

# Marek Lemiesz

---

## Hagar El-Beida 3: Excavations of a Napaton Cemetery

---

Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 17, 385-386

---

2007

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## 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 *kbhor* 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>

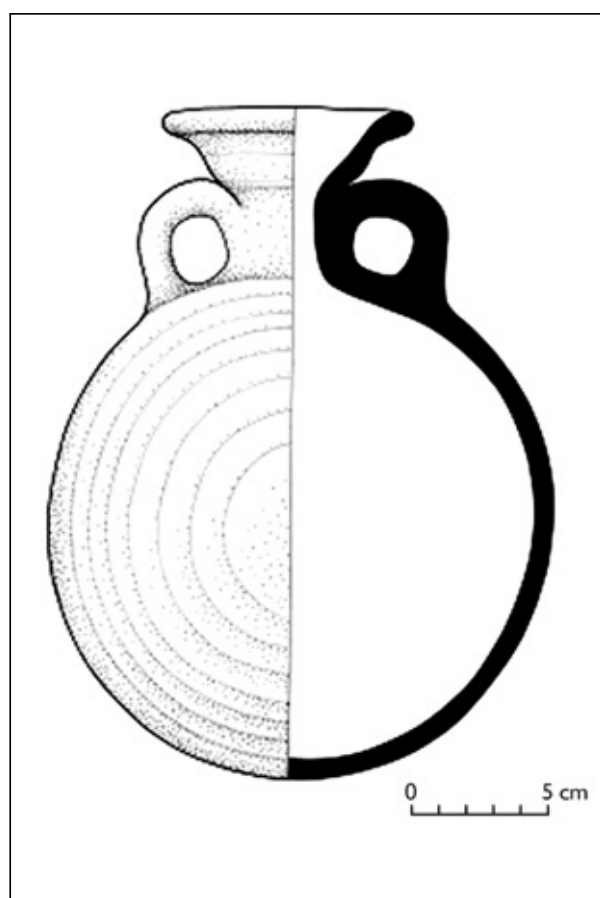


Fig. 1. Wheel-made pilgrim bottle from HB3/T1 (Drawing and photo M. Lemiesz)

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)