

# HAGAR EL-BEIDA 1

## EXCAVATIONS OF A LATE/POST-MEROITIC CEMETERY

Marek Lemiesz

The site of Hagar el-Beida 1 (HB1) is a large tumulus cemetery located in the immediate vicinity of the Hagar el-Beida village (N19°19'14.7" E032°45'46.4"). The site consists of 15 huge and medium-sized tumuli preserved on the surface, arranged in two distinct and easily recognizable groups: A (eight burials spread on a lightly eroded alluvial rocky-and-gravel slope along the southern outskirts of the village) and B (six superstructures situated on a large, plain sandy elevation, currently around the local soccer-field between modern houses).

The site was discovered in 2003 during an archaeological reconnaissance of the Fourth Cataract area and then provisionally recorded in late 2004.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the first prospection, archaeologists focused attention on the largest superstructure in the cemetery (HB1-T10), which they referred to as "royal" burial because of its size. It may very well be the most spectacular historical feature so far discovered within the area of the Polish concession. However, the sheer size of this burial, now estimated at c. 32 m in diameter (up from the previous estimate of

28 m) and a maximum of 6 m in height, did not allow anything but some standard initial surveying and measurements during the first season of excavation in 2005. Following two weeks of initial earthworks, the upper part of the eastern half of the mound was removed down to about two-thirds of its height. Four other relatively well preserved tumuli, representing some prominent differences in size and shape, were selected for excavation and explored between January 30 and March 6 [*Table 1*].

Although too few of the tumuli in this cemetery have been excavated so far to acknowledge them as a distinctly representative sample, the following remarks on hypothetical variants and typology are put forward with all due caution [*Table 2*].

### SUPERSTRUCTURES

The superstructures are varied in diameter and three main types can be distinguished:<sup>2</sup> small tumuli (max. 11 m, e.g. T3), medium-sized ones (from 12 to 18 m, e.g. T2, T6, T7 and T13) and large ones (more than 18 m, e.g. T1, T5, T9 and T14). The height ranges from 0.80 m for the small

1 L. Krzyżaniak, M. Chłodnicki, M. Jórdeczka, M. Lemiesz, "Archaeological reconnaissance between Shemkhiya and Khor Umm Ghizlan (left bank of the Nile), 2003", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 42; M. Chłodnicki, *PAM XVI, Reports 2004* (2005), 372, 375 and Fig. 4.

2 The "royal tumulus" HB1/T10 must remain outside this simple classification owing to its size and presumed predominant role in the necropolis.

FOURTH CATARACT – HAGAR EL-BEIDA

SUDAN

Table 1. Juxtaposition of features of tumuli from the Hagar el-Beida 1 site, excavated in 2005

Tumulus	HB1/T5	HB1/T6	HB1/T7	HB1/T9
SUPERSTRUCTURE				
Mound diameter	19.50 m	14 m	17.50 & 13.50 m	21.50 m
Mound layout	round	round	slightly oblong (E-W)	round
Height (preserved)	1.45 m	1.10 m	1.10 m	1.40 m
Construction	sand-gravel	sand-gravel with stone kerb	sand-gravel	sand-gravel with stone kerb
SUBSTRUCTURE				
Orientation	E-W	NW-SE	SW-NE	NW-SE
Shaft type	ramp-shaft (dromos) with mud-brick construction	oval with stone blockage	roughly rectangular with stone blockage	roughly rectangular with stone blockage
Chamber layout	L-shaped	Oval	L-shaped	L-shaped
BURIAL				
Body position and orientation	N?	SE?	SE?	SW?
Grave goods	3 vessels, jewelry (beads), iron	2 + 5 vessels, jewelry (beads), iron	2 vessels, jewelry (beads), iron	+ 8 vessels, jewelry (beads), iron

mounds to about 1.40 m for the big ones. None of the tumuli was observed to have an external skirt or kerb construction.<sup>3</sup> The mounds are roughly round in plan, except for two slightly sub-round tumuli T7 and T11; however, in these cases the current shape of the superstructure has proved to be the result of long-lasting erosion. All mounds were constructed of diagonally sprinkled layers of dusty or sandy silt alternating with thin layers of dark granulated silt, deposited above a core in the form of a small heap (max. about 2.50 m in diameter) of light yellow gravel with

pebbles. Originally, the surface may have been loosely clad with pebbles and gravel (the material locally swept from the ground), however nowadays no coat has been noticed except for some remains accumulated mostly around the exposed summit.

Apart from secondary size differences, the grave superstructures can be divided by their internal construction features into two main types:

**Mound type 1:** pure-gravel mound, fully or partly covered with small stones. This variant is comparable to form I.6 in the

3 As opposed to the tumuli in the Hagar el-Beida 2 cemetery situated in a nearby wadi.

typology proposed by the Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition (GAME),<sup>4</sup> and especially to Welsby's Type I.<sup>5</sup>

**Mound type 2:** gravel-covered mound with internal stone kerb, not circular but with a ledge (generally ovaloid in shape). Some similarities between this type and GAME's form I.3<sup>6</sup> or Welsby's Type II can be pointed out, although it must be stressed that in this particular case no evidence of the kerb is visible on the surface, making it impossible to discern between types 1 and 2.

### SUBSTRUCTURES

The substructures of the tumuli are differentiated as well, with two main groups having been distinguished:

**Substructure type I:** represented to date by a solitary tomb HB1-T5 with a shallow, trapezoid descent (dromos-like ramp), sloping gently to an L-shaped rock-cut chamber reinforced with a mud-brick construction.

**Substructure type II:** The most common element of this is a roughly rectangular shaft, cut vertically in alluvial rock and filled with pure sand and gravel. Another highly distinctive feature is the use of massive, flat and oblong stones of local provenience to secure the entrance to the chamber.<sup>7</sup> The chamber itself can be roughly oval (variant A, as in HB1-T6) or L-shaped (HB1-T7, HB1-T9) with an oblong main burial niche and a kind of perpendicular annex.



*Fig. 1. Hagar el-Beida 1. Excavations of tumuli 1 and 9; the latter, a satellite burial of the "royal" mound, in the foreground (Photo M. Lemiesz)*

4 H. Paner, Z. Borcowski, "Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition. A summary of eight season's work at the Fourth Cataract", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 110, Fig. 36.4.

5 D.A. Welsby, *Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract* (London 2003), 122.

6 Paner, Borcowski, *op. cit.*, Fig. 35,2.

7 For HB1-T9 the total weight of the measured blockage was in the whereabouts of 1.8 tons.

Table 2. Preliminary classification of tumuli from the Hagar el-Beida 1 site

Tumulus	HB1/T5	HB1/T6	HB1/T7	HB1/T9
Superstructure	Type 1	Type 2	Type 1	Type 2
Shaft	Type I	Type II	Type II	Type II
Burial chamber	Variant B	Variant A	Variant B	Variant B

#### LOCATION OF CEMETERY

##### AND DISTRIBUTION OF BURIALS

It is difficult to say whether the choice of location on the HB1 cemetery was determined by burial tradition more than practical considerations, but the topographical setting seems to play an important role, since – typically of Late Meroitic and Post-Meroitic tradition – the HB1 cemetery was located on flat, sandy ground.

Although it must be stressed that using the terms "rich" and "poor" with reference to the burials on the site of Hagar el-Beida 1 should be rather conservative and symbolic in character, the stone-kerbed superstructures can be associated with a relatively more plentiful choice of grave goods, since both of the Type 2 tumuli were undoubtedly better furnished, while those identified as pure-gravel mounds of Type 1 contained little more than a few vessels each. Moreover, in graves of Type 2, some vessels were probably intentionally placed on top of the blocking in the shaft: wheel-made cup in HB1-T9 and two broken vessels (broken ritually?) in HB1-T6. This practice has been considered as part of the funeral rituals revived in the Fourth Cataract area in Late Meroitic times.<sup>8</sup>

The "richly" furnished grave T9 seems to have played a specific role, perhaps interpreted as a kind of satellite burial, forming a larger funerary complex together with the dominant "royal tumulus" [Fig. 1], located at a distance of no more than 25 m to the north. However, since no other satellite superstructure or remains of one have been noted during a thorough survey of the area, there is no evidence for the existence of a hypothetical zone reserved for the tribal elite, buried in the vicinity of their ruler's tomb.

#### GRAVE FURNISHING AND CHRONOLOGY

Regardless of the tumuli's state of preservation, the total number and variety of grave goods retrieved from the tumuli is relatively poor, seemingly in contrast to the laboriousness and size of the superstructures. Metal objects are apparently unpopular as a category, even compared to similarly dated cemeteries in the area (i.e., Hagar el-Beida 2 and Es-Sadda 1). Dominating the few finds of metal were nondescript iron implements, too corroded for reconstruction, probably arrowheads or knife blades. Faience, glazed and stone beads, as well as ostrich eggshell and bone

8 M. El-Tayeb, E. Kołosowska, "Burial traditions on the right bank of the Nile in the Fourth Cataract region", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 66.

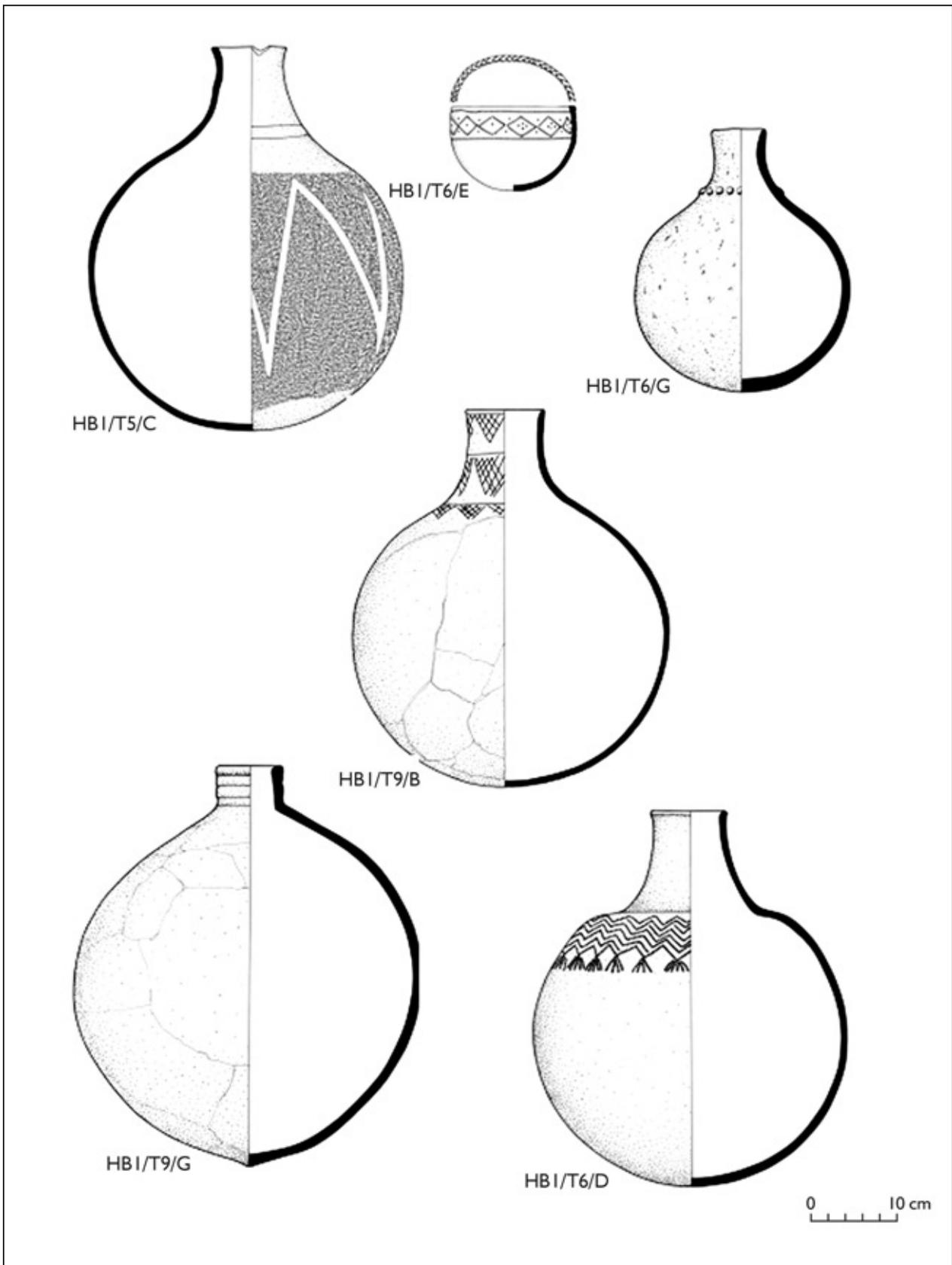


Fig. 2. Pottery from the tumuli in Hagar el-Beida 1  
(Drawing M. Lemiesz)

necklaces were found in huge quantity and variety, but they are hardly diagnostic for burial chronology.

The pottery [*Fig. 2*] is varied as well (establishing an internal site fabric typology will be a research priority for an upcoming season). Huge jars (including so-called beer-jars), some with textile imprints or incised ornaments, can be recognized as typical alternatively of Post-Meroitic or Late Meroitic contexts. A handmade globular pot with incised herring-bone decoration (HB1/T9/I) has been classified by Adams as post-Meroitic domestic ware,<sup>9</sup> but this same burial contained also an orange-ware wheel-made jar HB1/T9/G, which is attributed to the well-defined group of Meroitic wares known from the Gabati cemetery.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, however, the ceramic material seems to be connected preferably with the terminal Meroitic period.

A ramp with vertical shaft and perpendicular side chamber, such as in

HB1-T5, was popular in central Sudan in both the Late and Post-Meroitic periods.<sup>11</sup> In the Fourth Cataract region, these features (described as "compound burials" at Ab Heregil) have been regarded as more typical of Late Meroitic cemeteries.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, for substructure type II (rectangular, vertically cut shaft) a close analogy is found among published burials from Kassinger Bahri<sup>13</sup> and el-Haraz.<sup>14</sup>

The human remains from the hitherto explored graves of the HB1 cemetery were preserved in extremely poor condition, especially compared to the state of burials found in contemporary cemeteries in the vicinity (Hagar el-Beida 2 and Es-Sadda 1). The apparent long-lasting waterlogging of the chambers was responsible for a complete disintegration of the bones. Crushed fragments were scattered on the chamber floors and only in tomb HB1-T6 was a part of a thorax preserved in what looked to be an anatomical arrangement.

9 W.Y. Adams, "Ceramic Industries of Medieval Nubia" (Lexington 1986), 47-50, 411-423, Fig. 247.5

10 Gabati. A Meroitic, Post-Meroitic and Medieval Cemetery in Central Sudan, vol. 1, ed. D.N. Edwards (London 1998), 146, Fig. 6.18

11 P. Lenoble, "Trois tombes de la region de Meroe", *Archéologie du Nil Moyen* 2 (1987), 111-115; Gabati, op. cit., 15-52, Figs 2.3-10

12 El-Tayeb, Kołosowska, op. cit., 65-66, Fig. 24.

13 H. Paner, "The Hamdab Dam Project. Preliminary report of results from work in the Fourth Cataract region, 1996-1997", *GAMAR* 1 (1998), 126-129, Figs 17, 21-22

14 A.M. Abdel Rahman, H. Kabashy, "Two seasons in the Fourth Cataract Region. Preliminary results", *Sudan & Nubia* 3 (1999), 65-66, Fig. 10

# THE LATE AND POST MEROÏTIC TUMULI FIELD OF HAGAR EL-BEIDA 2 (TWO SEASONS IN 2005)

Anna Longa

The site of Hagar el Beida 2 is one of a complex of tumuli fields located in the region. It lies on the floor of a vast wadi to the north of the modern village and was spotted

during a field reconnaissance in December 2003.<sup>1</sup> Investigated first in January-February 2005, it was believed to consist of 93 tumuli concentrated in four groups. Site

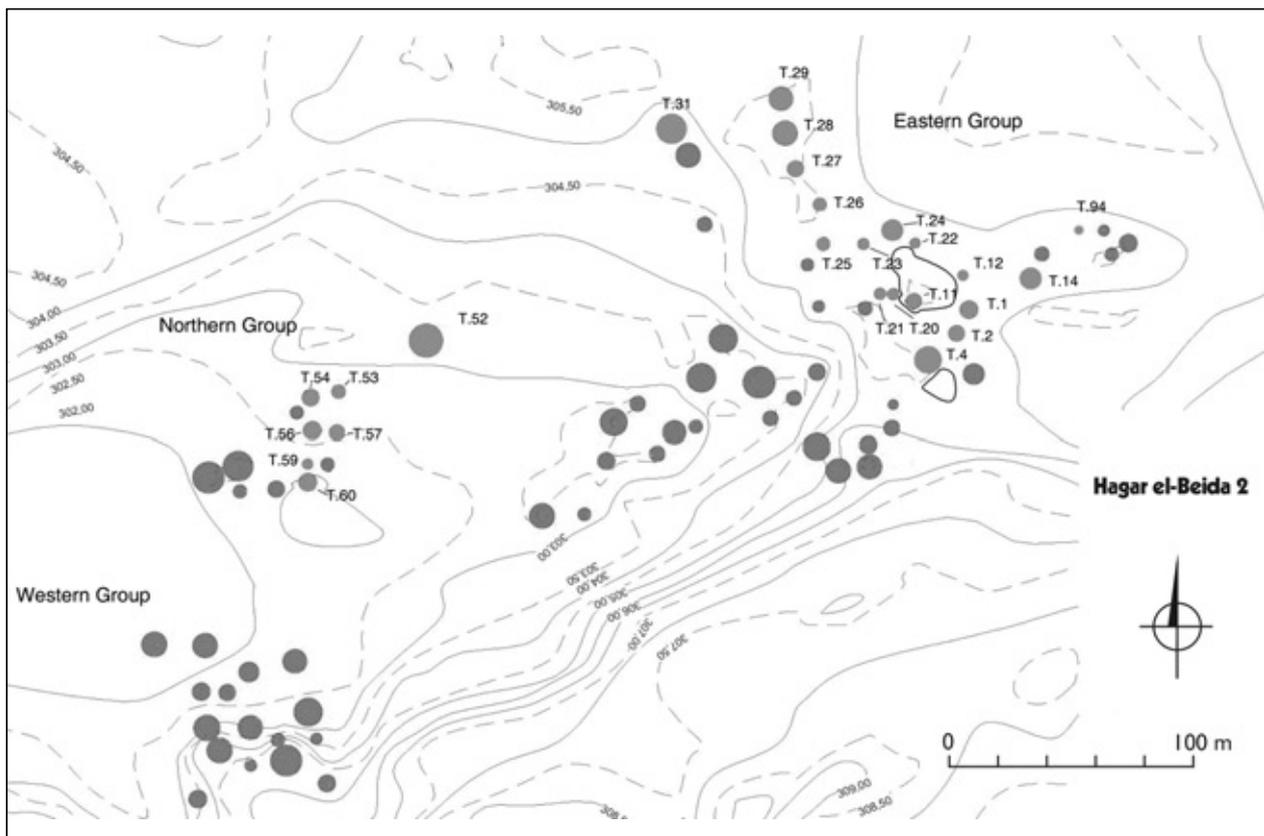


Fig. 1. Plan of the tumuli field of Hagar el-Beida 2  
(Drawing M. Sip)

1 L. Krzyżaniak, M. Chłodnicki, M. Jórdeczka, M. Lemiesz, "Archaeological reconnaissance between Shemkiya and Khor um Ghizlan (left bank of the Nile) 2003", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 39-43. Site 2 was first published as 16/2003. It was estimated initially at about 100 graves.

mapping in the winter season (November-December 2005)<sup>2</sup> excluded the western group of 16 tumuli as not connected. Therefore, the total number of graves with mounds or remains of mounds still visible on the surface now stands at 77. Of these 16 and 13 are in the southern and northern groups respectively, while the eastern one with 48 graves is the biggest [Fig. 1].

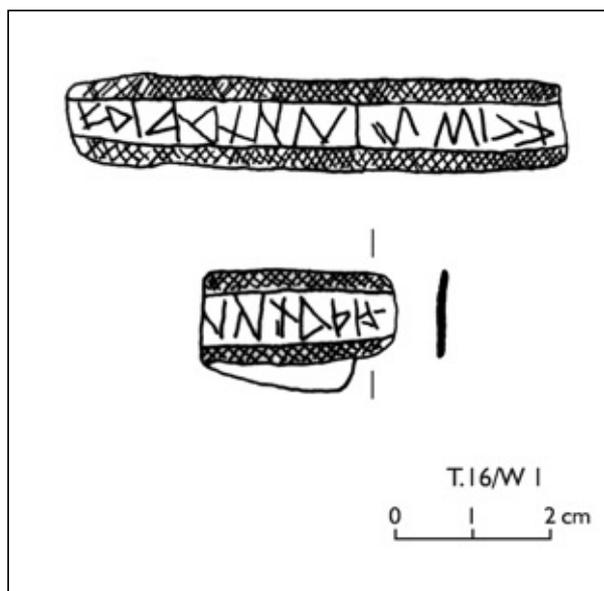


Fig. 2. Hagar el-Beida 2. Copper ring T.16/1 from a robber's pit (Drawing A. Longa)

During the first season 12 tumuli were examined, five (T.1, T.2, T.4, T.14 and T.24) in the eastern group and seven (T.52-T.54, T.56, T.57, T.59 and T.60) in the northern one. Another 12 tombs (T.12, T.25-T.29, T.31, T.94 and a group of four without skeletal remains: T.11, T.21-T.23) were excavated in the winter season. They provided a rundown through the different types of graves present on the site.

All of the graves excavated in the two seasons proved to be disturbed (except for T.54 and T.25 which were opened but not plundered). Ancient looting was attested by depressions in the central parts of the mound surfaces and robbery dumps nearby. The pits showed up in every cross-section. The fill of the mounds, shafts and burial chambers yielded pieces of potsherds fashioned to serve as handy shovels. In 12 of the recorded cases, there was evidence of contemporary looting (T.5, T.7, T.8, T.15-T.17, T.20, T.38, T.39, T.45, T.47, T.49). Those looted recently were situated mostly in the eastern group with only a few noted in the southern one. Coming from the robber's pit in T.16 was a curious find – a copper ring with engraved decoration [Fig. 2].

## THE GRAVES

Two general types of graves have been identified on the site. The first one comprises burials covered with mounds of silt and gravel, and loose pebbles scattered over the top. The size of these mounds has been observed to differ considerably with the best preserved ones reaching a height of 0.80-0.90 m. The predominant group, however, is from 0.20 to 0.60 m high. In

terms of area, two groups were distinguished: large tumuli measuring from 9 to 12 m across and small ones from 4 to 7 m.

The alternative type consists of graves with a round, oval or ovaloid ring of stones around the base. The burial chambers were dug in the alluvial layers of the wadi. Mounds without the stone rings occurred only in the eastern group.

2 The first season was headed by Ms Anna Longa with the assistance of students from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: Mr. Krzysztof Garwoliński, Ms Martyna Mazur and Mr. Paweł Polkowski. During the second season Ms Anna Longa was assisted by Mrs. Joanna Dębowska.

The present state of research is based on preliminary field prospection. The tombs explored were selected with an eye to examining different kinds of construction,

both the large ones with well preserved mounds and those marked on the surface by nothing but concentrations of large stones. Four general types of burial chambers were

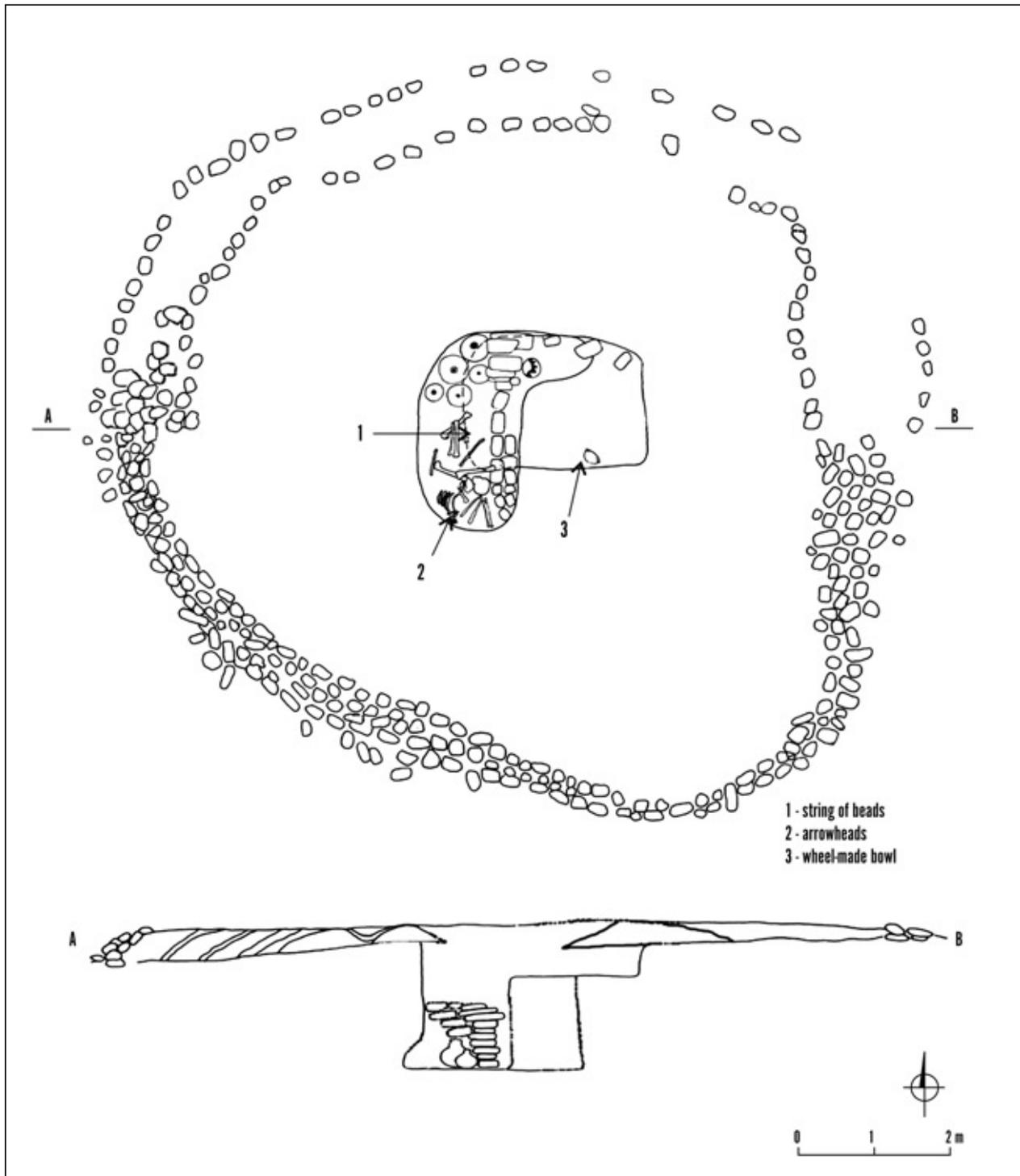


Fig. 3. Hagar el-Beida 2. Tumulus 52 in the northern group (Drawing A. Longa)

distinguished: the most common niche graves, trenches in the shaft bottom and one example each of a rectangular and an L-shaped chamber [Fig. 3]. The burial shafts were oval or cylindrical in horizontal cross-section. In the tumuli with L-shaped and rectangular burial chamber, the shaft was rectangular with rounded corners.

No observable preference in body orientation was apparent, the E-W position being just as common as the N-S one. Anthropological examination of the skeletal remains<sup>3</sup> in the two seasons demonstrated that eleven of the tombs contained male burials, aged mostly between 30 and 45. Four burials contained children's remains and another four those of females. In four of the graves no skeletal remains were discovered.

The male burials included both the big tombs with well preserved mounds and those marked on the surface with concentric rings of stones.

The mound of grave T.12 consisted of gravel covered with loose pebbles. Oval in shape, it was preserved in good condition, measuring 5.00 by 5.50 m at the base. The underground part comprised a vertical shaft and side chamber oriented E-W. The grave had been plundered in antiquity, leaving the original blocking of the burial chamber damaged. The skeleton of a male (35-40 years of age) was found partly level with the blocking and partly still inside the chamber. The original position could not be reconstructed. Despite the plundering, the grave offerings included two iron arrowheads, a ceramic cup and bottle, both decorated, and a rich collection of beads made of stone, glass and ostrich eggs, as well as a bird-shaped amulet (interpreted as a representation of Horus) [Fig. 4].

Grave T.25 did not have a mound. Instead, the only marker on the surface of this tomb was a circular concentration of stones measuring 4.40 by 5.00 m [Fig. 5]. The burial chamber was of niche construction, oriented E-W. The male (age 20-25 (30) buried in the grave was laid out on the left side with legs pulled up, the head to the east and facing south [Fig. 6]. A big decorated bowl was deposited by the head and a globular pot [Fig. 7], also decorated, by the knees. Strings of ostrich-shell beads were wound around the hips of the deceased. A string of faience, stone and glass beads decorated the neck. A silver ring was found on the middle finger of the left hand. Grave T.26 was marked on the surface with a ring of stone 4 by 6 m in diameter. The surface features were in poor condition, presumably due to plundering of the grave structure underneath. The burial niche contained a male skeleton (estimated age at death 30-35 years) in constricted position, lying NW-SE with the head to the south and facing west. The upper part of the skeleton had been disturbed. Grave goods included a large decorated bowl and a small iron arrowhead.

The mound of T.28, which rose to a height of 0.80 m, had an ovaloid ring of stones elongated in an E-W direction. It measured 9.30 m N-S by 12.20 m E-W at the base. A dump to the northeast was proof of plunder, as was a depression noted in the center of the mound. This robbers' pit was also clearly distinguishable in the section through the mound [Fig. 8]. The burial niche was oriented E-W. The skeleton had been disturbed heavily by robbers. The age of the male buried in this grave was estimated at 40-45 years. Some of the grave goods survived in the fill: piece of decorated bowl,

3 Carried out by the mission's anthropologist Karol Piasecki.



*Fig. 4. Grave goods from burial T.12  
(Photo E. Gauza)*



*Fig. 5. Grave T.25 during exploration  
(Photo J. Dębowska)*



*Fig. 6. The burial chamber of T.25  
(Photo A. Longa)*



*Fig. 7. Ceramic vessels from grave T.25  
(Photo L. Gauza)*

fragments of iron arrowheads and beads of faience, glass and stone. Moreover, textile fragments from the grave can be interpreted as part of the robes or shroud of the dead.

Another ovaloid mound on an E-W axis is T.29 in the vicinity of T.28. It measured 7.20 m N-S by 10.20 m E-W at the base. Despite plundering, the mound still rose to a height of 0.50 m. The skeleton of a male aged 30-35 was found in the burial chamber in disturbed condition, and the original position could not be reconstructed [Figs 9,10]. The original grave goods were represented by only one arrowhead, one ceramic pot and beads of faience and glass. The stone ring around mound T.31, which was 0.50 m high, measured 10 m N-S by 11.50 m E-W. Clear evidence of plunder was observed in the top of the mound. A rectangular (2.40 m E-W by 2.10 m N-S) burial shaft was located in the center; it led to a rock-cut burial chamber, oriented E-W and blocked with mud bricks. The western part of this blocking had been removed by

robbers. The skeleton, presumably of a male aged 40-45 at death, was found disturbed. The shape of the burial niche indicates that it had been deposited on an E-W axis with the head to the west (the upper part of the skeleton was found in the western part of the burial chamber) [Fig. 12]. Beads of ostrich eggshells, faience and stone, and one point of iron are the only remains of the original grave goods.

#### CHILDREN'S TUMULI

Four children's graves were discovered on the site. Two of them were examined in the spring season, while the others in the winter one.

One of the children's graves (T.27) had a gravel mound with small, loose pebbles strewn all over it and surrounded with a ring of stones following an ovaloid plan, measuring 6.20 m E-W and only 5.00 m N-S. It was a chamber tomb and it had survived in generally good condition despite the bones having been disturbed by robbers. Judging by the orientation of the



Fig. 8. Grave T.28 during exploration  
(Photo A. Longa)



*Fig. 9. Grave T.29 during exploration  
(Photo A. Longa)*



*Fig. 10. Grave T.29 during exploration  
(Photo A. Longa)*

chamber, the body was probably laid out along an E-W line. The original grave goods comprised stone and faience beads, as well as beads made of ostrich eggshells, and a small plain bowl.

No mound was preserved on another child's grave, T.94. It was marked on the surface by a concentration, about 4 m in diameter, consisting of big stones and loose pebbles. An oval chamber at the bottom of a burial shaft contained a child's burial, lying oriented N-S with head to the north and facing east. No grave goods were recorded.

#### OTHER GRAVES

Four of the investigated graves contained grave goods, but curiously no skeletal remains. Tumulus T.11 had a largely destroyed gravel mound, built on an oval plan more or less 5.60 m across and 0.60 m high.



Fig. 11. *Decorated bowl from grave T.11*  
(Photo Ł. Gauza)

A vertical oval shaft led to a small niche oriented N-S. Despite sieving, no traces of bones were recovered from the fill of the shaft and burial chamber. The grave goods included a tanned animal skin of rectan-



Fig. 12. *The burial niche of T.31 with traces of ancient plundering*  
(Photo J. Dębowska)

gular shape, measuring 0.35 x 0.30 m. Four ceramic vessels were also discovered: a wheel-made red-slipped cup, wheel-made bowl with painted and stamped decoration [Fig.11], handmade cup with impressed decoration filled with white pigment, and finally a spouted vessel with painted decoration below the rim. Moreover, there were three iron arrowheads found in the grave.

Tumulus T.21 had a well-preserved stone ring surrounding a mound rising 0.10 m above the ground. The diameter of the mound was about 5 m. The burial chamber-niche contained only a few stone beads and a small bowl.

Nearby, tumulus T.22 also had a stone ring and a low mound rising no more than 0.05 m above ground level. The diameter was about 4.30 m. At the bottom of a vertical shaft there was an E-W-oriented niche. Three iron arrowheads, stone beads and a fragment of faience vessel were found in the fill of this burial chamber.

T.23 also had an oval mound strewn with loose pebbles. It measured about 4.50 m across and has survived to a height of 0.40 m. The underground part of the tomb consisted of a trench at the bottom of the shaft. The fill of the chamber yielded beads of ostrich eggshells and an iron arrowhead.

## SUMMARY

The male graves investigated in the course of the two seasons are highly differentiated with regard to the superstructures. Most of the time, the graves had big well-preserved mounds. The grave goods included ceramic vessels, arms and personal adornment. Children's graves were usually deprived of grave goods or else received a single vessel. The graves with nothing but grave goods could have been cenotaphs. They were all in a single area and could have constituted a separate part of the site set aside for symbolic graves.

The pottery discovered in the graves represents four types: large jars, open bowls, cups and small jars. Apart from three examples of wheel-made pots, all the vessels were hand-made. The surface of the pots is predominantly black or pink and most vessels were decorated. There is a larger group of pottery, mostly bowls, with incised decoration filled in with white pigment.

The eastern group of tumuli usually contained deep bowls, cups and bottles with both broad and narrow mouths. The handmade bowls were usually decorated in the upper part of the vessel under the rim with registers of ornament – impressed, relief and also plastically decorated. One small wheel-made bowl has stamped and painted decoration in the upper part of the vessel. Recovered specimens of handmade bottles usually had stamped or incised register decoration. The ornament is found usually on the base of the vessel neck and on the shoulders. In this part of the site pottery represents the same technological type and is quite uniform in character. This type of pot corresponds to the Late Meroitic period.<sup>4</sup> The chronology is confirmed by the architecture of the superstructures and the underground parts of the tombs.<sup>5</sup>

An interesting collection is composed of iron weapons, found exclusively with male

4 M. El-Tayeb, E. Kołosowska, "Pottery from the Fourth Cataract region (Sudan)", *GAMAR* 2 (2003), 117-126.

5 Id., id., "Burial traditions on the right bank of the Nile in the Fourth Cataract region", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 51-74.

burials in the eastern group of graves on the cemetery. A spearhead and double-barbed arrowhead are unique, the predominant form being a single-barbed arrowhead with differently formed blades. Meriting note are two archer's rings of stone, also found in the tumuli in the eastern group.

A vast collection of beads made of various materials was collected from the site. Most beads were disc-shaped and made of ostrich eggshell. Also quite popular were cylindrical beads of faience, green and blue in color. In addition, examples of barrel-shaped beads of white and blue glass, as well as barrel-shaped and biconical of stone were found. One should also mention two rings: the copper band illustrated above and another one of silver wire.

The northern group of graves is highly different from the eastern one. Pottery found in this part of the site consists of: large and medium-sized bottles, small cups and globular pots. Interesting vessels were discovered in the context of the mound of grave T.57. They were deposited inside the

stone ring and then covered with the mound, making them contemporary with the time of construction. These vessels were made of Nile silt and rather poorly fired. Traces of awkward modeling, their forms and fragility indicate that they had no practical function. Moreover, their insignificant size and bottle-like shape could testify to their role as models of regular full-sized vessels.

Personal ornaments recovered from this part of the cemetery repeat forms and materials noted in the eastern group. Interestingly, only one grave contained arrowheads. This section of the wadi was evidently in use as a burial ground in Post Meroitic times, judging by the pottery and structural features of the tumuli.<sup>6</sup>

The presented conclusions are not to be treated as final, considering that the data comes from only two of three grave groups, which were partly examined in the course of the two field seasons. Further work on the site will surely bring new evidence to confirm and elaborate on the above.

6 Loc. cit.

## HAGAR EL-BEIDA 3 EXCAVATIONS OF A NAPATAN CEMETERY

Marek Lemiesz

The site of Hagar el-Beida 3 (HB3, N19°19'14.7" E032°45'46.4") is a small cemetery located on the flat top of an elongated jebel (approx. 330 m a.s.l.), situated some 700 m south of the central part of the Hagar el-Beida village. The cemetery consists of six medium-sized tumuli, located on a spur above a small narrow *khor* crossing the jebel.

Surveyed in 2003 during a first reconnaissance of the area,<sup>1</sup> the site was regularly excavated on March 6-20, 2005. Due to time constraints, only three of the tumuli, HB3-T1 and a double grave HB3-T2/T3 were selected for exploration. The other three located in the northwestern zone of the site remained unexplored in view of their relatively poor state of preservation.

All of the excavated graves represented a fairly homogeneous type, without any special variety in superstructure construction and with minor differences in burial pit layout. All of graves seem to have been plundered and/or disturbed, either in ancient or modern times, making it difficult

today to determine their exact original shape and details of construction.

The grave superstructures were low (about 0.60-0.70 m high), constructed of medium-sized rough blocks of local sandstone, irregularly deposited on a roughly subcircular area c. 5 m in diameter. The centers of the mounds were almost empty, partly filled with gravel or with the level inside matching ground level outside. This form of superstructure can be compared to Types II.1 and II.5 in the GAME classification and Type V described by Welsby.<sup>2</sup>

The burial pits are located more or less centrally, dug in hard, alluvial gravel of reddish color (resulting from the presence of hydrogen-oxygen compounds). They are shallow (0.30 m) and of subcircular shape (1.00-1.20 m across), partly separated by a single row of medium-size stones. Fragmented bones were registered in the fill and around the burial pits, presumably testifying to extensive looting.

The pottery material from the mounds generally did not differ from the surface

1 L. Krzyżaniak, M. Chłodnicki, M. Jórdeczka, M. Lemiesz, "Archaeological reconnaissance between Shemkhiya and Khor Umm Ghizlan (left bank of the Nile), 2003", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 42. For a map of the Polish concession, cf. *PAM XVI, Reports 2004* (2005), Fig. 1 on p. 370.

2 H. Paner, Z. Borcowski, "Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition. A summary of eight season's work at the Fourth Cataract", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 112, Figs 36.6, 37.1; D.A. Welsby, Survey above the Fourth Nile Cataract (London 2003), 122; id., "The Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project. The Sudan Archaeological Research Society's Concession", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), Fig. 2.5.

collection of 2003, which had included some black-topped vessels. Exploration of Tumulus HB3-T1 yielded one of the most interesting finds of the season, a wheel-made globular "pilgrim bottle" (HB3/T1/A) furnished with circular handles, wide rim and painted semi-centric circles on the body [Fig. 1]. A wheel-made light-red bowl HB3/T3/A was recovered from Tumulus HB3-T2.

The absolute lack of any funerary equipment other than pottery cannot be explained entirely by thorough looting. The most likely explanation is funerary ritual providing relatively poor furnishings for the dead.

The position of the shoulder and leg bones of the deceased (medium-aged female) found *in situ* in the burial pit of Tumulus HB3-T2 reflects a characteristic arrangement with the dead buried in contracted position on one of the sides, but following no defined orientation.

The cobblestone, somewhat ring-like superstructures of the kind encountered on the tumuli field of Hagar el-Beida 3 have been considered as being of Old Kush I date.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the location of the cemetery on a rocky elevation, near the wadi and not far from the Nile Valley itself, is acknowledged as common throughout the pre-Meroitic periods, that is to say in Old Kush, New Kingdom and Early Napatan times.<sup>4</sup> The two vessels seem to confirm

fully this alleged date for the burials: the bowl is most likely of the New Kingdom or Napatan period,<sup>5</sup> nevertheless the bottle has been recognized as New Kingdom ware of pure Egyptian or Late Mycenaean (Cypriot-Levantine?) provenance. An almost identical vessel was found at Abu Haraz<sup>6</sup> and at Tombos.<sup>7</sup>

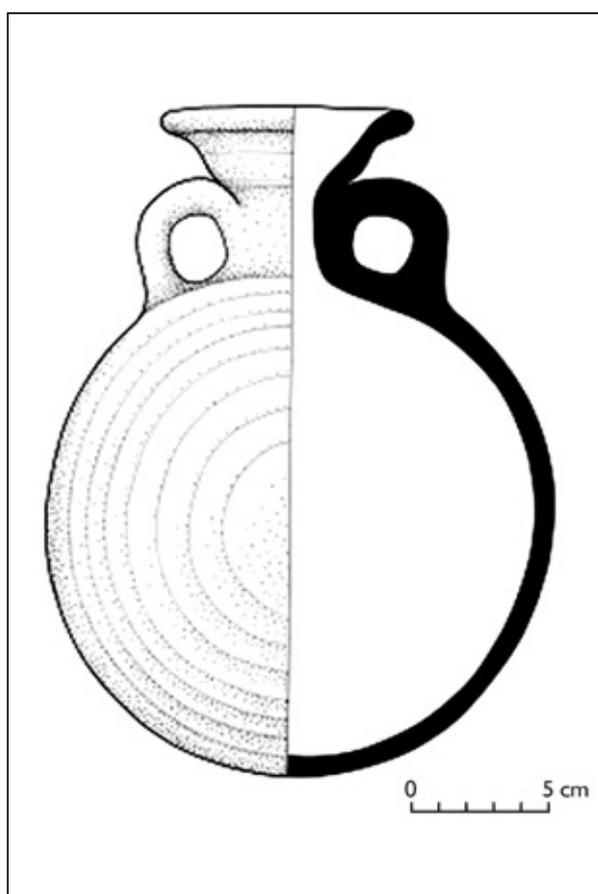


Fig. 1. Wheel-made pilgrim bottle from HB3/T1 (Drawing and photo M. Lemiesz)

3 See note 2 above.

4 M. El-Tayeb, E. Kotosowska, "Burial traditions on the right bank of the Nile in the Fourth Cataract region", *GAMAR* 4 (2005), 53.

5 For parallel forms, cf. B.B. Williams, *Excavations Between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier, Part 7: Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and Napatan Remains at Qustul: Cemeteries W and V*, *Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition 7* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1990), 71, Fig. 22.b, Pls 5.d, 6.b.

6 Paner, Borcowski, *op. cit.*, 96, Fig.13: C<sup>14</sup> analysis yielded a date corresponding to 1060-890 BC.

7 S. Tyson Smith, "University of California Santa Barbara. Department of Anthropology. Excavations at Tombos", [www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/stsmith/research/artifacts\\_pottery.html](http://www.anth.ucsb.edu/faculty/stsmith/research/artifacts_pottery.html)

# PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION OF A KERMA-HORIZON CEMETERY AT HAGAR EL-BEIDA 11

Michał Sip

Site 11 at Hagar el-Beida was discovered in January 2005 during a survey of the PCMA concession on the Fourth Cataract (for the survey results, see above, M. Chłodnicki et al. in this volume). The site (N 19°19'06.5"; E 32°45'13.6") is situated at the top of a hill, on the edge of an old flood-terrace of the Nile. It occupies an area of more than 50 ares. The surface is covered by gravel and scree, and interestingly, the graves did not extend beyond the hill top. The surface

collection comprised sherds of Neolithic and Kerma-horizon date.

The first season of excavations<sup>1</sup> in November-December 2005 changed the original estimate of 50 graves to near 170. Testing in a trench measuring 10 by 10 m in the southwestern part of the cemetery revealed the outlines of four tumuli, namely T37, T38, T39, T40, to which two more (T167 and T168) were added once regular excavations began [*Fig. 1*].

## DESCRIPTION OF THE TUMULI

All of the tumuli except T40 turned out to be plundered. T167 was hidden mostly under the trench wall and was not investigated this year.

Tumulus 37 (Dia. 2.14 m; D. of shaft 0.55 m) consisted of a stone circle without mound on the surface. Loose stones spread east of the circle presumably came from the destroyed blockage of the grave pit. A layer of rock rubble filled the tomb shaft starting at a depth of 0.25 m below surface level; it was missing from the southern part of the shaft, presumably dug up when the grave was plundered. At the level of the burial, the shaft narrowed down forming a kind of ledge on the southwestern side. An incomplete human skeleton, namely the

bones of the pelvis and lower limbs in anatomical position, was recorded at a depth of 0.52 m. The original position of the skeleton was contracted on the right side. The body had been wrapped in a kind of leather shroud dyed with ochre; this had been preserved fragmentarily. The fill contained fragments of the skeleton, pieces of the leather shroud and 148 potsherds.

The stone circle of Tumulus 38 (Dia. 2.42 m; D. 0.71 m) was situated directly to the southeast of T37. The grave had been plundered, but the stone blockage was still mostly in place. A small ledge hewn in bedrock was noted on the northeastern side. The burial was accompanied by a complete vessel and two beads, one a barrel-shaped

1 The investigations were supervised by Mr. Michał Sip from the Patrimonium Foundation in Poznań.

bead of bone and the other made of green glass. The fill also produced pieces of leather dyed with ocher.

Tumulus 39 (Dia. 1.68 m; D. 0.68 m) was very much like the preceding two tombs with the stone circle still well preserved on the south and east, a stone blockage at 0.46 m depth and a rock ledge

on the eastern side of the shaft. The skeleton was only partly preserved, but the long bones of the lower limbs were in anatomical position.

The only one not to be plundered was Tumulus 40 (Dia. 2.80 m; D. 0.94 m). The stone-and-gravel mound was 0.40 m high. Blockage of big rock fragments was

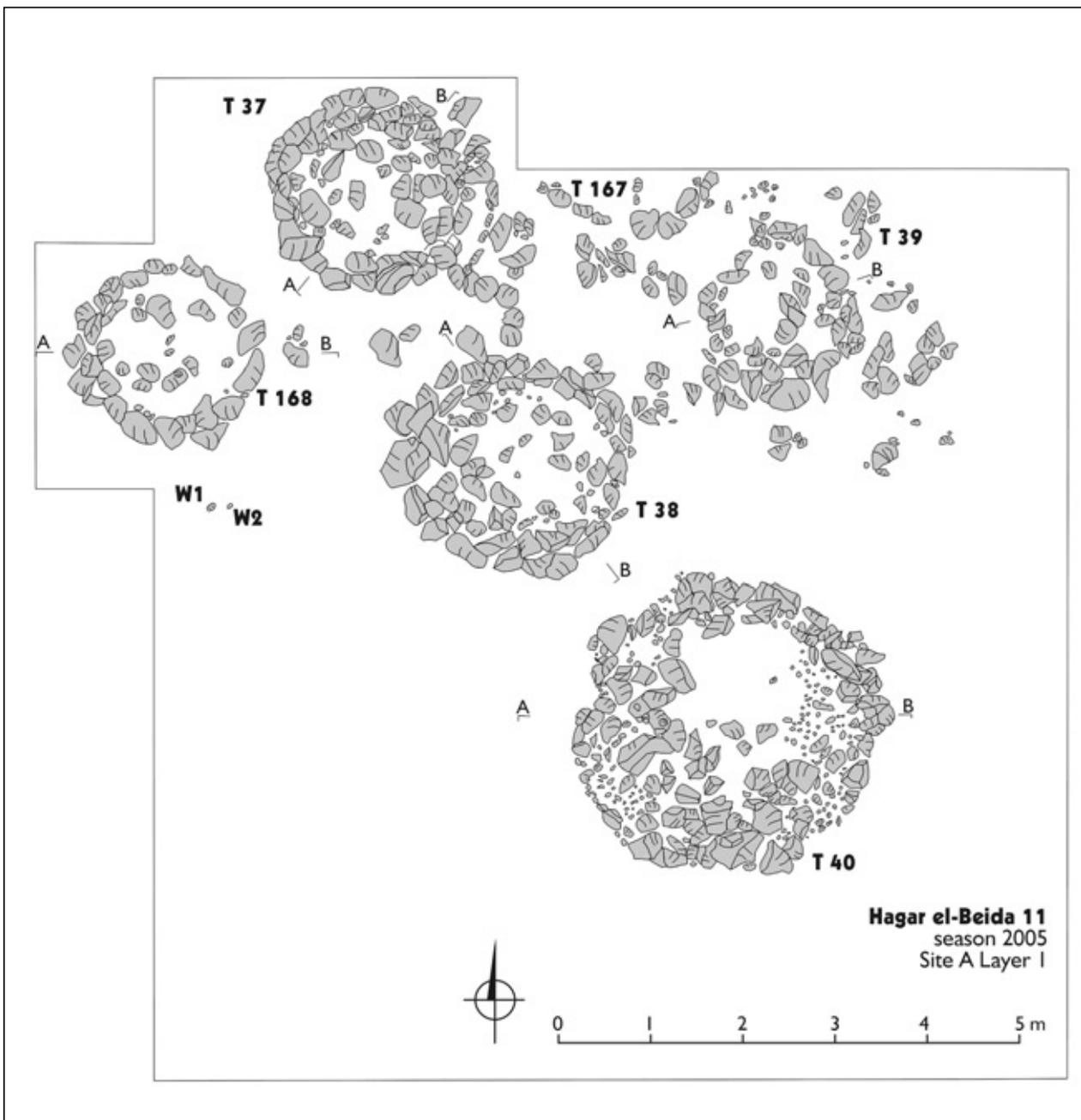
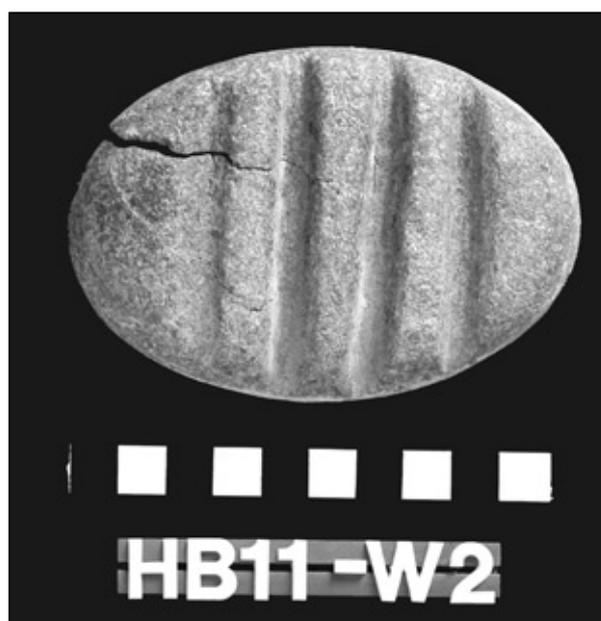


Fig. 1. Plan of the tumuli excavated in 2005  
(Drawing M. Sip)



*Fig. 2. The burial in Tumulus 40  
(Photo M. Sip)*



*Fig. 3. Two oval stone pieces with grooves from the neighborhood of T168  
(Photo M. Sip)*

recorded only in the northern part of the structure, 0.20 m below ground surface. A small red bowl with polished surface stood by the head of the skeleton which lay in a contracted position on its right side in a shallow pit (1.42 by 0.85 m, max. 0.55 m deep) excavated in bedrock. The head pointed northeast and faced north; the hands were folded together under the right cheek [*Fig. 2*]. Two gold earrings, made of circular wire, were found with the burial.

A single circle of stones marked the position of Tumulus 168 (Dia. 2.65 m; D. 0.70 m). Large rock fragments forming the covering of the grave pit were registered at a depth of 0.34 m. A small rock-cut ledge appeared in the southwestern part. The burial had been plundered; human bones,

dyed leather pieces and a pot, as well as broken potsherds were discovered in the fill. The pottery from the graves is typically red, often with black-topped rim, the surface either smooth or polished. Ornaments include engraved lines (horizontal, diagonal, hatched) and characteristic punctured dots. It is characteristic of Kerma-Horizon wares (although the surface collection contained some Neolithic fragments as well).

Surface finds from the neighborhood of T168 included two oval, flattened objects of hard stone (10 by 7.5 cm; 2.5-3 cm thick) bearing curious decoration in the form of transverse grooves, four in one case and two in the other [*Fig. 3*]. The function of these two objects remains a mystery.