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## Preliminary Report on the Excavation of a Kerma-Horizon Cemetery at Hagar El-Beida 11

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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.

# 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

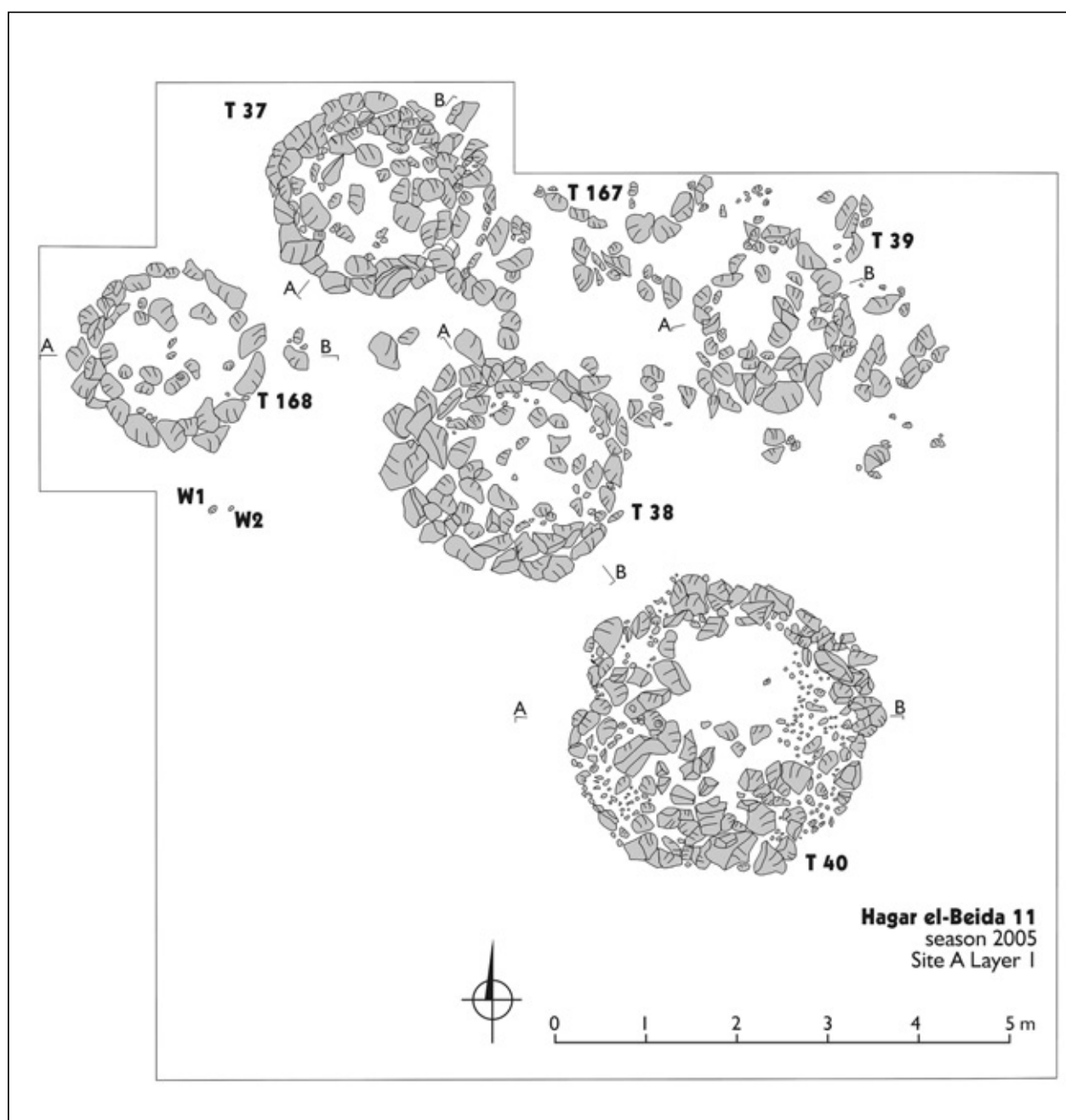
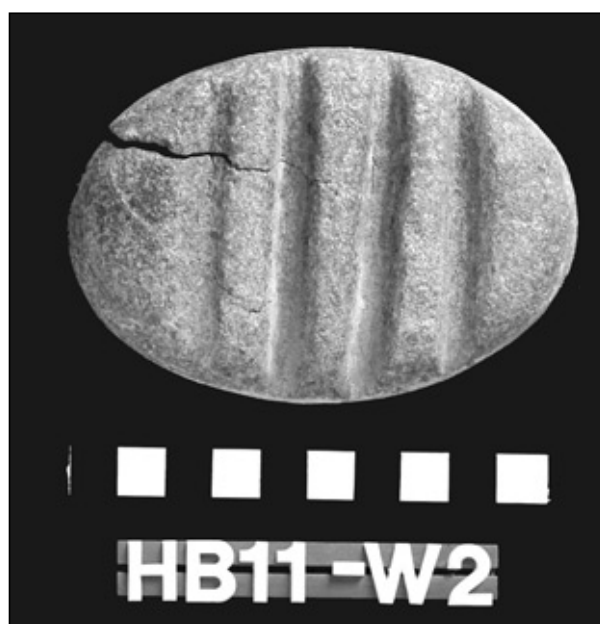


Fig. 1. Plan of the tumuli excavated in 2005  
(Drawing M. Sip)



*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.