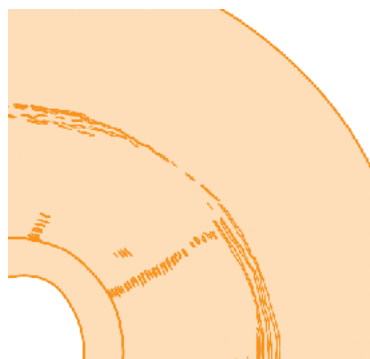


# Early Makuria Research Project

## The vessel assemblage from Tanqasi



**Abstract:** The first archaeological season of the Early Makuria Research Project at Tanqasi, which encompassed the exploration of five tombs in different parts of the extensive tumulus field (16, 23, 46, 52, and 179), yielded an assemblage of pottery vessels, as well as a metal bowl. The material dates from the late Meroitic, post-Meroitic and early Makurian periods.

**Keywords:** Tanqasi, tumuli, pottery, metal vessel, post-Meroitic, late Meroitic, early Makurian

The explored tumuli: 16, 23, 46, 52, 179, have not been abundant in vessels, possibly as a result, among others, of robbery of the tumuli in ancient times (see Wyzgól and El-Tayeb 2018, in this volume). Tumulus 23 was the best equipped tomb, its 13 registered almost completely preserved vessels including nine jars/bottles, one cup, and a metal bowl. As for the other tumuli, only a few complete pottery vessels were found: 16 – one complete cup among 15 registered pottery artifacts, 46 – one bottle and two cups among 13 registered pottery artifacts, 179 – one complete bowl among four registered pottery artifacts, and 52 – no complete vessels. The fragmented pottery assemblage included non-diagnostic fragments and sherds used as “digging” tools. The article presents some examples of vessels derived from the tumuli.

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### VESSEL REPERTOIRE AND CATALOGUE

#### CUPS [FIG. 1]

Tnq16/13  
Wheel-made cup; rim diameter 9.8 cm, height 8.8 cm. Slip on both surfaces (10R 5/8 red). Decoration below the rim is composed of a band of punctuated circles placed between two grooves.

Tnq23/21  
Wheel-made cup; rim diameter 14 cm, height 13.1 cm. Both surfaces slipped (7.5R 5/6 red) and burnished.

Tnq46/7  
Wheel-made cup; rim diameter 10.7 cm, height 11.2 cm. Both surfaces slipped (10R 4/6 red) and burnished.

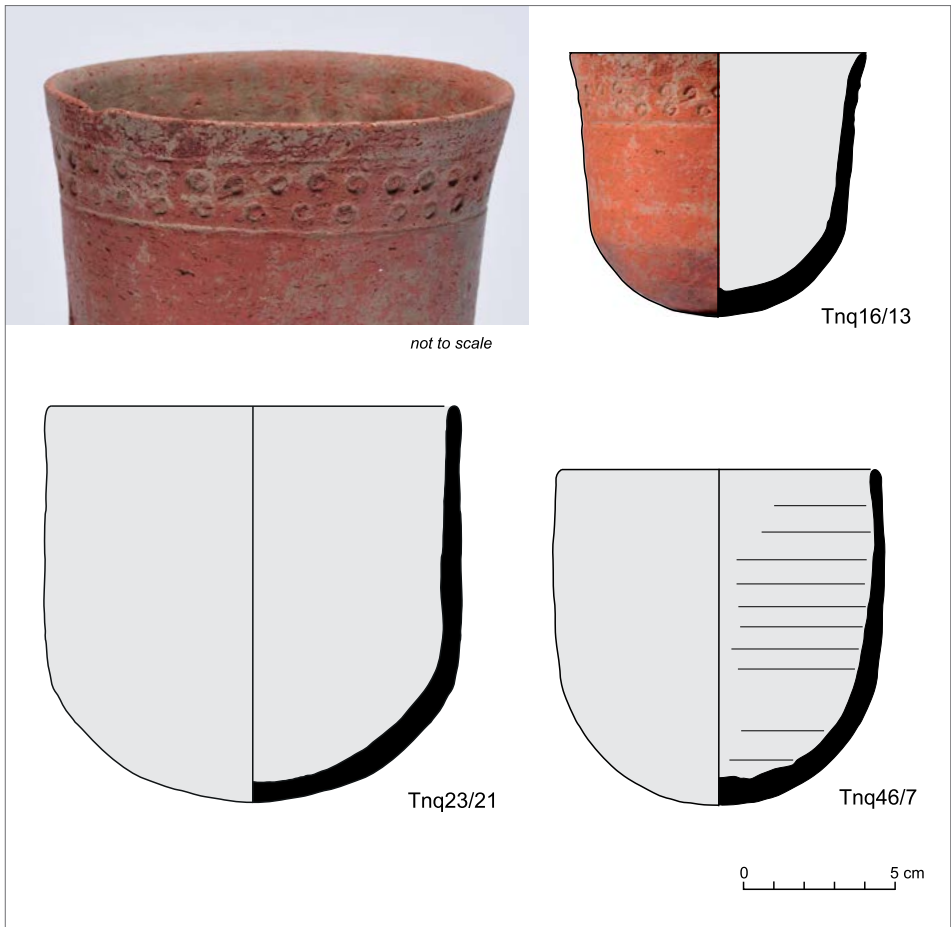


Fig. 1. Cups from different tumuli (EMRP PCMA UW/drawing J. Górecka, digitizing J. Górecka, E. Czyżewska-Zalewska, photo A. Kamrowski)

**BOWLS [FIG. 2]**

Tnq179/3

Handmade bowl; rim diameter 26.5 cm, height 14.4 cm. Both surfaces white slipped (10YR 8/2 very pale brown).

Tnq23/23

Metal (copper-based alloy) bowl; rim diameter 13.7 cm, height 6.8 cm; very thin walls (1–1.5 mm). Decorated with two grooves below the rim (for the production technology, see Zieliński 2018, in this volume).

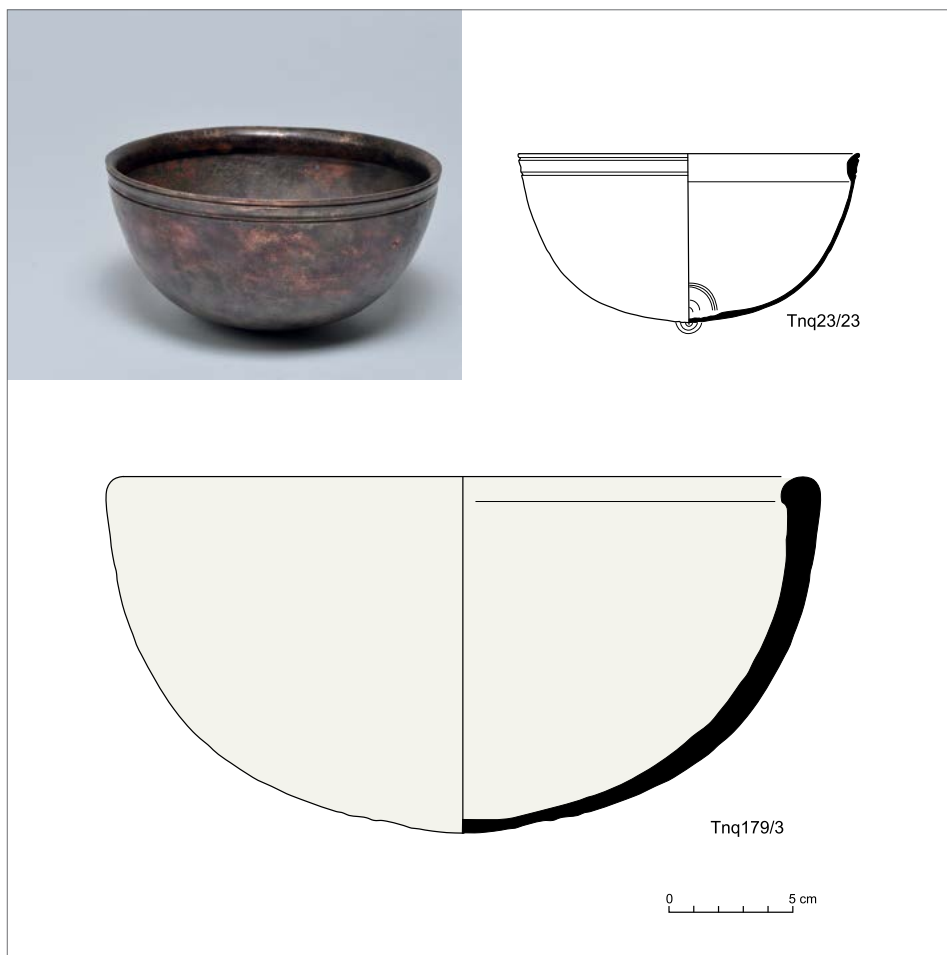


Fig. 2. Bowls from tumuli 23 and 179 (EMRP PCMA UW/drawing and digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska, photo A. Kamrowski)

## BOTTLES AND JARS

All bottles/jars are handmade and come in three sizes: small, medium and large. In this article, the differences between the sizes and the distinction between jars and bottles is based on the characteristics established by the author for the el-Zuma pottery material, although with a slight modification for the large-sized jars<sup>1</sup> (Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 730–732).

### SMALL JARS

Tnq46/12 [Fig. 3]

Small jar; rim diameter 6.4 cm, height 23 cm, maximum diameter 20 cm. External surface slipped (10R 4/6 red). Slip matt and thick, fragmentary because of rubbing of the external surface. The attached neck does not develop gradually into a globular lower body as in typical jars, but runs straight down and the angle between the belly and the neck is distinct.

Tnq23/28 [Fig. 3]

Small jar; rim diameter 7.4–7.8 cm, height 23.6 cm, maximum diameter 23.2 cm. External surface decorated. The broad neck attached to the body develops gradually into a globular lower body. Neck slipped (7.5R 4/8 red) and burnished. Additional two bands of slip and mat impression on the body make for the decoration of this vessel. Poor execution of the slip and mat impression.

### MIDDLE-SIZED BOTTLES

Tnq23/27 [Fig. 4]

Bottle; rim diameter 6 cm, height 34.8 cm, maximum diameter 31.6 cm. Neck narrow and long. Outside surface slipped and burnished. Slip clearly visible, shiny, well preserved and quite well made.

Tnq23/36 [Fig. 4]

Bottle; rim diameter 5.2 cm, height 34 cm, maximum diameter 30 cm. Neck narrow and long, slipped (10R 4/6 red) and burnished. Body covered with a mat impression. Shoulders and upper part of body decorated with two bands and four slipped rhombic patterns. Slip lustrous, burnished with precision.

### LARGE JARS AND BOTTLES

Tnq23/22 [Fig. 5]

Bottle; rim diameter 10 cm, vessel height 59 cm, maximum diameter 45 cm. Long neck. Outside surface red-slipped and burnished. On the neck, burnish was clearly executed in vertical lines, but on the globular body was poorly executed in all directions. A decoration of four sets of three small bosses was applied on the shoulders. Scratched decoration made after firing on the neck and shoulders.

Tnq23/24 [Fig. 5]

Bottle; rim diameter 7.8 cm, height 54 cm, maximum diameter 42 cm. The neck is long, slender and was only burnished

1 Mahmoud El-Tayeb proposed to classify the bottles as small and middle-sized, whereas “jars” came in three size groups, including small, medium and large. However, the structure of the narrow rim and the slender and tall neck in some large-sized vessels are typical of bottles, while some “jars” have a broad rim and a short and broad neck as well (Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 730; El-Tayeb 2013: 89, 91).

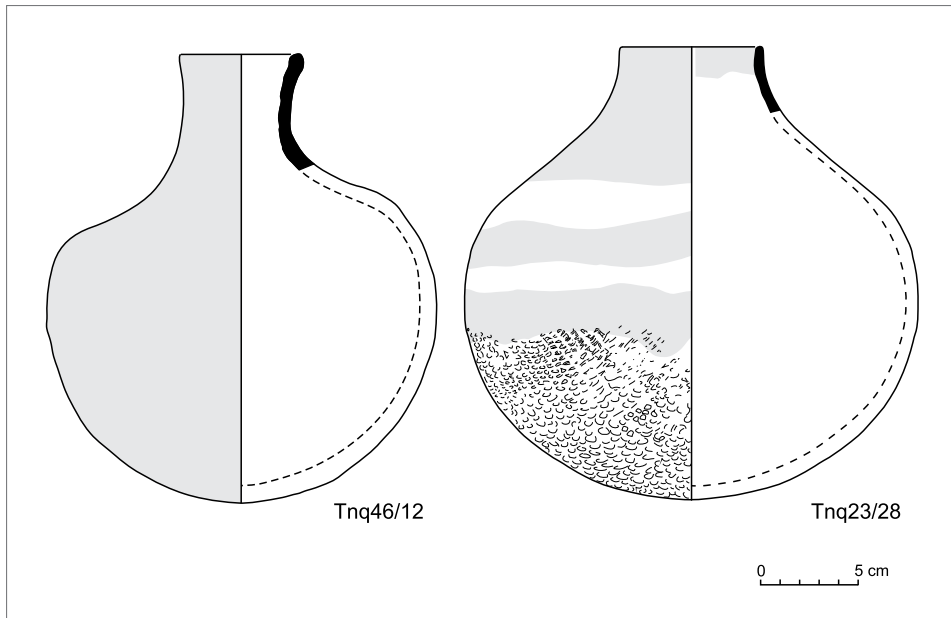


Fig. 3. Small-sized jars with slip and slipped decoration, from tumuli 23 and 46 (EMRP PCMA UW/ drawing J. Górecka, digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska)

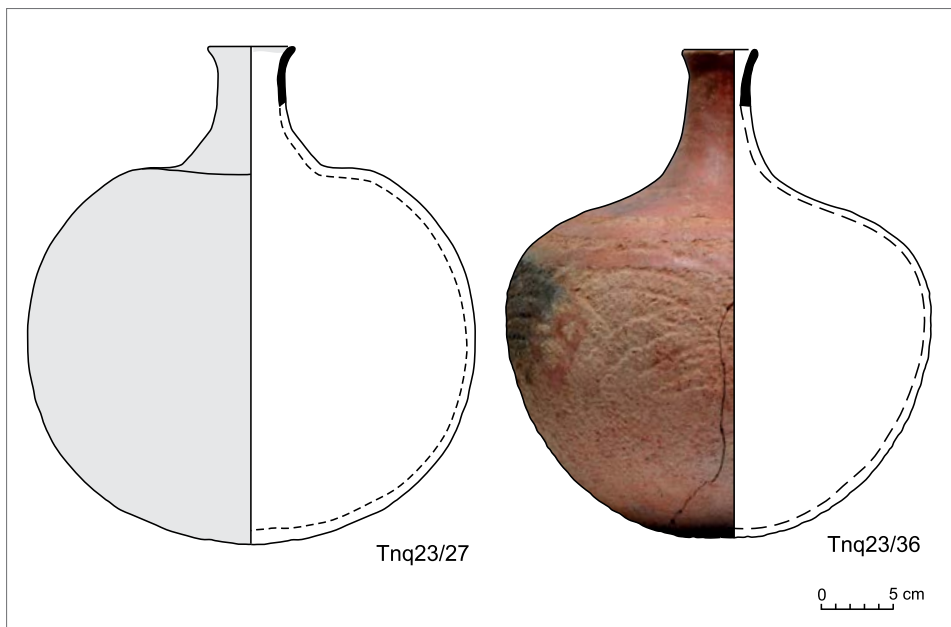


Fig. 4. Middle-sized bottles with slip and slipped decoration, from tumulus 23 (EMRP PCMA UW/ drawing J. Górecka, digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska, photo A. Kamrowski)

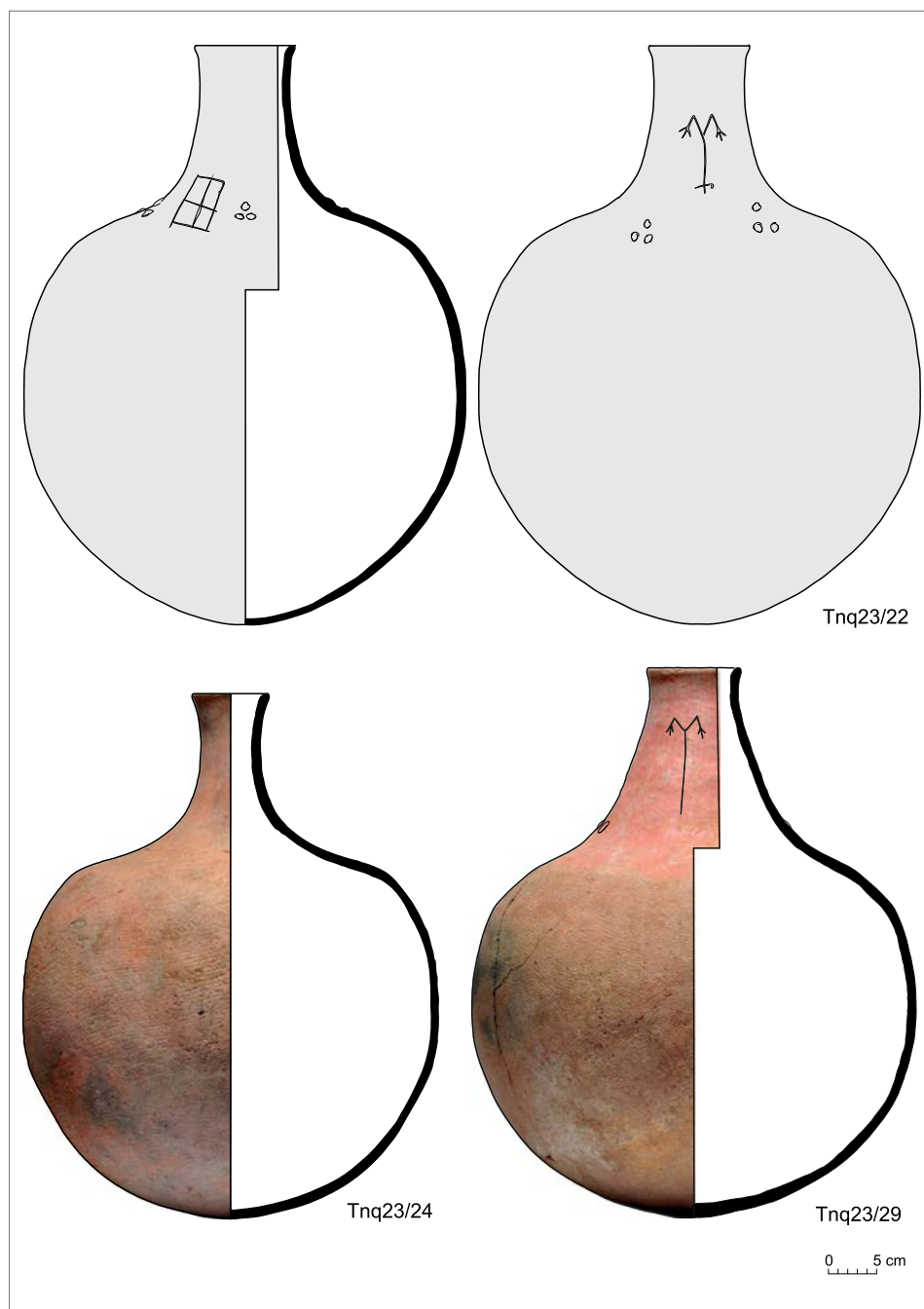


Fig. 5. Large-sized bottles and jar: Tnq23/22 – slipped bottle with bosses and scratched decoration; Tnq23/24 – bottle with mat impression on the body; Tnq23/29 – jar slipped in upper part and mat-impression decoration on the body, bosses and scratched pattern (EMRP PCMA UW/ drawing J. Górecka, digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska, photos A. Kamrowski)

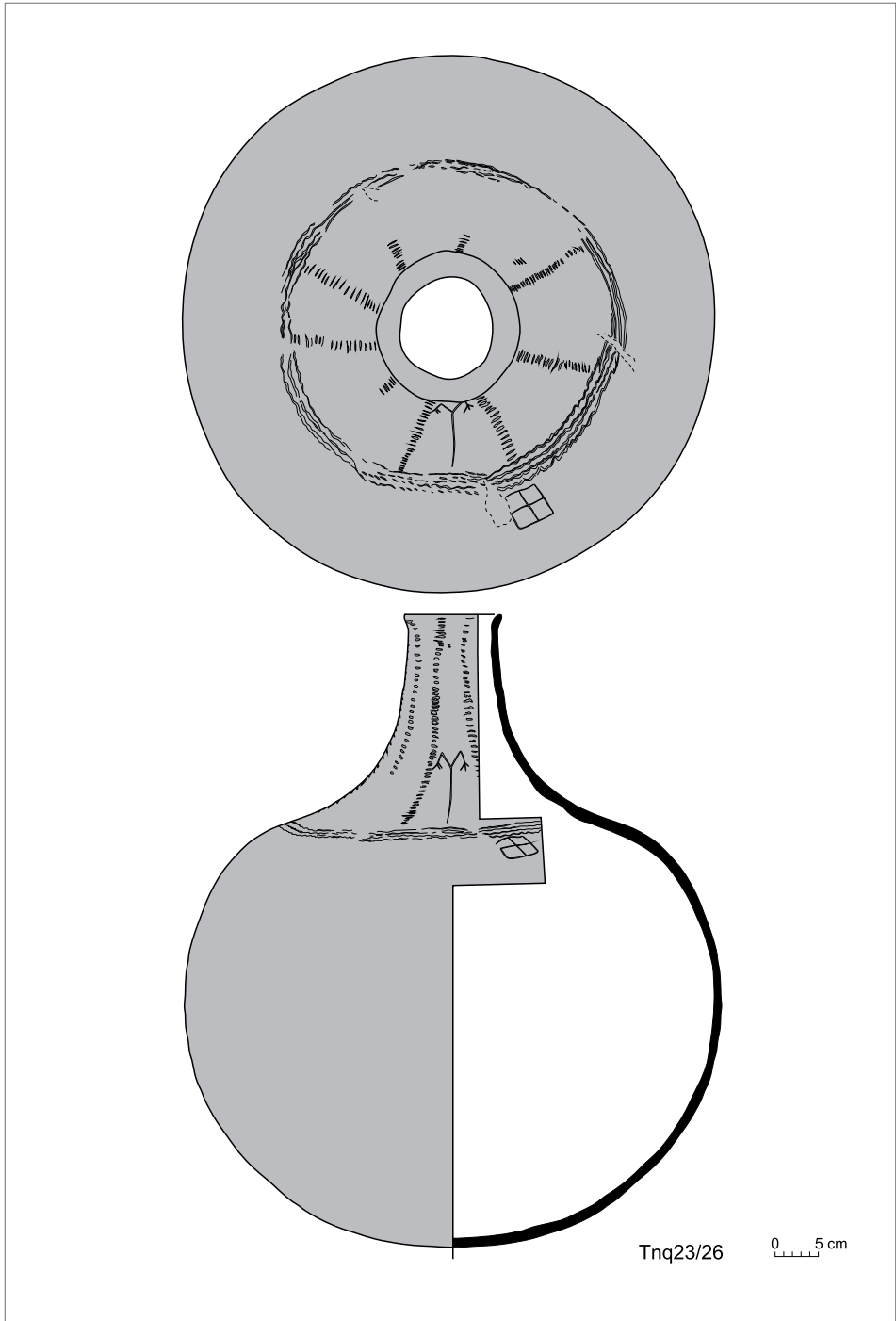


Fig. 6. Large-sized black-fired bottle from tumulus 23 (EMRP PCMA UW/drawing J. Górecka, digitizing E. Czyżewska-Zalewska)

(without slip). The globular body is covered with a delicate mat impression.

#### Tnq23/29 [Fig. 5]

Jar; rim diameter 9.8 cm, height 56.5 cm, maximum diameter 47 cm. Broad neck, gradually develops into the globular body, red slipped and burnished. Mat impression covers the whole belly. A decoration of four sets of two bosses each was applied on the shoulders. Scratched decoration made after firing on the neck.

#### Tnq23/26 [Fig. 6]

Largest bottle; rim diameter 11 cm, height 72 cm, maximum diameter 61 cm. Long neck. Outside surface slipped and burnished. Slip fired to black. Incised decoration on the neck and shoulders: nine vertical rows of horizontally arranged strokes on the neck, and a spirally running wavy line arranged in 3–4 rows on the shoulder. Scratched decoration made after firing on the neck and shoulders.

## DISCUSSION

### CUPS

Cups Tnq23/21 and Tnq46/7 are slipped and burnished on both surfaces. They represent Adams's groups A10 and A12 (Adams 1986: 108, 109). Cups of this type were found earlier in Tanqasi tomb T.87, dated by Włodzimierz Godlewski to AD 250–390 (late- to post-Meroitic period) (Godlewski 2008: 474; Klimaszewska-Drabot 2008: 485, Fig. 11, 488–489). Cups are known from other sites of the late-, post-Meroitic and early Makurian periods in the Dongola Reach. Cups at el-Kassinger have been dated to AD 330–540 (El-Tayeb and Kolosowska 2007: 39, Fig. 11; Kolosowska and El-Tayeb 2007: 16–17). Cups found at Safi Island cemetery 56 and at el-Haraz are dated to the post-Meroitic period (Żurawski 2007: 193, 195, Pl. 13; Ali Mohammed and Hussein 1999: 67–68). In the Early Makuria period, vessels from the el-Zuma site, from tumuli types II and III, were dated to AD 450–550 (Early Makuria phase II) (El-Tayeb 2013: 61; Klimaszewska-Drabot 2010b: 480, 481, Fig. 1).

The slipped cup, Tnq16/13, is a very interesting example. Stamped decorative

motifs, placed below the rim, are known from Meroitic times, as for example at Hamadab (Wolf 2002: 92, 99, Color Pl. 8). Similar cups at el-Kassinger were dated to the Transitional Period (from late Meroitic to early post-Meroitic), about AD 300–350 (El-Tayeb 2013: 87–89, Fig. 30). The closest analogy to the Tanqasi cup was found in Abu Geili, in Upper Nubia, and described by the author as an “import from the north”, and dated to the Meroitic period (Crawford and Addison 1951: 51, 63, 64, 66, Pl. XL:10, 11, 19, Pl. XLIII:2). North, at Karanóg in Lower Nubia, fragments of similar cups were found as well (Woolley and Randall-MacIver 1910: 1–6, Pl. 100:9039).

### BOWLS

Metal bowls produced with a cast and turning technique, as observed on bowl Tnq23/23 (see Zieliński 2018, in this volume) are known from the Meroitic period. In tomb 91 from Deffufa site a bronze bowl, not decorated, although produced with the same technique, was dated to the 1st century BC–2nd century AD (Bon-



net and El-Tayeb 1991: 31, 32, 34, Fig. 3:3; El-Tayeb 2013: 87–89, Fig. 30). Two bronze bowls were found at al-Ahmada, a Meroitic cemetery in the Sixth Cataract region; according to the excavators, bowls of this type were widespread over a territory from Jebel Moya in the south to Faras in the north (El-Tayeb and Gar El-Nabi 1998: 45–46, Fig. 11). In the north, in Lower Nubia, a similar bowl, probably made with the same technique, with a decoration in one groove below the rim has been found in Sedeinga and dated to the Meroitic period (Francigny and David 2013: 103, Fig. 3 [I.To87 C18], 110). Bronze bowls with grooved decoration below the rim almost identical to Tnq23/23 were discovered at Ballaña and dated to the 4th–6th centuries AD (Emery and Kirwan 1938: 295–296, Pl. 73:B10–30, B10–2).

Bowl Tnq179/3 is the only complete vessel from tomb 179. It is handmade, carelessly executed, covered with white slip on both surfaces. This kind of surface treatment with white slip is known from other sites, like el-Zuma, but there the bowls were wheel-made and have a different shape (Klimaszewska-Drabot and Czyżewska 2012: 369, 371, Fig. 7, Z11/34). The closest analogy is from Usli, where a hemispherical bowl of similar shape, dated to the Meroitic period, was described as a regional variation in the Fourth Cataract and Dongola Reach region. The difference is in the finishing of the rim and surface treatment. Bowl Tnq179/3 has a rounded rim, while the Usli bowl has a plain rim and both surfaces unslipped (Phillips 2003: 402, 407, Pl. 30:b). With regard to the typology established by Adams, bowl Tnq179/3 is similar in shape to a bowl of class C 15 handmade pottery of family D

dated to the Meroitic period: bowls with burnished and slipped surfaces with red, black and sometimes white slip in (Adams 1986: 47, 117, Fig. 27.15). What differentiates bowl Tnq179/93 from the Adams' category is the surface treatment: the Tanqasi bowl was not burnished, and the shape of the rim – that of Adams' was flat not rounded. Tumulus 179 has been dated by Mahmoud El-Tayeb to the late Meroitic period, roughly AD 250–350 (see Wyźgół and El-Tayeb 2018, in this volume).

### BOTTLES AND JARS

Bottles and jars of the kind presented in this article are known from other sites of the late-Meroitic to early Makurian periods (El-Tayeb 2013: 87–93). They correspond to typological groups W 16 for jars with short neck and low shoulders, W 31 for jars with extra long neck and W 36 for jars with narrow neck (Adams 1986: 170–171).

Bottles and jars, such as Tnq46/12 or Tnq23/27, slipped on the external surface, have been found earlier in Tanqasi tomb 87 and dated by Godlewski to the 3rd–4th century AD (Klimaszewska-Drabot 2010a: 221, 222, Fig. 3). Such vessels are known from other sites. Bottles/jars from Usli are dated to the post-Meroitic period (Żurawski 2002: 83–84), from el-Zuma (Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 730–732) to AD 450–550 (El-Tayeb 2013: 61–73), and from el-Detti to the same period as at el-Zuma (El-Tayeb et al. 2016: 417–419).

Bottle Tnq23/22, fully slipped on the outside, bears a decoration of four sets of three bosses each, applied on the shoulders. Similar decoration, with four pairs of applied bosses, was found on Tnq23/29. Applied bosses are present

on jars and bottles from the Meroitic to Early Makuria periods. The place of application sometimes changed, but in most cases the decoration occurs on the shoulders and neck of the vessel. Bosses were placed on plain vessels (without slip), slipped vessels (slipped on the external surface) or partly slipped vessels with mat-impressed decoration. A jar with applied decoration arranged around the lower part of the neck, dated to late/post-Meroitic period, came from Hagar el-Beida (Lemiesz 2007: 372–373). A large jar from Usli, with a band of small bosses arranged vertically on the neck, was dated to the late Meroitic/very early post-Meroitic period (Phillips 2003: 403–404, 406 and Pl. 28). In Hammur, a vessel with added decoration on the shoulders was dated to the post-Meroitic period (Phillips and El-Tayeb 2003: 461, 462 and Pl. 10). In the Early Makuria period, the variety of applied bosses diminished on pottery from el-Zuma and el-Detti. A composition of two bosses on the shoulders in two sizes, smaller and bigger, can be found on a jar from the el-Zuma assemblage (Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 730, 732, Fig. 5).

Handmade jars with a mat-impressed pattern appeared in the late Meroitic period (El-Tayeb 2010: 10–11; Phillips 2003: 403). Examples like Tnq23/24 with smoothed, sometimes burnished neck and mat-impressed pattern on the body appeared on other sites and dated from the late Meroitic to post-Meroitic period, like the examples from Usli (Phillips 2003: 403–404, 406, Pl. 23) and Hammur (Phillips and El-Tayeb 2003: 460, 461, Pl. 5). Vessels from el-Kassinger tomb HP47.3.48 (El-Tayeb and Kołosowska

2007: 48–49) are dated to AD 388 +/- 95 (Daszkiewicz and Goedicke 2007).

Vessels Tnq23/28, Tnq23/29, Tnq23/36 have a mat-impression on the body and slipped and burnished neck and shoulder. Small jar Tnq23/28 has also two slipped horizontal bands as decoration in the upper part of the vessel. Bottle Tnq23/36, like Tnq23/28, has slipped horizontal bands, but also decoration in the form of a slipped rhombic pattern executed on the body with a mat impression. Decoration with slip, sometimes red-slipped bands or slipped zigzag patterns on the shoulders and body, were characteristic in early post-Meroitic times and evolved, both in form and decoration, throughout the late post-Meroitic period (El-Tayeb 2010: 10–11). Mat-impressed decoration and slipped neck are known, for example, from the post-Meroitic period at site 3-Q33 near Timmeriya (Wolf and Nowotnick 2006: 21, 23–24, Color Pl. XVII). Vessels with slipped zigzag decoration on a mat-impressed body originated from the post-Meroitic sites of el-Sada (Osypiński 2007: 350, 353, Fig. 6.8) and Hagar el-Beida 1 (Chłodnicki and Stępnik 2013: 314–315, Fig. 6). Vessels with slipped horizontal bands on the shoulder, like jar Tnq23/28, are known from the Early Makuria period at el-Zuma, where they were dated to AD 450–550 (El-Tayeb 2013: 92 and Figs 32, 93–94). Such decoration, horizontal bands as well as zigzag patterns, can be observed also on vessels from Kadada and Sheiteb between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts, where they have been connected with the Meroitic and post-Meroitic tradition (Lenoble 1992: 83, 84, Pls I,85, II,86) Decoration of slipped ver-

tical bands on the shoulders and slipped zigzag pattern on the belly was less frequent, but was observed at other sites as said above. The decoration of slipped diamonds, as on bottle Tnq23/36, was very rare and the closest parallel is a jar from Tumulus III at el-Hobagi between the Fifth and Sixth Cataracts, dated to the 4th–5th centuries AD (Lenoble 2004; Lenoble et al. 1994: 53, 65–66, 85, Pl. 17).

A black-fired bottle represented by Tnq23/26 is the largest vessel discovered in the 2018 season. Handmade black vessels were known from the Neolithic period. Production of handmade black ware was more common in late Meroitic

to early post-Meroitic times (El-Tayeb 2010: 9–10). A similar blackened jar, with a wavy decoration in the upper part of the shoulders and incised vertical decoration on the neck, was found at site SH5 at Shemkhiya and dated to the Meroitic period (Żurawski 2008: 435–436). Black-fired pottery, but without such decoration as on Tnq23/26, are known from later periods, for example from the post-Meroitic cemetery 3-Q33 near Timmeriya (Wolf and Nowotnick 2005: 30, Color Pl. XIX), and from Early Makuria contexts at el-Detti (D2/14, not published yet) and el-Zuma (for example, tumuli T.12, T.21, see Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 726, Fig. 1).

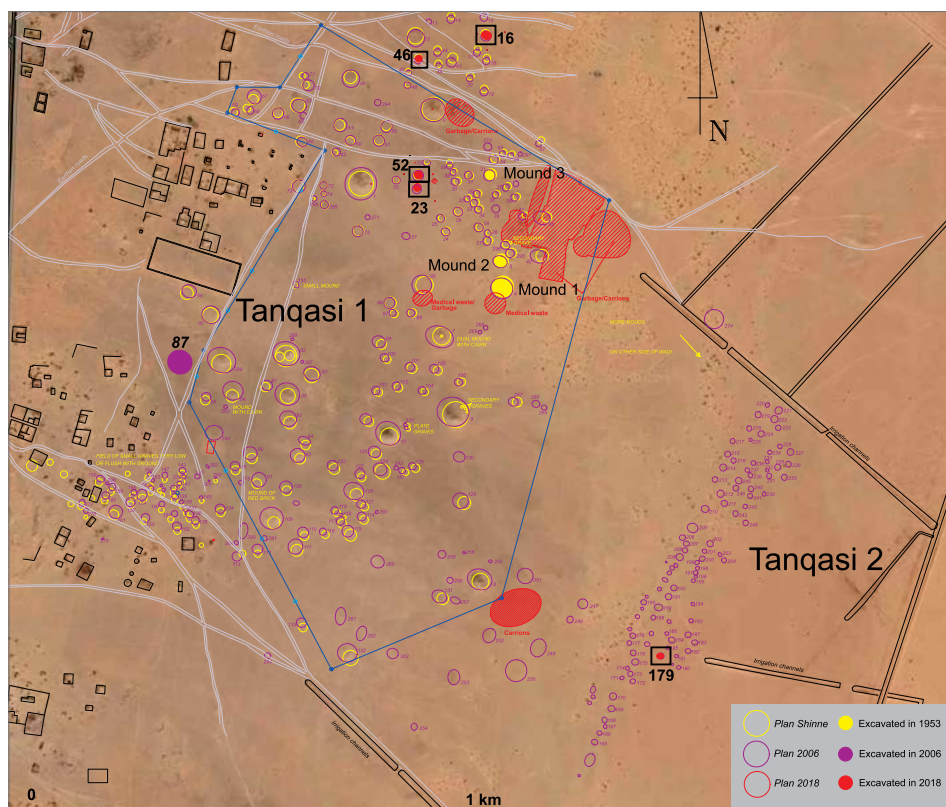


Fig. 7. Map of the Tanqasi cemetery with all the excavated tumuli (EMRP PCMA uW/plan M. Antos, amended)

Scratched decoration, executed after firing, also deserves mention here. In the presented pottery assemblage, such decoration was executed on jars Tnq23/22, Tnq23/29, Tnq23/26. All vessels come from the same tumulus. They have similar pattern of decoration [see *Figs 5, 6*], which may be interpreted as a mark of ownership. Scratched decoration occurs at other sites from the post-Meroitic to Early Makuria periods, such as el-Kassinger (El-Tayeb and Kołosowska 2007: 41–42, 48, Fig. 2f) and el-Zuma, where the decoration consists of a simple geometrical pattern or floral motifs (Czyżewska-Zalewska 2016: 738; Klimaszewska-Drabot and Czyżewska 2012: 362–363).

## SUMMARY

The Tanqasi cemetery was divided by Godlewski into two parts: Tanqasi 1 covers the central part and Tanqasi 2 its southeastern part (Godlewski 2008:

469). Shinnie explored three tumuli: T.4 (Mound I), T.5 (Mound II) and T.21 (Mound III) (Shinnie 1954), all at Godlewski's Tanqasi 1 [*Fig. 7*], and dated the pottery to the late Meroitic and post-Meroitic periods. Tumulus T.87, excavated by Godlewski, is dated to the same period. Pottery excavated in the 2018 season falls within the same timeframe. A glance at the site plan suggests that the tumuli with late- and post-Meroitic pottery are located in Tanqasi 1. Bowl Tnq179/3, lacking good parallels, originated from a tumulus in the other part of the burial ground (Tanqasi 2).

The Tanqasi cemetery contains more than 250 burials, but only nine have been excavated so far. The chronological range represented by these tumuli is broad, but the material studied is still insufficient to provide a detailed site chronology. Studies of the pottery and artifacts from forthcoming seasons should throw more light on this issue.

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