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## Tell El-Retaba - Season 2010 : Pottery Report

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Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 22, 96-103

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2013

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# TELL EL-RETABA, SEASON 2010: POTTERY REPORT

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**Abstract:** The pottery material from excavations at Tell el-Retaba in the 2010 season was dated to the early Eighteenth Dynasty (reign of Thutmose III), early Nineteenth Dynasty, Third Intermediate Period, and Late Period. Household vessels for domestic use were chiefly represented in all the identified periods. Among these, serving bowls and cups, as well as storage vessels were the most common. The Third Intermediate Period layers also yielded many cooking jars and bread molds.

**Keywords:** Tell el-Retaba, New Kingdom, Third Intermediate Period, Late Period, pottery

The pottery material from excavations at the site of Tell el-Retaba in the 2010 season comprised 4016 diagnostic fragments of pottery from 116 stratigraphic units. The vessels represented different phases in the

occupation of the site, dating from the early Eighteenth Dynasty, early Nineteenth Dynasty, Third Intermediate Period and a transition period between the Third Intermediate and Late Periods.

## POTTERY FROM THE EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY

Pottery from the early Eighteenth Dynasty (147 diagnostic fragments) came from area 3 (Wodzińska 2011: 1016–1019). The early New Kingdom assemblage contained many red-slipped bowls, some with black-painted rims [*Fig. 1*]. Bowls of this type were typical of the early New Kingdom, especially the reign of Thutmose III (Bourriau, Eriksson 1997: 112, 116, *Fig. 4:11–12* and *Fig. 8:6*; see also Aston 2007a: especially 218–219).

A number of carinated bowls with low ring bases, decorated with black painted

strokes on top of the rims, came from the same context (see *Fig. 1*, top, the largest bowl; see also *Fig. 1:1*, bowl with eroded surface, most likely with black painted decoration on its rim). Petrie found two bowls of this type in Saft, among pottery vessels which he dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty (Petrie, Duncan 1906: Pl. XXXIXc, Nos 47, 49). Two bases of wine amphorae made of Marl D fabric were also found in stratigraphic units dated to the early Eighteenth Dynasty [*Fig. 1:2–3*].

Both had a cream slip coating the outside surface.

Overall, the pottery assemblage from the reign of Thutmosis III is plainly

domestic in character. It is characterized by the presence of common table ware and a few storage containers, but absolutely no luxury items.

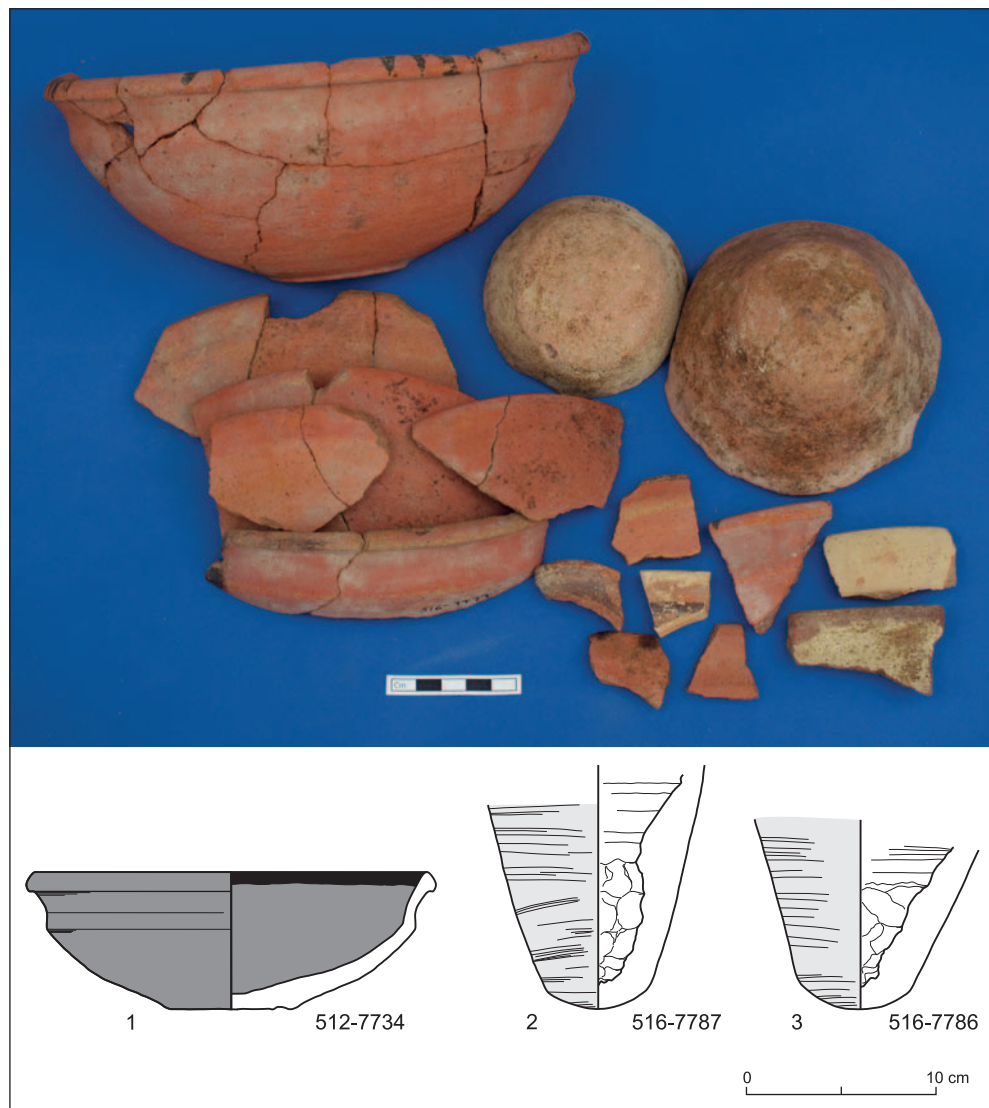


Fig. 1. New Kingdom (early Eighteenth Dynasty) ceramics: top, selection of diagnostic sherds; bottom, selected examples: 1 – carinated bowl with black-painted rim; 2, 3 – amphora bases (Photo A. Wodzińska; drawing S. Gromadzka, E. Klimaszewska-Drabot)

## POTTERY FROM THE EARLY NINETEENTH DYNASTY

Stratigraphic units dating from early Nineteenth Dynasty layers, found above the New Kingdom deposits, yielded 369 diagnostic ceramic pieces originating from a structure made up of two long rooms. The excavators have interpreted the feature as a possible army barracks and part workshop (see Rzepka *et alii* 2013, in this volume).

The ceramic material is characterized by an abundance of red-slipped bowls of various sizes [Fig. 2:2] (Aston 1998: 124, Nos 206–219; Wodzińska 2009: 268, Fig. 29:1–2). A number of handles and bases represented wine amphorae. Some coarse basins made of Nile C fabric were recorded as well [Fig. 2:3].

Jars with flaring rims [Fig. 2:1] made of Marl D can be classified as globular jars, also known from Qantir (Aston 1998: 470, especially No. 1745). The Nineteenth Dynasty layers also contained a number of objects made from reused body and rim sherds, produced from Marl D most frequently. Such objects, used as scrapers, (see Rzepka *et alii* 2013, in this volume: Fig. 9, right on page 88) were also present in Qantir (Raedler 2007).

The ceramic material from the early Nineteenth Dynasty can be referred to domestic activities, chiefly food storage and consumption, but with very little evidence of actual cooking.

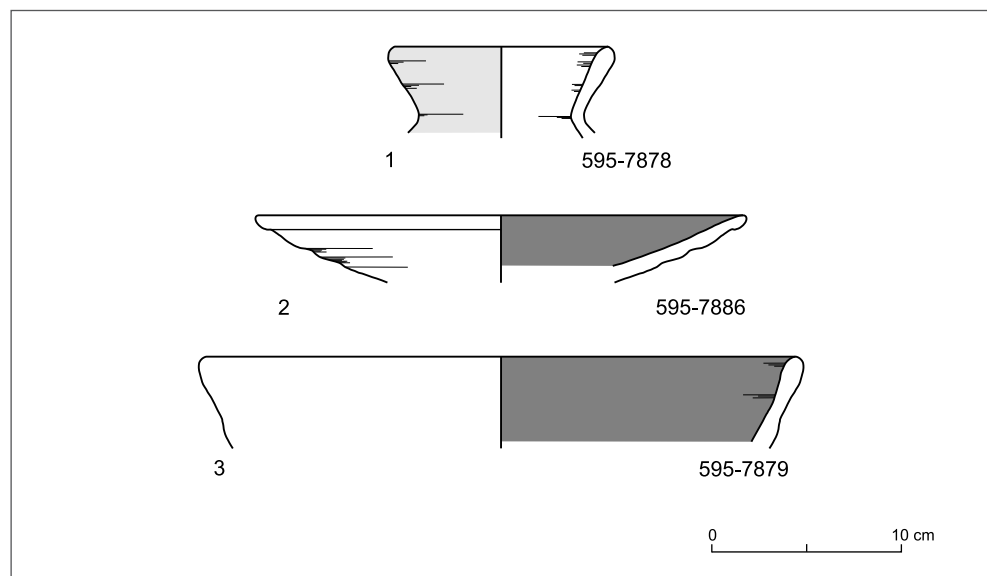


Fig. 2. Selection of ceramics from the New Kingdom (early Nineteenth Dynasty): 1 – globular jar with flaring rim; 2 – red-slipped bowl; 3 – coarse basin  
(Drawing S. Gromadzka, E. Klimaszewska-Drabot)

## POTTERY FROM THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

Stratigraphic units dated clearly to the Third Intermediate Period, especially from area 4, contained the largest quantity of ceramic vessels (2601 diagnostic fragments). There were very frequent occurrences of small conical cups, probably used for drinking (Aston 2007b: Figs 31, 41, Nos 207–214, 446–481) [Figs 3, 4:1–3]. Other vessels were also present, such as large bowls with flaring rims and cooking pots with almost cylindrical necks, but their number was clearly smaller. Jars with slightly flaring neck and round rim [Fig. 4:4] were

very common in the Third Intermediate Period assemblage (Wodzińska 2009: 271, Fig. 31:16), also the so-called pigeon pots [Fig. 4:5] (Wodzińska 2011: 1022, 1035, Fig. 11:2). A red-slipped and burnished jar made of Nile B1 fabric has proved to be unique [Fig. 4:6].

As in previous seasons, the Third Intermediate Period pottery assemblage originating from the current excavations could be associated with domestic activities, such as food preparation, storage and consumption.



*Fig. 3. Small bowls from the Third Intermediate Period  
(Photo A. Wodzińska)*

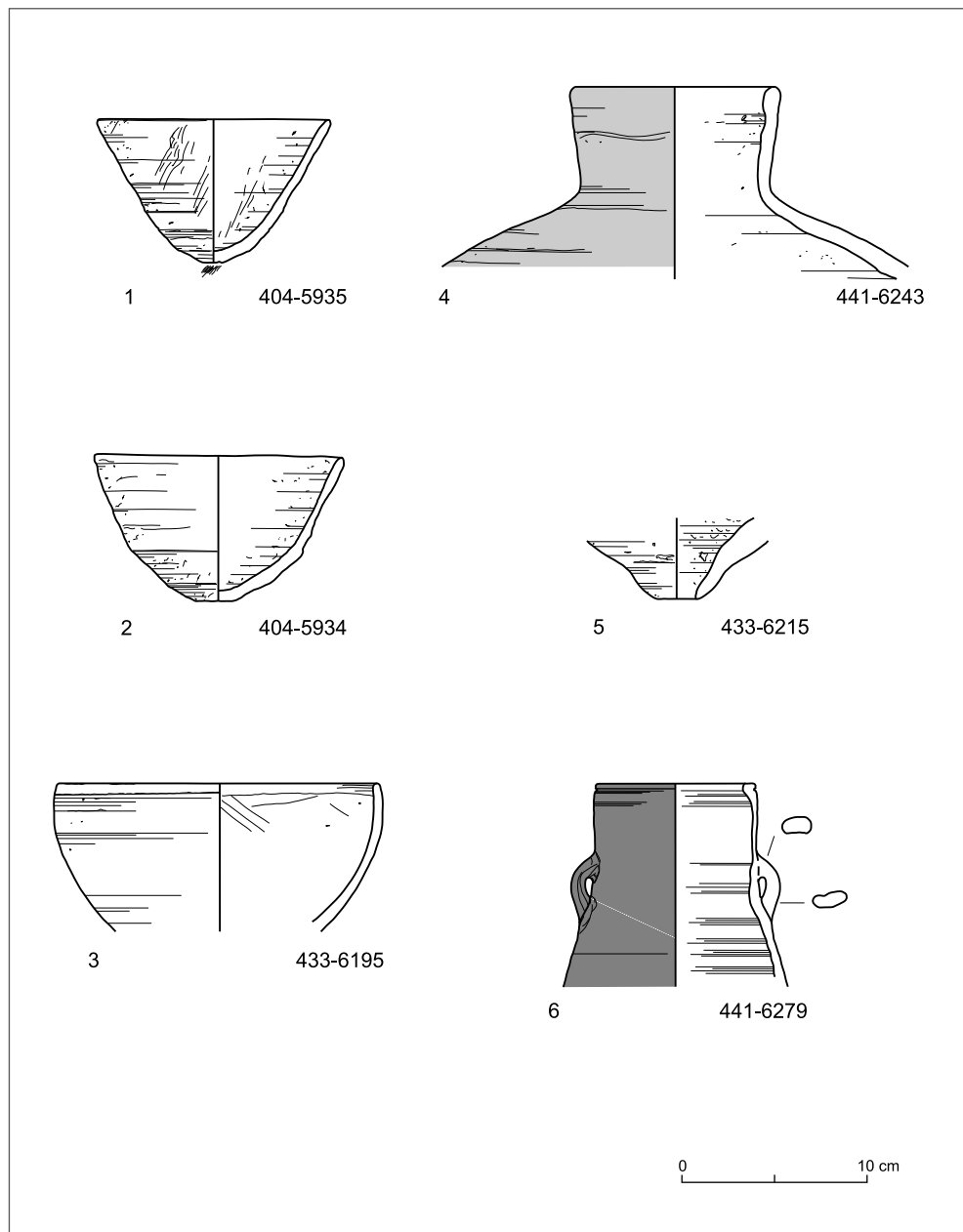


Fig. 4. Ceramics from the Third Intermediate Period: 1, 2, 3 – small conical cups; 4 – jar with flaring neck; 5 – vessel resembling a ‘pigeon pot’; 6 – red-slipped burnished jar (Drawing S. Gromadzka, E. Klimaszewska-Drabot, A. Wodzińska)

## POTTERY FROM THE THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD/LATE PERIOD

Top layers associated with the Late Period (some mixed with Third Intermediate Period material) yielded 386 diagnostic pottery fragments. The material included large storage jars, coarse basins and flat

bread trays [Fig. 5]. Basins with a ledge, that is, a narrow strip of clay, attached to the external surface just below the rim, were identified among the coarse examples of this type. Based on parallels



*Fig. 5. Selection of ceramic fragments, including bread trays, from the Late Period  
(Photo A. Wodzińska)*

with the material from the site of Buto (French 2004: 93–94, 96, Pl. 1, Type 7) and Saqqara (French, Ghaly 1991: 112, Fig. 55), they can be dated to the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.

Despite extensive damage to the Late Period structures, the contexts can be described as strictly domestic in character with some space set aside for storage facilities.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is a marked consistency in the ceramic material from this and previous seasons at Tell el-Retaba. It is a domestic assemblage on the whole, containing vessels used daily in domestic contexts. Following the present season, however, it has been observed that the pottery from the New

Kingdom, early Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Dynasties reflects virtually no cooking activities, unlike that from the Third Intermediate Period. Evidently during the New Kingdom, food must have been prepared somewhere outside the immediate area of the excavations.

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