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NAQLUN 2006: POTTERY FROM HERMITAGE 85

Magdalena Żurek

Hermitage 85, which was located already during the first season of archaeological work by a Polish team in Deir el-Naqlun in 1986, lies about 1 km west of the medieval monastery, in a shallow wadi running down to the canal by the modern village. In 2005, when illicit digging was noted in the area, a surface survey was made of the hermitage. The pottery that was collected from the surface at the time was dated to the 6th century. Excavations in the hermitage were undertaken in 2006 (see above, report by W. Godlewski in this volume). It soon became clear from an analysis of the fill, confirmed by an analysis of pottery assemblages, that the layers had been disturbed more than originally anticipated. Consequently, there is no point in discussing the assemblages room by room as very few vessels can be connected with a specific unit inside the hermitage.

Cooking ware constitutes most of the finds. The share of ceramic plate fragments is relatively low, but compensated for by the number of glass plate pieces (see above, contribution by M. Mossakowska-Gaubert in this volume). The same is true of the lamps. The percentage of amphorae is also glaringly low, no more than 20% of the collected material. Among the amphora sherds there are practically none that can be classified as Late Roman 7, which was the prevalent type in late antique and early medieval assemblages from the kom in Naqlun, as well as other Egyptian sites of

the period. Only eight vessels of this type were recorded in the material from the hermitage.

The relatively large number of inscribed fragments (10) comes as yet another surprise. The graffiti were either painted in red (1) or more often scratched on the walls or floor of the vessel. These were for the most part single letters; in one case (Nd.06.316) the name AMMWN is legible, in another (Nd.06.445) it can safely be reconstructed. It is possible that the resident of Hermitage 85 went under this name, which in any case was not uncommon at the time. Similarly inscribed vessels have been found previously in Naqlun, e.g. the ceramics from Hermitage 44, among which there is a bowl with the name of Phibamo scratched on it (dated to the second half of the 5th century, cf. Godlewski 1998: 77-86).

PLATES

Despite the relatively insignificant number of ceramic plates found in the fill of the hermitage, they are the best dating evidence for the occupation of the complex. Cooking pottery, although varied, is not an equally precise chronological indicator.

Plate Nd.05.168

Red, rather fine clay. Shallow with profiled rim.

Resembles plate Nd.97.013 found in Hermitage 44. The type is an imitation of Hayes ARS 84. Similar plates have been

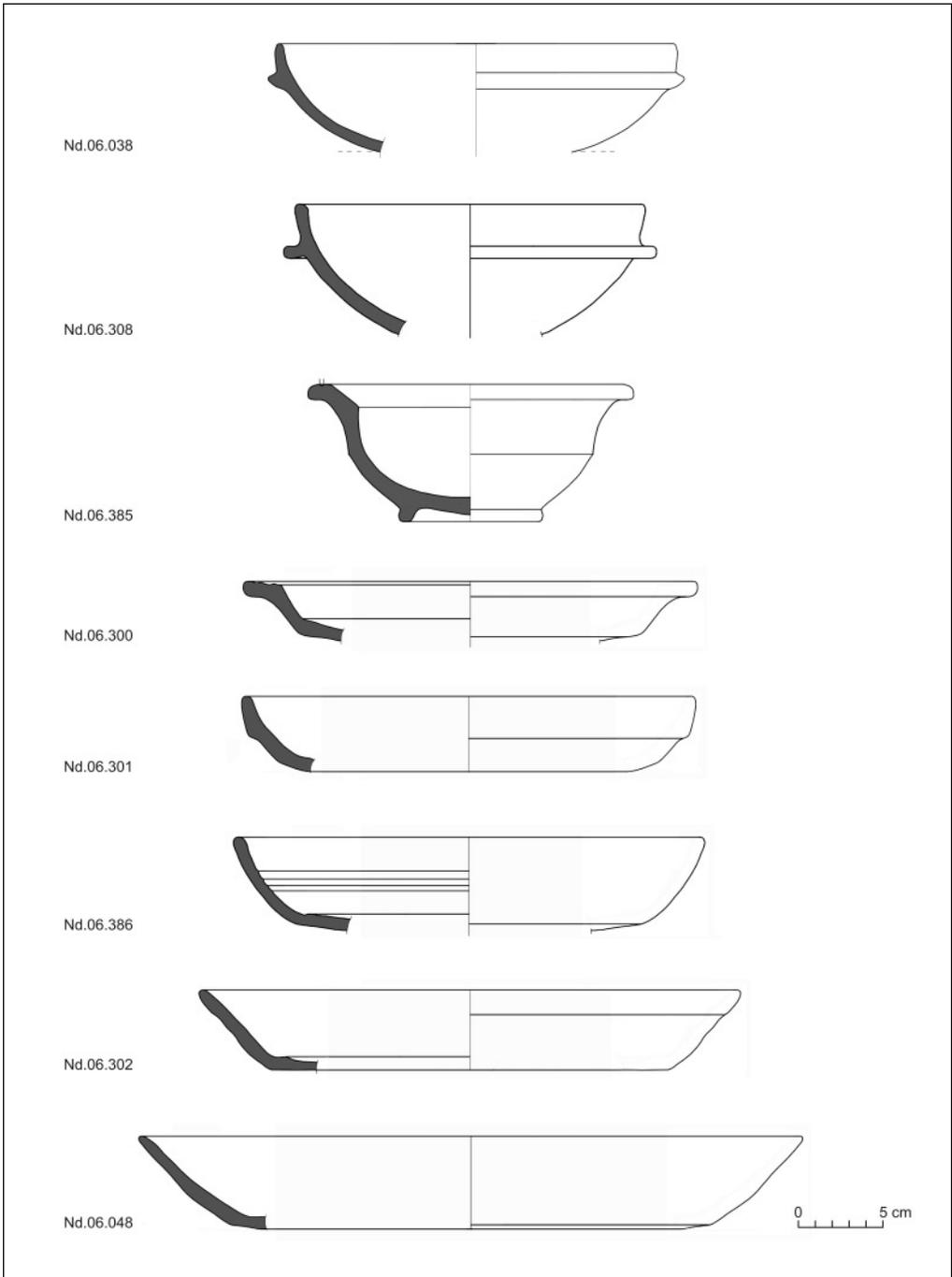


Fig. 1. Plates from Hermitage 85 in Naqlun (2006 season)
(Drawing M. Żurek)

found in Tebtynis (6th century; Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 7.g), Ashmunein (mid 5th to mid 6th century; Bailey 1990: 12), and Elephantine (from second half of 5th to beginning of 7th century; Gempeler 1992: Pl. 12).

Plate Nd.05.169

Nile silt. Quite deep, thin-walled, red-slipped with flange around rim.

Plates Nd.06.038 [*Fig. 1*], Nd.06.039, Nd.06.130, Nd.06.199 (inscribed: -NE-), Nd.06.308 [*Fig. 1*], Nd.06.479 (all from Hermitage 85), Nd.06.218 (from Hermitage 87, found on the surface) are similar in form. Flanged plates have been excavated elsewhere at Naqlun, including rooms AA.20.2 (Nd.01.049, 7th-8th century layer) and AA.30.2 (Nd.02.164, 8th/9th century layer with intrusive 6th century material). Similar plates/bowls are found on many early medieval Egyptian sites, dated generally to the 5th-6th century, occasionally until the beginning of the 7th century (5th-6th century, Bailey 1990: 16; second quarter of 5th-third quarter of 6th century, Gempeler 1992: Pl. 36).

Plate Nd.05.172

Nile silt. Quite deep. Broad outturned rim with small groove around the edge, ring base.

A few more plates of this kind were discovered in the hermitage in 2006 (Nd.06.083, Nd.06.271, Nd.06.385 [*Fig. 1*]), and one on the surface in nearby Hermitage 87 (Nd.06.216). Similar but more massive plates were also found earlier in a storage bin in Room B.1 of Hermitage 89 (Nd.89.299) and in layer 4 inside room AA.20.2, dated to a slightly later period. Plates of this kind have also been collected from the surface in Qusur Ereima in Kellia (form Kellia 58 without precise dating, Egloff 1977: Pl. 42) and Elephantine

(T.210b, Gempeler 1992: Pl. 10), where they are dated rather broadly from the third quarter of the 4th through the middle of the 6th century.

Plate Nd.06.089

Nile silt. Rather shallow with massive semi-rounded rim and carinated wall.

Similar form represented by plates Nd.06.132 and Nd.06.133, and among the earlier finds, Nd.96.248 (Hermitage 44). Sufficiently similar forms from Ashmunein are dated to the end of the 6th-7th century (Bailey 1990: 14), at Tebtynis to the 6th century (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 9.b), and at Tôd to AD 500-650 (Pierrat, Lecuyot 2004, Pl. 13.171).

Plate Nd.06.464

Red clay, rather fine. Dia. 39 cm. Massive, slightly flattened rim.

Plates Nd.06.198, Nd.06.458 (Nile silt) and Nd.06.301 (Dia. 26 cm) [*Fig. 1*] are similar in form. Another similar plate Nd.01.147 was found in room AA.20.2, in layer E dated to the second half of the 5th-beginning of 6th century.

Plate Nd.06.512

Nile silt. Shallow, featuring rather massive walls with triple semi-rounded bands.

Similar plates from Elephantine come from layers dated to the second quarter of the 5th through second quarter of the 6th century (Gempeler 1992: Pl. 2.5).

Plate Nd.06.522

Nile silt, red slipped inside. Rather shallow; flat outturned rim marked with groove.

Similar form represented by plates Nd.05.174, Nd.06.082, Nd.06.191, Nd.06.275 and Nd.06.300 [*Fig. 1*]. Plates of this kind found in Ashmunein came from layers of the 5th-6th century (Bailey 1990: Pl. 14.105).

Plate Nd.06.636

Nile silt, red slipped. Rather shallow with rounded walls and straight rim.

Fragments of at least two similar plates were discovered in Hermitage 85 (Nd.06.634 and Nd.06.478). Of similar form is plate Nd.97.018 from Hermitage 44. Plates similar in form came from the 5th-6th century layers at Ashmunein (Bailey 1990, Pl. 3.26).

CUPS AND BEAKERS

Cup Nd.05.171

Red, fine clay, slipped, with a flange below the rim. Common in Naqlun, as well as on other early medieval sites from Egypt. A few similar ones were discovered in Hermitage 85 (Nd.06.031, Nd.06.054, Nd.06.095, Nd.06.218) and in other parts of the site, in Hermitage 44 (Nd.96.088, Nd.96.102, Nd.96.191, Nd.96.222, Nd.96.380), in the bin inside Room B in Hermitage 25 (Nd.89.257) and in layer 4 of unit AA.30.2. The accompanying material sets the date for these bowls firmly in the second half of the 5th – beginning of 7th century. Similar cups with a flange below the rim, rounded walls and weak ring base, imitations of ARSW 91, are known from many sites, including Kellia (Egloff 1977: Pl. 108, deposit from AD 550-570), Elephantine (Gempeler 1992: Pl. 51, second half of 6th-8th century), Ashmunein (Bailey 1990: Pl. 11, 5th-6th century), Tebtynis (Rousset, Marchand 2000: Pl. 7.a, Aswan ware) and Tôd (Pierrat 1991: 156 and 199, 8th century; 2004: 185 and 189, c. AD 650-800).

Cup Nd.05.175

Nile silt. Rather deep with broad outturned rim, rounded wall and ring base.

Hermitage 85 has yielded many similar fragments (Nd.06.029, Nd.06.030 [Fig. 2],

Nd.06.053, Nd.06.388 [Fig. 2], Nd.06.442 and Nd.06.455). Cup Nd.06.041 is a variant of the form with a flat bottom instead of a base. Similar cups have been found in Elephantine, in contexts with uncertain dating. A resemblance in form to plate Nd.05.172 suggests a similar date from the middle of the 5th century through the middle of the 6th century.

Cup Nd.06.165

Nile silt. Rather deep, straight rim undercut and strongly carinated wall.

Similar cups come from Kellia and Elephantine, from contexts dated from the mid-6th to the mid-7th century (form T.230b, Gempeler 1992: Pl. 18.9). Similar forms came also from Ashmunein, where they have been dated to AD 550-700 (Bailey 1990: Pl. 10.75).

Cup Nd.06.482

Nile silt. Strongly carinated wall, inclined inward at the top and decorated with two grooves, plus a ring base.

Resembles cup Nd.96.230 from Hermitage 44. Similar cups come from Elephantine, from layers dated to the second half of the 6th-7th century (Gempeler 1992: Pl. 35.23).

Beaker Nd.06.307

Nile silt.

Perhaps the most popular form in Naqlun, it has a slightly everted rim, almost vertical walls and an uneven bottom. Similar beakers are numerous in sectors AA, D and E, most frequently in medieval contexts. On Late Antique sites, like the South Church in Ashmunein and on Elephantine, they occur in 5th-6th century contexts.

BOWLS

Carinated bowl Nd.06.315

Nile silt, red slip. Rather shallow with

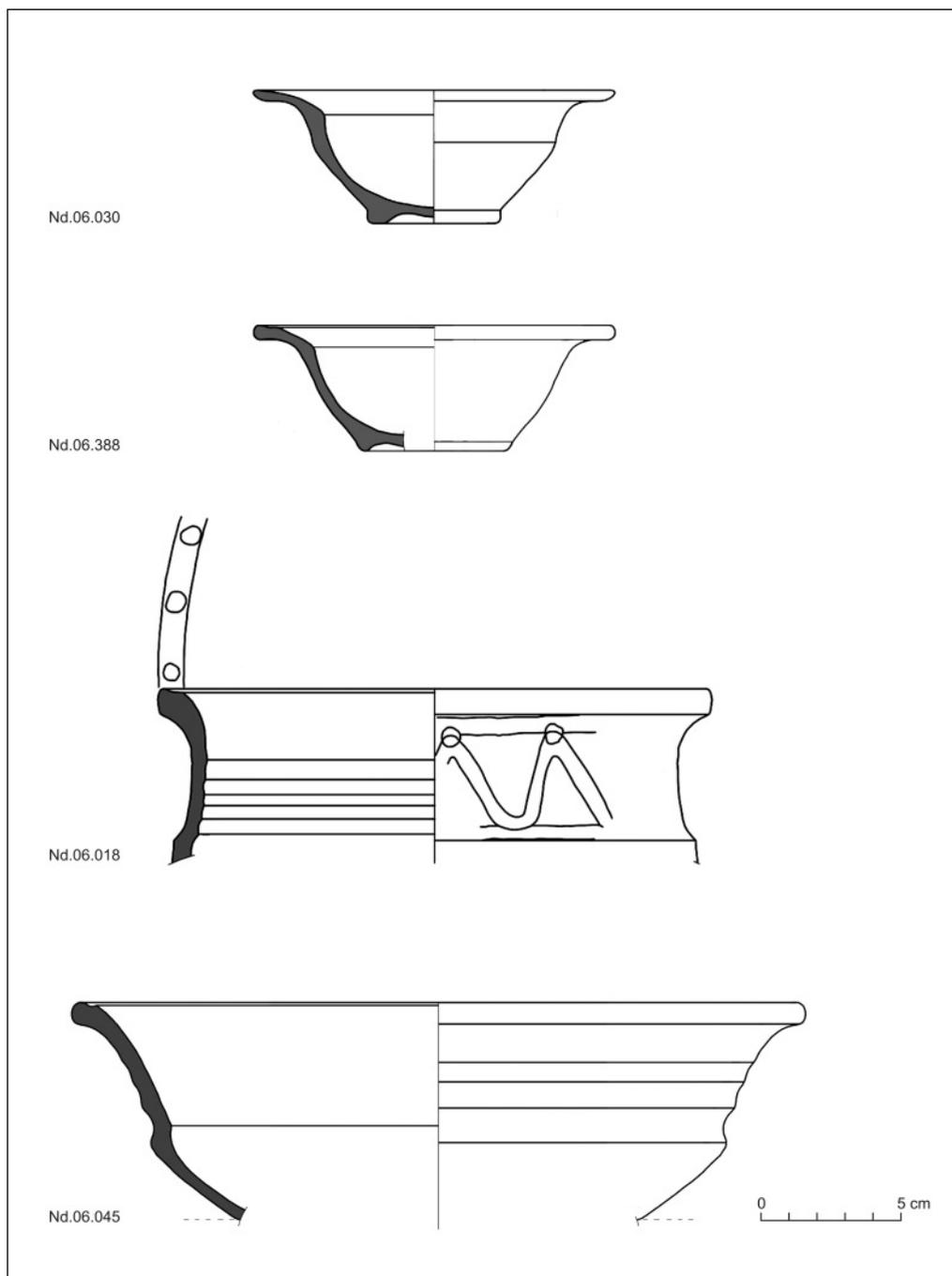


Fig. 2. *Cups, beakers and bowls from Hermitage 85 in Naqlun (2006 season)*
(Drawing M. Žurek)

massive semi-rounded rim and strongly carinated wall, the upper part of which is slightly concave and the bottom part rather flaring. Ring base. A dark zigzag decorates the upper part of the wall.

Of similar form are bowls Nd.06.018 [Fig. 2] and Nd.06.221. Such vessels have been found in 7th century contexts at Kellia, Hermopolis, Alexandria and Esna.

Bowl Nd.06.045 [Fig. 2]

Nile silt, red slipped. Form similar although less sophisticated. Straight, slightly flaring rim, carinated wall with the upper straight part slightly flaring. Ring base.

This type was quite popular in Naqlun; Hermitage 85 yielded a similar vessel Nd.06.046 and a vessel of this kind was found on the surface near Hermitage 87 (Nd.06.226).

Bowl Nd.06.391

Nile silt. Massive semi-rounded rim, slightly flaring wall and flat bottom.

The form of Nd.06.401 is similar. Similar bowls were found in Kellia, in deposits G and I, dated respectively AD 425-475 and 450-550 (Egloff 1977: vol. 2, Pls 104-105).

Bowl Nd.06.480

Nile silt, quite fine, red slipped. Strongly flaring rim with four regular grooves on the upper surface and strongly carinated wall. Similar bowls have been found at Tebtynis, in layers from the mid-7th to the beginning of the 8th century (Rousset, Marchand 2000: Pl. 28.e).

OTHER

Keg Nd.05.165

Orange clay, rather fine. Straight rim, narrow vertical neck and bulging body

composed of two separately turned hemispheres.

Similar forms, but smaller were found in Kellia, in contexts dated to AD 400-450 (Egloff 1977: vol. 2, Pl. 101).

Stand Nd.06.208

Nile silt. Massive, flat. Ring base.

A similar stand from Kellia (referred to as a lid there) comes from a deposit dated to AD 400-450 (Egloff 1977: vol. 2, Pl. 88).

AMPHORAE

Amphora Nd.06.098

Nile silt. Late Roman 7 type, extremely popular in 6th and 7th century Egypt. Only a few examples of this kind have been found in the material from Hermitage 85 (Nd. 06.137, 06.295, 06.402, 06.481, 06.610, 06.833, 06.829, unlike sectors A, B and C, as well as earlier excavated hermitages, where considerable quantities were recorded. A few intact LR 7 amphorae were discovered in Hermitage 44, and some 60 toes in the niche of chamber A in this complex, possibly used for calculations(?). LR 7 amphorae are dated to the 6th-7th century.

Amphora Nd.06.389

Rim diameter of 11 cm. Tunisian product. The fabric is a hard brick-red clay with a greenish-yellow outer coating resulting from the use of salty water in production. The coating exhibits characteristic vertical brushing. The presence of a relatively large number of body sherds testifying to a considerable diameter has confirmed the resemblance to the Peacock/Williams type 35, which is also dated to the 6th century (Peacock, Williams 1986: 158-165).¹ At least a few such amphorae were present in Hermitage 85.

1 Peacock dates these amphorae to the 4th through 6th century. They were found mainly in southern Spain and naturally in North Africa, but sporadically in Palestine and Alexandria, cf. Peacock, Williams 1986: 158-165.

COOKING POTS

Cooking pottery constitutes a big and varied group. The forms are quite differentiated and they make up a sizable percentage of the ceramics from the hermitage.

Cooking pot Nd 05.167 (+Nd.06.015)
[Fig. 3]

Nile silt. Big with flat, everted, double-grooved rim, slightly inclined neck, sloping shoulders and bulging body. The upper part of the vessel is decorated with a broad wide band on the rim and neck, and another one in the middle of the body; irregular white dots are sandwiched in between. Similar vessels have been found at Tebtynis, in a layer dated to the 6th century (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 10.g).

Cooking pot Nd.05.186

Nile silt. Tape rim, beveled inwardly, weak inclined neck, and sloping shoulders. Similar pots (one of them Nd.91.095) were discovered in Hermitages 25 and 89.

Cooking pot Nd.05.189

Nile silt. Simple flaring rim and very sloping shoulders. Similar vessels come from a 6th-century layer at Tebtynis (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 8.i).

Cooking pot Nd.06.014

Nile silt. Prominent tape rim, strongly beveled inwardly, short inclined neck, sloping shoulders and globular body with fine ribbing.

Similar vessels were discovered in Elephantine in layers of the 6th/7th century (Gempeler 1992: Pl. 99).

Cooking pot Nd.06.167

Nile silt. Beveled, inward-leaning rim and rounded walls covered with fine ribbing. Similar vessel (Nd.90.077) discovered in

room C of Hermitage 89, in a 6th-7th century context. At Kellia such pots (type 115) are dated to AD 390-750 (deposit N from structure 1, dated to AD 550-570, and deposit O from AD 390-750, Egloff 1977: Vol. 2, Pls 108 and 109), while in nearby Tebtynis it is not earlier than the 6th century (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 11.c).

Cooking pot Nd.06.179

Nile silt. Simple everted rim and sloping shoulders.

Vessels Nd.06.282, Nd.06.286 and Nd.06.339 had a similar shape, simple and uncomplicated, which remained in use for quite a long time. The bin in room B.1 of Hermitage 25 in Naqlun yielded a pot of this kind from a 7th century context. Similar vessels from Elephantine have been dated rather early to the third quarter of the 4th century (Gempeler 1992: Pl. 92.4), at Tebtynis to the middle of the 7th century (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 14.l), while at Tôd they are from AD 875-1000 (Pierrat, Lecuyot 2004: 185 and 189).

Cooking pot Nd.06.320 [Fig. 3]

Nile silt. Strongly inward sloping rim, cut flat on top, very narrow shoulders and almost vertical body walls with fine regular ribbing. A similar vessel (Nd.90.045) comes from Room C of Hermitage 89, from a 6th-7th century context. Pots of this kind have also been found at Tebtynis, in 6th century layers (Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 9.e).

Cooking pot Nd.06.639 [Fig. 3]

Nile silt. Short vertical neck with rim beveled inward at slight angle, fine ribbing on sloping shoulders, globular body and vertical handles. Broken wavy line painted in white on the shoulders, three white dots above it.

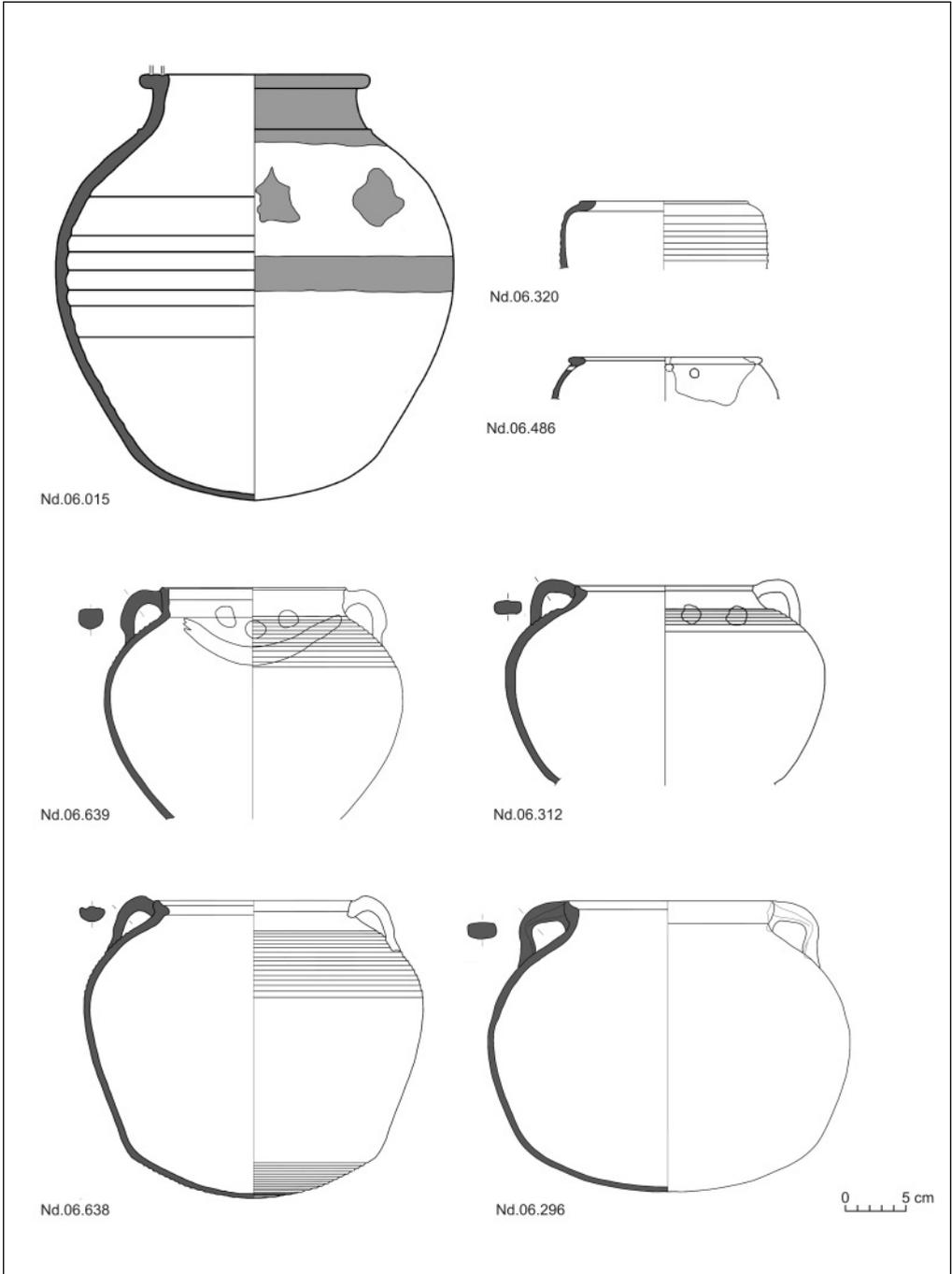


Fig. 3. Cooking pots from Hermitage 85 in Naqlun (2006 season)
(Drawing M. Żurek)

Similar vessel fragments were discovered in 2006 (Nd.06.105, Nd.06.256 and Nd.06.343); pots of this kind were recorded also in the kitchen of Hermitage 25 (Nd.91.036). Identical pots from layer 0 at Tebtynis represent the same chronological horizon (6th century, Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 9, 10.j) while similar pots from Elephantine are earlier (type K415c, 4th-early 5th century, Gempeler 1992: Pl 103.4).

Cooking pot Nd.05.192

Nile silt. Flaring rim, short neck and sloping shoulders. Similar pots found at Tebtynis in layers dated to the 6th century (Rousset, Marchand 2000: Pl. 8.e; Rousset, Marchand, Foy 2001: Pl. 10.j).

STORAGE WARE

The hermitage has yielded an interesting set of storage pots representing two variants of form. None of the pots was fully recomposable, yet the collected sherds sufficed to reconstruct massive, closed, handmade shapes. Most of the fragments came from unit 10, which has been identified as a kitchen, and in two cases the actual location of the pots inside the room could be determined.

Storage pot Nd.06.816

(Similar fragment Nd.06.818, perhaps also a surface find from the previous season Nd.05.196)

Rim dia. 58.0 cm; H. in excess of 70.0 cm
Nile silt, rather porous and coarse. Wide vertical rim with massive inside edge for supporting a lid, sloping shoulders and rather slender body. Handmade, using fragments of older big-diameter bowls to stiffen the sides. Weakly fired. Outer surface covered with a simple painted ornament in the form of a broad white

band on the rim and oblique lines on the body.

Similar forms found in Kellia were recognized there as bread ovens; they were dated to AD 400-450 (Kellia 326, from Deposit E, cf. Egloff 1977: Pl. 102).

Storage pot Nd.06.817

Nile silt, rather porous and coarse. Also handmade and almost as big as the previous pot. Beveled rim, narrow sloping shoulders and flat base. The Kellia *fours a pain* are again a good parallel (structure 1, deposits C and F, from AD 400-450 and 450-500, cf. Egloff 1977: Pls. 101 and 103).

Lid Nd.06.629

Nile silt, rather porous and coarse. The flat, handmade lid with massive handle matches the monumental storage pots for size. Its purely functional aspect and simple form preclude any discussion of parallels. Nonetheless, similar lids have been recorded at many Late Antique Egyptian sites, e.g. Tôd in layers from c. AD 200-350, Elephantine (3rd/4th century AD) and naturally Kellia, deposit dated to AD 390-420.

The pottery assemblage from the fill of Hermitage 85 leaves no doubt that the complex was occupied in the 6th century, perhaps even through the beginning of the 7th century. The presence of a relatively big quantity of Tunisian amphorae is noteworthy in view of the fact that this product is not found elsewhere in Naqlun. Adding to the significance of this observation is the surprisingly low number of sherds of the typical LR 7 which otherwise proliferated on the site. When considered in the light of the rich architectural program of the hermitage (which was furnished with two chapels, cf. Godlewski's preliminary report in this

volume, 195 ff) and its atypical although not exceptional location close to the canal, between the oasis and the monastery, it leads one to surmise about the role that this hermitage played in the life of the local monastic community.

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