El-Tayeb, loc. cit.

18 Welsby-Sjöström, loc. cit.

19 Privati 2000, op. cit., 176-192; id. 2004, op. cit., 162-189.

POST-KERMA HORIZON AND NAPATAN PERIOD

The collection of sherds and complete vessels from the surface and excavations of the cemetery in Uli 23 deserves a separate and detailed discussion. The site extends well beyond the cemetery itself and has yielded mostly standard Kerma-period wares. The collection from the cemetery, however, appears to represent a much more varied time horizon. It should be kept in mind that only intact vessels from the bottom of graves can be regarded as constituting undisturbed grave goods. Since the graves were disturbed and in any case lay very close together, the loose ceramic material may be mixed and there is no certainty that all the sherds found in a grave actually belonged to vessels deposited at the time of burial. Despite this, it seems that the cemetery may have been in uninterrupted use until

the 25th Dynasty. Thus, an in-depth consideration of the pottery assemblage (here presented at a very early stage in the study) could bring more light to bear on the period in Nubian pottery production that followed the fall of Kerma.

WHOLE VESSELS

Two bowls found in grave 4 and one from grave 10 represent an interesting handmade product in a similar, coarse black-topped red ware with yellow band on the body imitating Kerma products [Fig. 7:1-3]. Similar bowls were discovered in Hillat el Arab, in a grave attributed to the late New Kingdom.²⁰ Such bowls were also found in graves by the GAME expedition.²¹ Many sherds with the same features collected from the surface indicate that vessels of this type must have

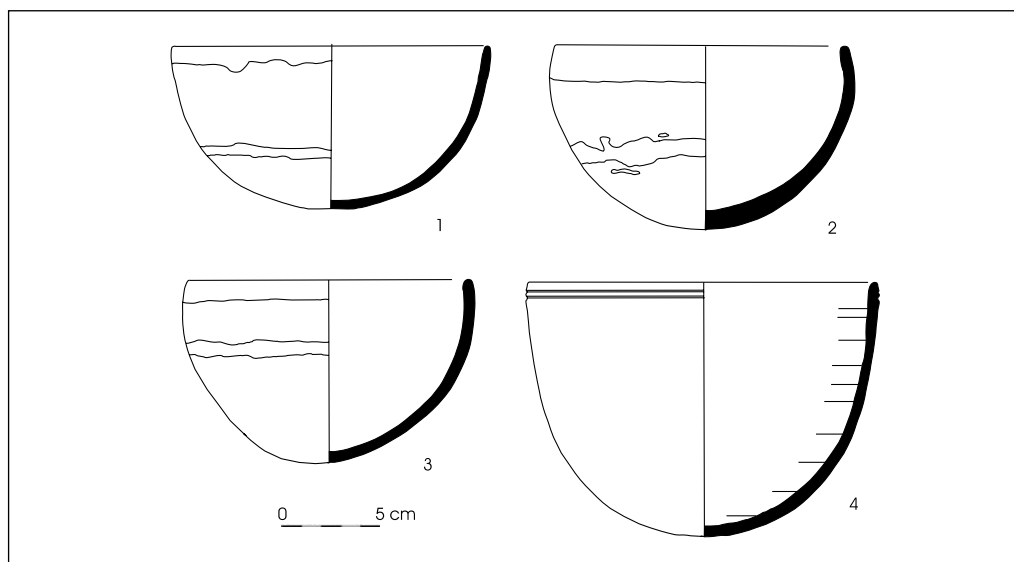


Fig. 7. Pottery from the Uli 23 cemetery: 1 – U23.T4.2; 2 – U23.T4.1; 3 – U.23.T10.3; 4 – U.23.T1.4 (Drawing E. Klimaszevska-Drabot)

20 I. Livererani, "Two Field Seasons in the Napata Region", *KUSH* XVII (1997), 170.

21 M. El-Tayeb, E. Kolosowska, "Burial Traditions on the right bank of the Nile in the Fourth Cataract Region", *GAMAR* 4, Fig. 16.

been quite common among the grave offerings.

Another vessel of interest is a wheel-made hemispherical red-slipped bowl with two grooves below the rim [Fig. 7:4]. It could be of Napatan date, but the dating is not all that clear. The style of decoration is known from the Kerma site, where it appears to have been popular, hemispherical or cylindrical bowls bearing from one to six or more grooves under the rim.²² A similar bowl was found in Soniyat temple, where it was dated to the Napatan period.²³

Coming also from this cemetery is an Egyptian amphora [Fig. 8] of a type that

started being produced locally in Egypt during the New Kingdom, when it became quite common. Earlier vessels of this kind had been imported from the Levant, and then produced only in the Delta.²⁴ The pot from grave 4 was made of Nile silt and given a cream coating. It is 30 cm high and features an elongated neck and vertical handles. It resembles Hope's type 1c, dated to the 18th Dynasty (reign of Amenhotep II) and 19th Dynasty or a little later.²⁵

SHERDS

Incised sherds evidently of Kerma tradition included a big open hemispherical bowl



Fig. 8. *Egyptian amphora U23.T4.3*
(Photo W. Godlewski)



Fig. 9. *Sherds of hemispherical open bowl in the Kerma tradition from Uli 23 cemetery (U23.T10.1)* (Photo W. Godlewski)

22 Salah el-Din M. Ahmed, *L'agglomération napaténne de Kerma* (Paris 1992), Fig.20, 25, 26.

23 M. Orzechowska, "Preliminary Report on the Pottery from the Soniyat Temple", in: B. Żurawski, *Survey and Excavations between Old Dongola and Ez-Zuma, Southern Dongola Reach Survey 1, Nubia II* (Warsaw 2003), Pl. 4.f.

24 C.A. Hope, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom: Three Studies*, Victoria College Archaeology Research Unit, *Occasional Paper* No. 2 (Victoria 1989), 87.

25 *Ibid.*, 95-96.

decorated with incised lines on the exterior [Fig. 10:1], and another one with short, slightly oblique lines under the rim and horizontal lines on the body [Fig. 9].

Another two handmade black-topped bowls, thin walled and deep, and burnished inside and out [Fig. 10:2-3], find distant parallels in material from Napatan sites.²⁶

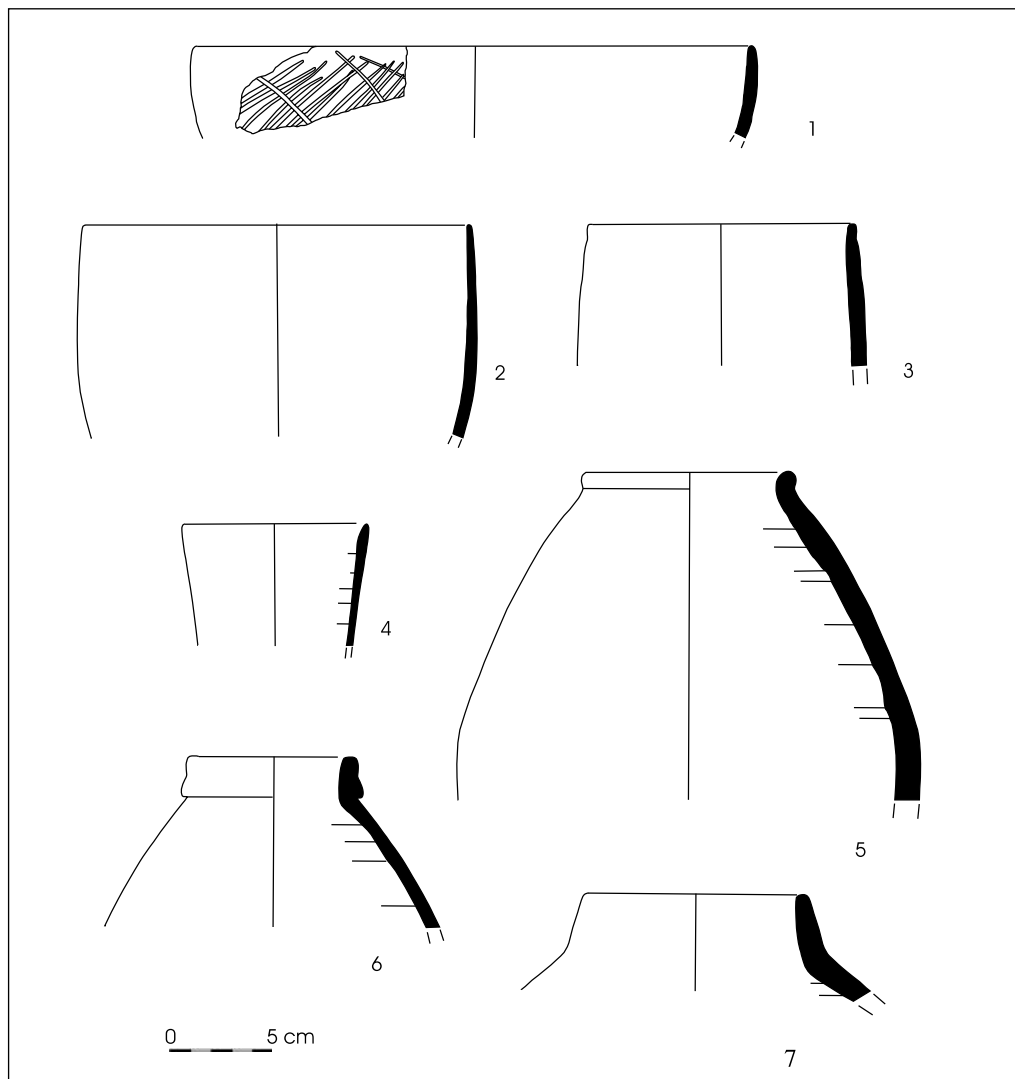


Fig. 10. Pottery from the Uli 23 cemetery: 1 – U23.T4.2; 2 – U23.T4.1; 3 – U23.T10.3; 4 – U23.T1.4; 5 – U23.T4.6; 6 – U23.T1.3; 7 – U23.T4.4 (Drawing E. Klimaszevska-Drabot)

26 B.B. Williams, *Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and Napatan Remains at Qustul: Cemeteries W and V*, The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition, vol. VII (Chicago 1990), 6; F. L. Griffith, "Oxford Excavations in Nubia, The Cemetery of Sanam", *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* X (1923), 99.

The Napatan examples, however, look more coarse, and the deep bowls from Uli 23 could actually be earlier products, which emerged when reminiscences of the Kerma tradition appeared.

Wheel-made sherds, which are a more abundant class in the collection, included a red-slipped beaker [Fig. 10:4], burnished inside and out, which can be compared with examples from the pottery workshop in Kerma²⁷ or with finds from the Qustul cemeteries.²⁸

A few sherds of storage containers coated with a thin cream wash [Fig. 9:6,7] are doubtless of Napatan date. Similar pieces were found in the Usli temple.²⁹ Storage jars of Nile silt, difficult to date due to the fragmentariness of the sherds, were also represented [e.g. Fig. 9:5]. Vessels of this kind appeared during the New Kingdom,³⁰ but were also found in 25th Dynasty contexts at El-Kurru³¹ and Amarna South (tombs dated to or around the 25th Dynasty).³²

SUMMARY

While further study of the ceramic assemblage from Uli Island is in order, the present preliminary presentation of selected issues and examples of pottery demonstrates an inherent similarity of the material to what other archaeological expeditions have already collected on the Fourth Cataract. Neither does it depart

significantly from the picture of pottery production that is available for areas upriver and downriver from this region. Further studies of the Uli Island material in confrontation with the growing body of published evidence from other work in the region should provide the grounds for a more detailed analysis.

27 Salah el-Din M. Ahmed, op. cit., Fig. 26.

28 Williams, op. cit., 8, Fig. 2:20.

29 J. Phillips, "An overview of the ceramics", in: Żurawski, Survey Ez-Zuma, op. cit., 399, Pl. 14.a.

30 Hope, op. cit., Fig. 1.i.

31 L.A. Heindorn, "Preliminary analysis of selected vessels from the earliest tombs at El-Kurru (Generations A-F)", Seventh International Conference for Meroitic Studies (Berlin 1992), Fig. 3a.

32 D.A. Aston, "Egyptian pottery of the Late New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (twelfth-seventh centuries BC). Tentative footsteps in a forbidding terrain", *Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Ägyptens* 13 (Heidelberg 1996), Fig. 119-SJ6 4.3 (L).