

Pottery from Tomb MMA 28 at Deir el-Bahari: preliminary remarks



Abstract: The clearance of Tomb MMA 28 at Deir el-Bahari yielded mixed pottery material dating from the Middle Kingdom to modern times. The article presents, in chronological order, some of the most characteristic vessels representing each phase (with the exception of the late Roman period, which is to be studied separately). Among them are Middle Kingdom pointed bottles and Marl C jars, New Kingdom double and triple bottles, *kernei*, beer jars and blue-painted pottery, as well as Ptolemaic painted pottery.

Keywords: Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Hatshepsut, MMA 28, pottery, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, double bottles, blue-painted pottery, cult of Hathor

The ceramic material presented in this paper comes from the clearing of Tomb MMA 28 at Deir el-Bahari, carried out during the 2021 spring season by the Polish-Egyptian Archaeological and Conservation Mission of the Temple of Hatshepsut. The tomb is situated south of the middle courtyard's Southern Retaining Wall, on a path that originally led to the ramp of the Hathor shrine situated in the Middle Courtyard of the temple. It was first carved in the Middle Kingdom,

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possibly during the reign of Mentuhotep II, and a burial took place at this time. In the Eighteenth Dynasty, the tomb was used in the cult of Hathor (probably as a dumping place for ritual objects and offerings), and it was reused as a burial place during the Twenty-first Dynasty

(P. Chudzik, personal communication, 2021). Objects of later date, from as late as the mid-20th century, were also found in number. This tomb was first recorded by Edouard Naville (1894–1895: 35–36), but had not been properly cleared before.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Tomb MMA 28 was divided into five sectors for the purpose of its cleaning: one in the dromos (D), three in the corridor (C1, C2, C3), and one in the burial chamber (BC). The pottery from the dromos is not included in the present paper as its discovery at the very end of the season prevented its full documentation. The stratigraphy was disturbed in all the sectors and the material was mixed. Vessels from completely different periods were found together, and joining sherds from the same vessel were found scattered in almost all the sectors.

The non-diagnostic fragments of pottery from the cleaning of these sectors were first separated from the diagnostic sherds (rims, bases, handles, decorated sherds), and were divided into Nile and marl fabrics. The sherds in each group were counted. Then the non-diagnostic material was packed away.

Diagnostic sherds were counted and inventoried. Each sherd was assigned a unique number made up of the excavation inventory number and a consecutive ceramic number for sherds recorded from the site (starting at 0001; e.g., 2788-0341). In some cases, very similar sherds or vessels—notably some bottles and painted sherds found in large quanti-

ties—were recorded as a group in which case they were assigned a single inventory number. The sherds were described individually, taking into consideration shape (using an onsite preliminary typology), vessel part, fabric (according to the so-called Vienna System; see Nordström and Bourriau 1993: 168–182), surface treatment, method of manufacture, decoration, and specific features, if any. Selected diagnostic sherds were drawn and/or photographed. In the figures, the sherd number is followed by measured diameter (in cm) and an estimate of the preservation of the perimeter (percentage). An arrow indicates where the diameter was measured; if not indicated, it was measured on the rim exterior.

The material can be divided into seven broad chronological periods: Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom, Third Intermediate Period, Late Period, Ptolemaic, Late Roman and modern times. The presentation follows a chronological order, discussing the different types of vessels and giving parallels from other sites in Egypt under each chronological heading. The Late Roman pottery, which is to be studied separately by Aleksandra Pawlikowska-Gwiazda, has been excluded from this paper.

MIDDLE KINGDOM

The main category of vessels securely dated to the Middle Kingdom, more precisely to the Eleventh and early Twelfth Dynasty, is represented by small coarse bottles with pointed bases [Fig. 1]. None of the vessels from Tomb MMA 28 had a preserved rim, but the latter was most probably straight and simple, possibly slightly flaring or restricted (Arnold 1988: 107, 109, Figs 52:9–14, 53:9–13, 54:9–12).

The bottles are made of Nile B2 clay and are uncoated. Usually their upper part (above the maximum body diameter) is smoothed, and their lower part is vertically trimmed. While most of the bottles have a height of approximately 15 cm, there are also some miniature examples with a height of less than 10 cm. This type of vessel probably served a ritual purpose and is linked with the original burial that

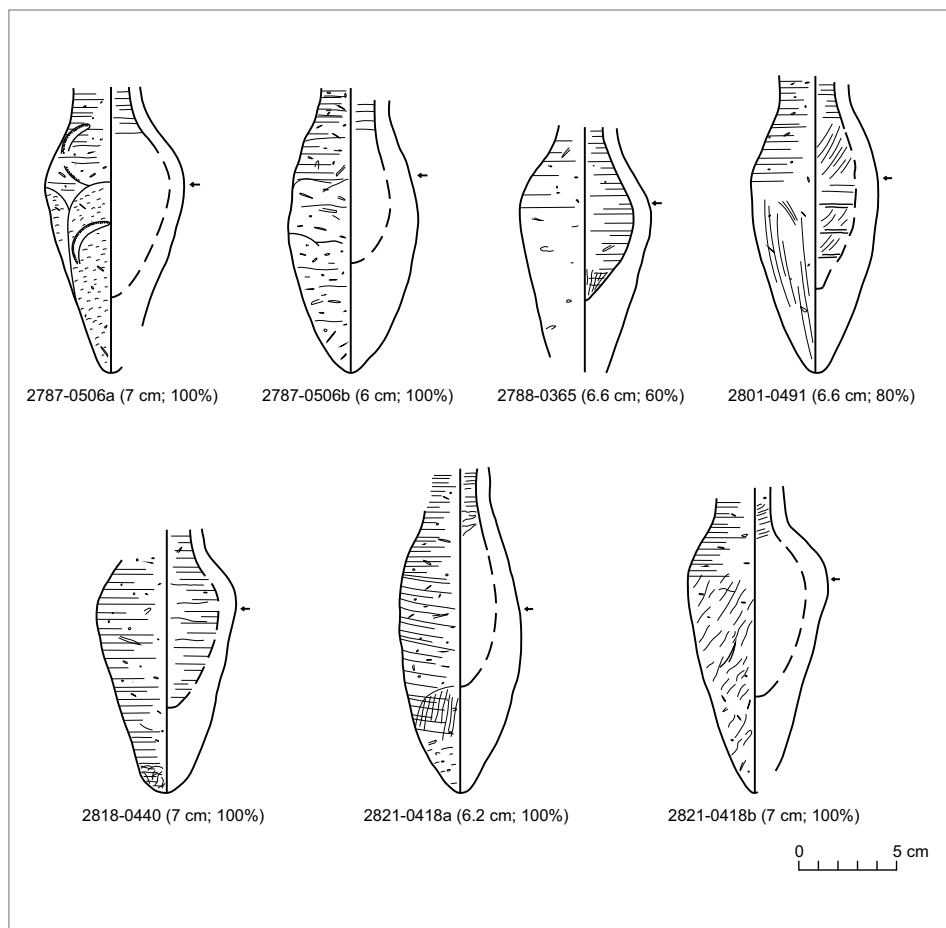


Fig. 1. Small bottles; Middle Kingdom (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

took place in the tomb. Such bottles were notably found at Lisht (Arnold 1988: 107, 109) and Beni Hassan (Bourriau 1981: 62).

Another type of vessel most probably dated to the Middle Kingdom is a slender jar with a funnel-shaped neck, made of Marl C clay. Only rim fragments are preserved among the material from the tomb [Fig. 2]. One of them bears a pot-mark made before firing and consisting of two crossing lines; such marks are often found on this type of jar (Czerny 1999: 97). To the author's knowledge, jars of this kind have not been attested so far in the Theban region. They have been found in Lower Egypt (notably Tell el-Daba, Czerny 1999: 94–98, 191–192, Figs 43–44; Aston 2004b: 96–97, Pls 64–67) as well as on Elephantine (Rzeuska 2010: 412, Figs 10–11) and in Nubia at Toshke, Aniba and Buhen (Rzeuska 2010: 411), but no-

where in between. The examples from Deir el-Bahari could thus represent a new “missing link” in the contacts between the North and the South, an idea to be corroborated by more data from the Theban region.

Numerous simple, thin rims of open forms are also possibly of Middle Kingdom date. They could belong to hemispherical cups that are very characteristic of this period. They are made of Nile B1 clay and are uncoated. This kind of cup is extremely common and is found on most Middle Kingdom sites, among others at Tell el-Daba (Aston 2004b: 62–66, Pls 8–10), Memphis (Bourriau and Gallorini 2016: 67, Fig. 24:3a1.1–3b1.1), Dahshur (Arnold 1982: 60, Fig. 17), el-Tarif and Asasif (Arnold 1972: 42, Fig. 2:4) and Elephantine (Seidlmayer 2005: 286–289, Fig. 4).

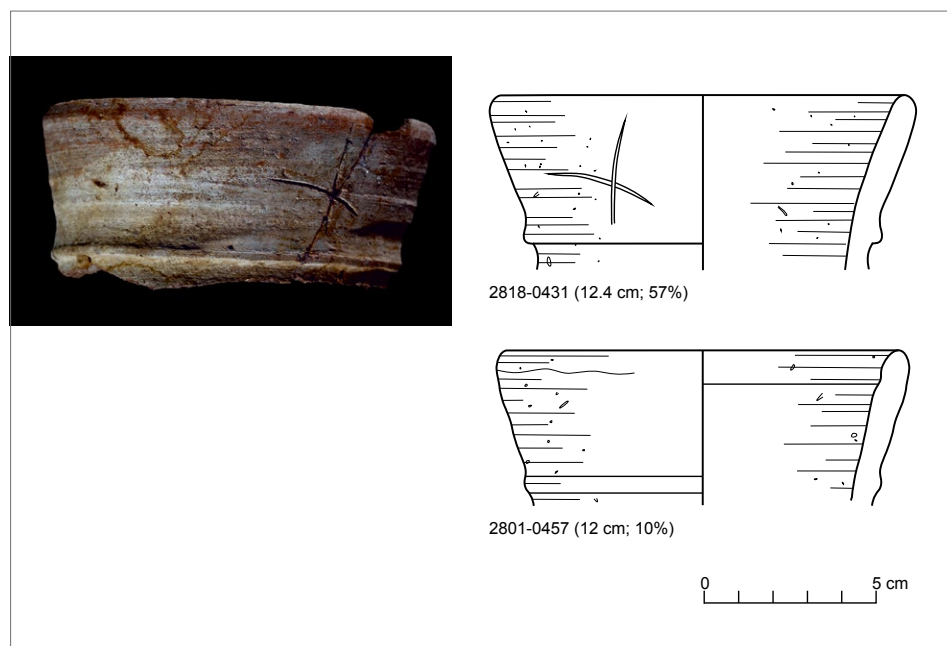


Fig. 2. Marl C jars; Middle Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska)

NEW KINGDOM – EARLY EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY

There are several vessels that can be dated to the first part of the Eighteenth Dynasty. One of the most well-represented types is a small, double or triple bottle with a flat base, vertical or flaring neck, and a joining at the base and shoulder

[Fig. 3]. The triple bottles were joined at an angle of either 180 or 90 degrees. Very few examples had their rim preserved; only one still consists of two bottles

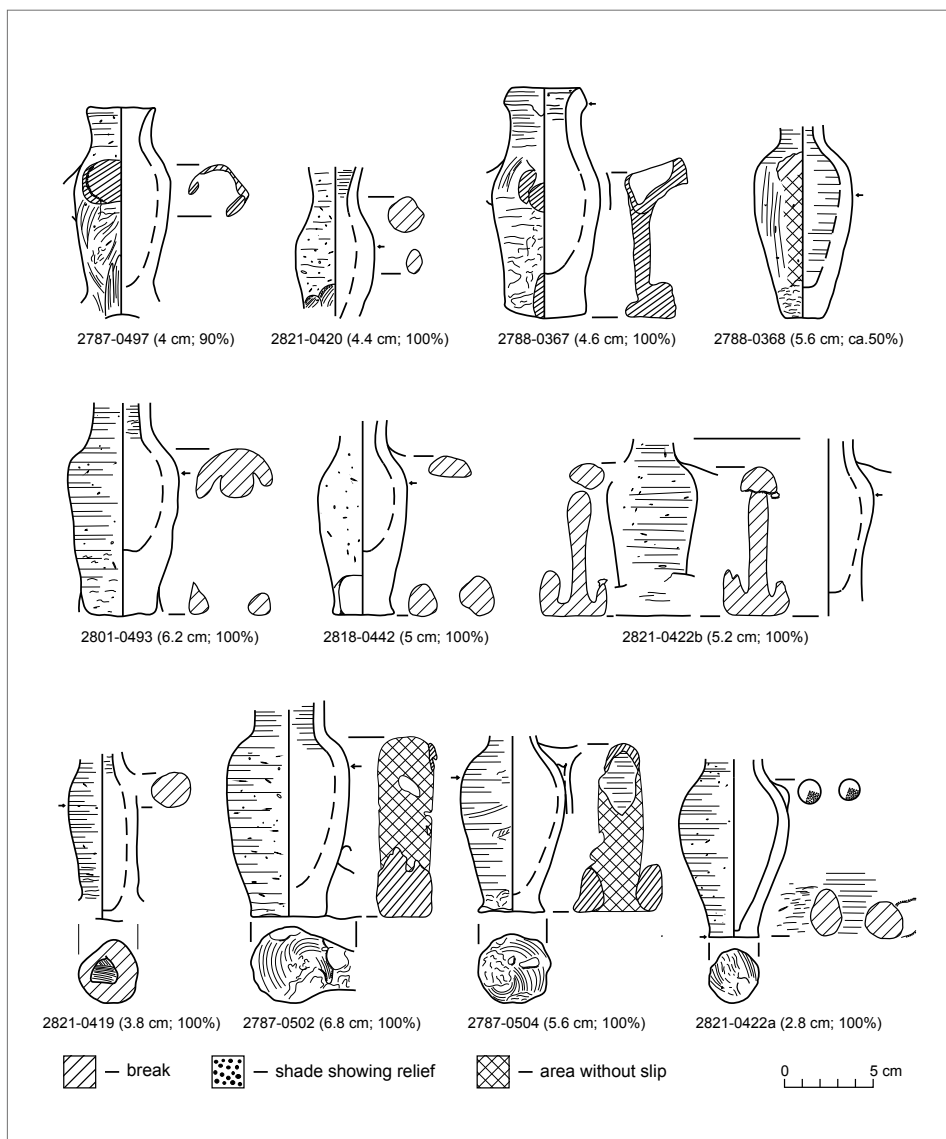


Fig. 3. Small bottles; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

joined together [Fig. 4]. These bottles are in most cases covered with a red slip and some are whitewashed on top. They are made of Nile B2 clay; one is made of Marl A2. Some of them have modelled representations of breasts in the upper part of their body. Miniature examples (less than 10 cm height) are also present. The bottles most probably served a ritual purpose, such as libation (Pinch 1993: 317), and can be linked with the cult of Hathor, a fact exemplified by the vessels with modelled

breasts, a symbol of fecundity. Parallels to this vessel are notably found in Deir el-Bahari itself (Hall 1913: 15, Pl. XXIII:1; Rzeuska 2001: 307–308, Fig. 4), in Deir el-Medina (Nagel 1938: 61, Fig. 44:17) and in Esna (Downes 1974: 47, No. 150).

Mono- and bichrome painted vessels are also typical of the early Eighteenth Dynasty, and particularly of the reigns of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III onward (Aston 2003: Figs 3, 4a). One of the vessels decorated in this style is a small “squat

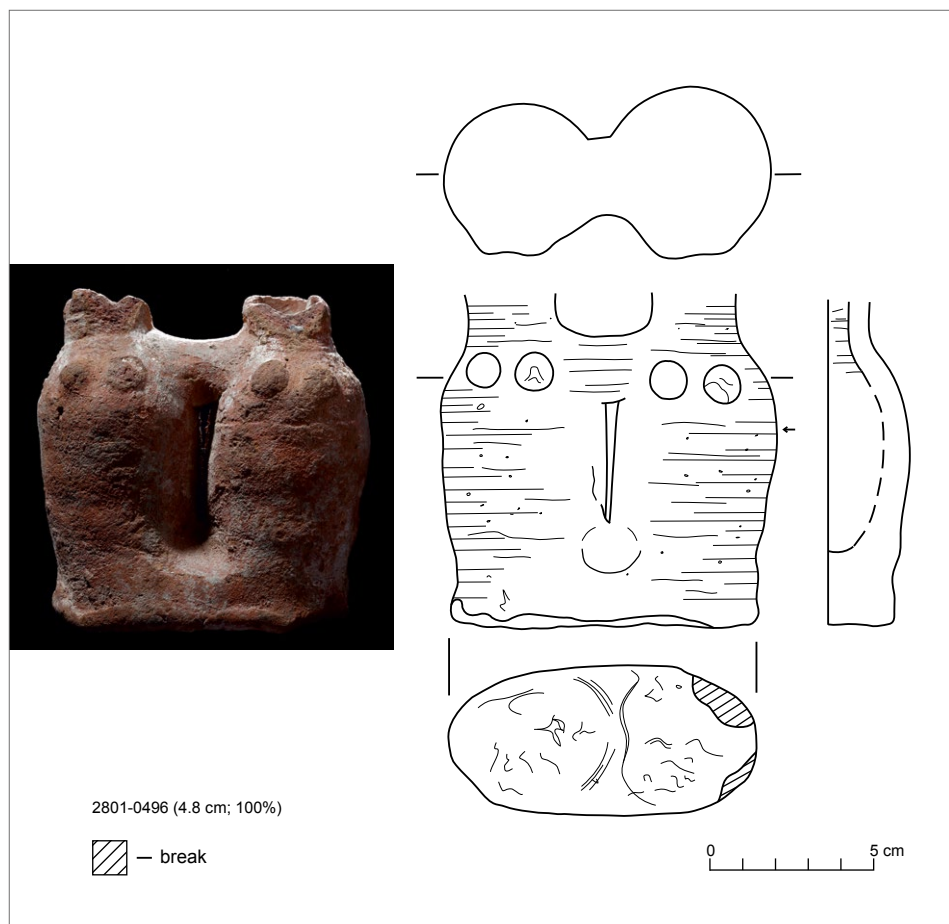


Fig. 4. Double bottle; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki, drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

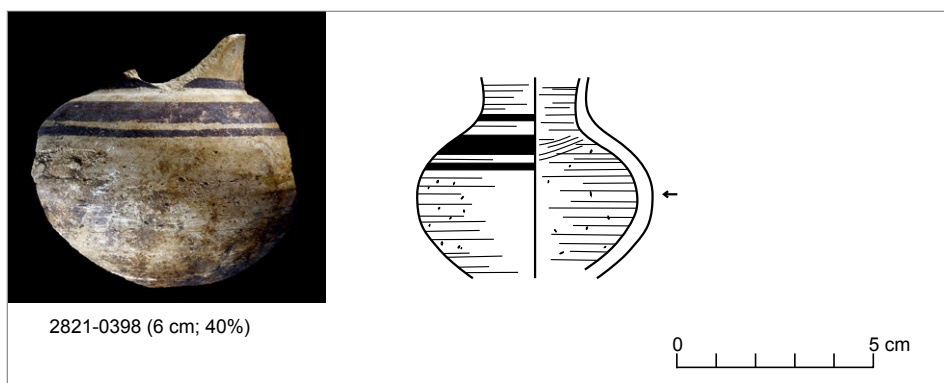


Fig. 5. Small squat jar; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)



Fig. 6. Bichrome painted ware: top, sherds; bottom left, rim of a jar; bottom right, base of a jar; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

jar” made of Marl A2 or A4 clay and bearing monochrome decoration consisting of three horizontal lines [Fig. 5]. Only one such jar was found in Tomb MMA 28; its rim and base are not preserved. These vessels were very common at the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty and are found among others at Kahun (Aston 2003: Fig. 3), Qau (Bourriau 1981: 134), Hu (Bourriau 1981: 135), Amarna (Rose 2007: 136, 285, type MG 3.1), Deir el-Medina (Nagel 1938: Figs 35:4, 47:27, 53:26, and others), in Nubia (Fadrus, Holthoer 1977: 134, Pls 30–32; Saï island, Budka 2017: 150, Fig. 81) and in Syro-Palestine (Megiddo and Martin 2009: 212–214, Fig. 1:2; Jaffa, Burke et al. 2017: 98, Fig. 7:MHA2297, Table 3).

The bichrome style of decoration probably originated from eastern Cyprus, from where it spread to the Levant and Egypt (Bourriau 1981: 133). Several pottery sherds from MMA 28 are painted in this style [Fig. 6]. One of the rims comes from a characteristic ovoid jar with tall neck and simple rim; it is made of Marl A4 clay and its decoration consists of one black and one red horizontal line, as well as hanging black triangles below [Fig. 6 bottom left]. This type of jar appears first during the reign of Amenhotep II (Aston 2003: 146–147). A complete example was

notably found in Hu (Bourriau 1981: 77, No. 145). The other bichrome sherds are as follows: the base of a small jar of Marl A4 painted with black and red horizontal lines [Fig. 6 bottom right]; part of the neck of a jar of Marl A2, decorated with lines, dots and floral patterns; three body sherds of jars (two of Marl A4 and one of Nile D, covered with a cream slip) decorated mostly with black and red lines.

Black-slipped rims are another type of decoration typical of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (Aston 2003: 142, Fig. 1a). A black rim of a Nile B2 carinated bowl found in the tomb is red-slipped on the outside and uncoated on the inside [Fig. 7]. Parallels are found notably in Tell el-Retaba (Wodzińska 2011: 1017, Fig. 4:2), Abydos (Budka 2006: 99, Fig. 10:2, 3) Dra’ Abu el-Naga (Seiler 2005: 142–143, Fig. 63:6), Deir el-Bahari (Szafranski 1992: 54–55, No. 5), the mortuary temple of Thutmose III in Western Thebes (Bader and Seco Álvarez 2016: 239, Fig. 40:c,d) and in Nubia (Holthoer 1977: 111, Pls 24–26; Saï island, Budka 2017: 128, Fig. 54:N/C 965.1).

Four miniature “bowls” from the tomb are made of Nile B2 (three) and Marl B (one). These small “bowls” are parts of larger open vessels or rings with miniatures added to their rim,

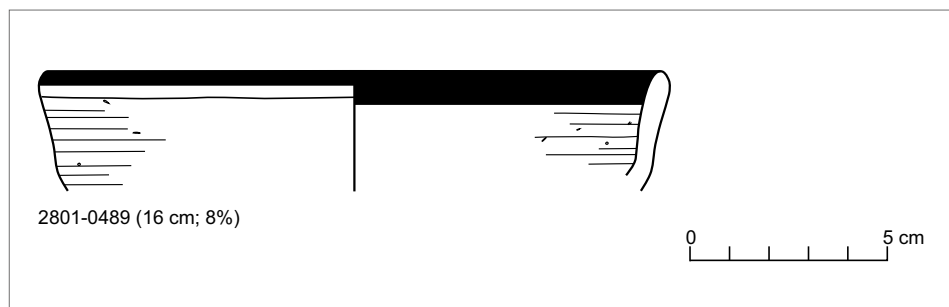


Fig. 7. Bowl with black rim; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

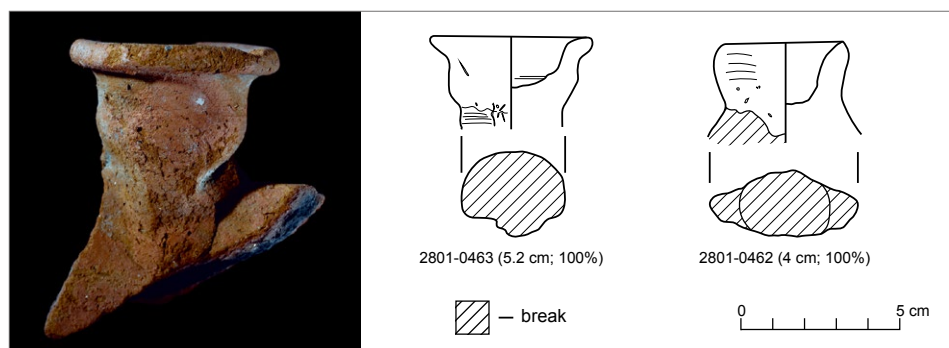


Fig. 8. Miniature vessels from *kernois*; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda, A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

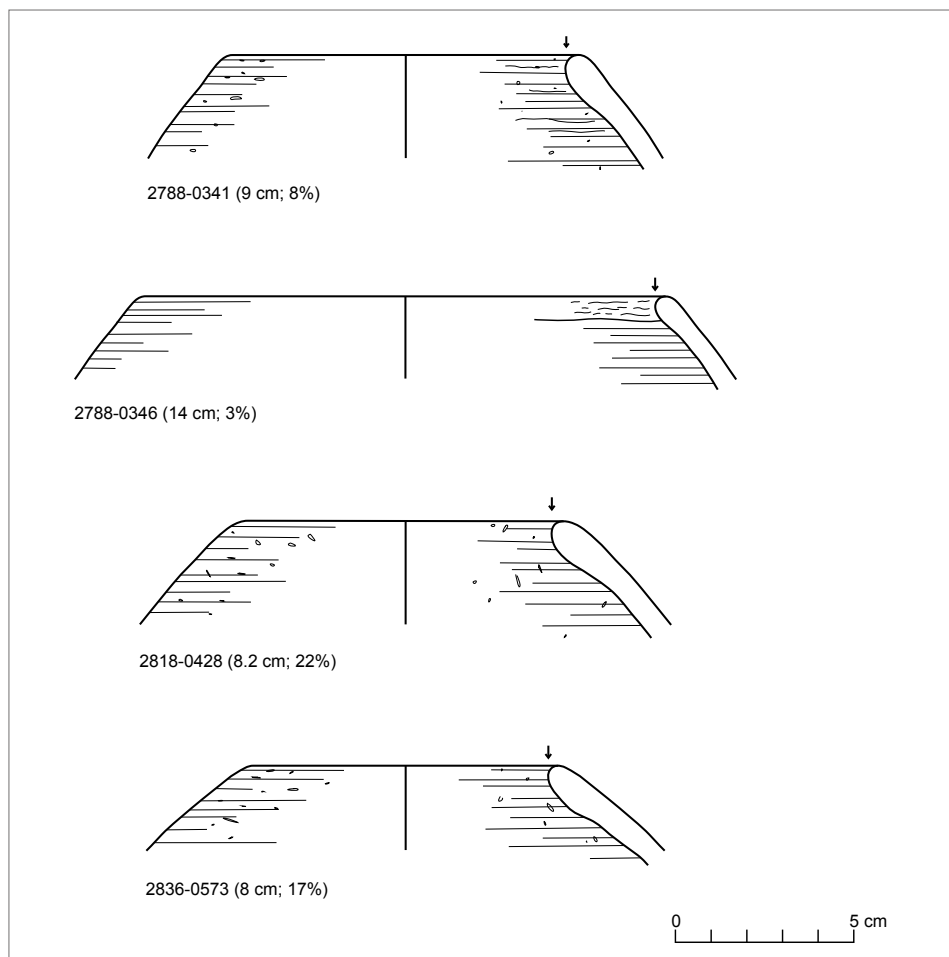


Fig. 9. Holthoer's BB2 type beer jars; early Eighteenth Dynasty (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

which is an Egyptian equivalent of the Greek kernoī. One of the bowls from MMA 28 is actually still attached to a kernos rim [Fig. 8 left]. The open form of these miniature bowls suggests a date in the late Second Intermediate Period or beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty (Rzeuska 2007: 332, Fig. 4). Parallels are found at Hu (Petrie 1901: Pl. XXXVI:183), Deir el-Bahari (Hall 1913: 15, Pls XXIII:2, XXXII:16), Deir el-Medina (Nagel 1938: 210–212, Pl. XVI-II, Type XXVII), Esna (after Rzeuska 2007: 332) and Edfu (Michałowski et al. 1950: Pl. XLI:6, 9). The Egyptian kernoī undoubtedly served a ritual purpose,

perhaps for the offering of water or flowers (Pinch 1993: 317–318). Some of them can be decorated with figures of cows (Pinch 1993: 317), which links them to the cult of Hathor.

Many simple, restricted rims were found in the tomb. They are made of Nile B2 or Nile D clay, and their surface is left uncoated [Fig. 9]. They belong most probably to beer jars of type BB2 or BB3 according to Holthoer (1977: 86, Pl. 18), a type that is characteristic of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (Budka 2006: 88). Beer jars are extremely common and are found on virtually every New Kingdom site in Egypt.

NEW KINGDOM – LATER PHASE

Numerous sherds of jars painted blue with black and red elements are part of the assemblage. This type of pottery decoration (usually called “blue-painted”, Arnold 1993: 100) is very characteristic of the New Kingdom; it appeared during the reign of Thutmose IV and remained en vogue until the rule of Ramesses IV (Aston 2003: 151). The largest assemblages of blue-painted pottery come from Memphis, Gurob, Amarna, Malqata and Qantir, all of them cities with royal residences (Aston 2003: 151). There are no complete vessels in the material from the MMA 28 tomb; a few rims are preserved [Fig. 10] but the bulk of the material consists of body sherds. Most of the blue-painted vessels are made of Nile clay (usually Nile B2), covered with a cream slip before painting. Three Nile clay sherds are red-slipped. Three sherds are made of marl clay (A4 and E) and are not slipped. A few fragments have also

modelled elements of decoration below the slip and paint.

Different styles of blue-painted decoration were observed in the assemblage. The first one consists of simple, alternating bands of blue, red and black, with a large portion of the surface left unpainted, and probably figural representations in the central part of the decoration [Fig. 11A:a]. This style is described by Hope as the earliest kind of blue-painted pottery, still very similar to the bichrome style (Hope 1987: 108, 110, Pls XXXIII A–B, XXXV B). Next is a style with fairly bold designs, bright, consisting of lines and large floral elements, sometimes also representing animals and possibly a head of Hathor [Figs 11B,C]. The paint does not cover the whole vessel and the slip can be discerned underneath in many places. Sherds with modelled decoration belong to this group [Fig. 11C:bi]. This style was most common in the reign of Amenho-

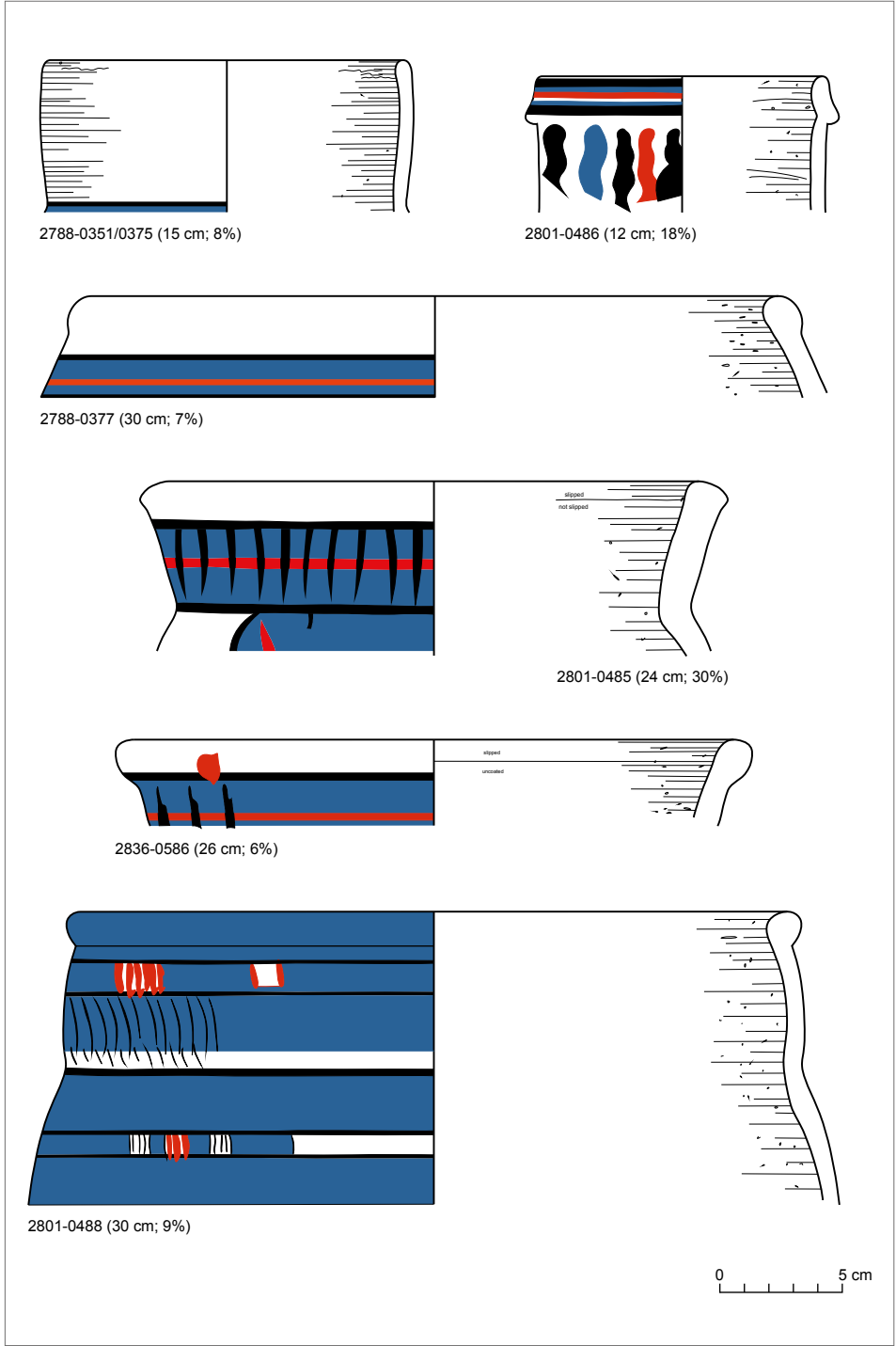


Fig. 10. Blue-painted jars from the New Kingdom (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

tep III (Hope 1989: 1) and the later Eighteenth Dynasty (Hope 1991). A third style has blue paint covering almost the entire surface of the vessel, and the designs are much simpler: mainly bands, with very fine and stylised floral designs [Fig. 11A:c]. This style is characteristic of the Rameside period (Aston 1998: 354). In the case of three rim sherds, the slip is red rather than cream and nothing is preserved of

the presumed design on the shoulders [Fig. 11A:d]. One sherd belongs to a completely unusual style. It has horizontal lines beneath the rim and vertical streaks below [Fig. 11A:e].

New Kingdom vessels include also large bowls made of Nile B2 clay with flat base and thickened rim [Fig. 13]. The rim is red-slipped and there are rope marks on the walls. This kind of bowl is

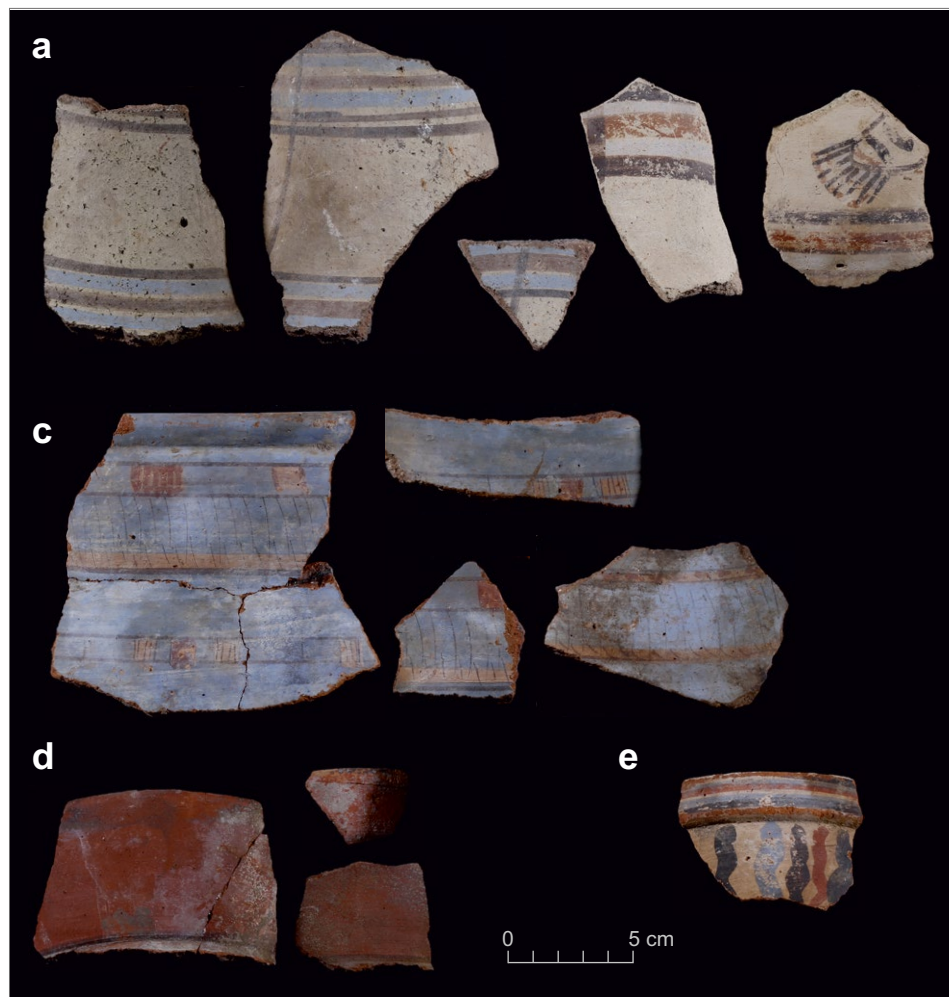


Fig. 11A. Blue-painted sherds, styles (a), (c), (d) and (e); New Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawor-nicki; plate design M. Momot)



Fig. 11B. Blue-painted sherds, style (b); New Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; plate design M. Momot)

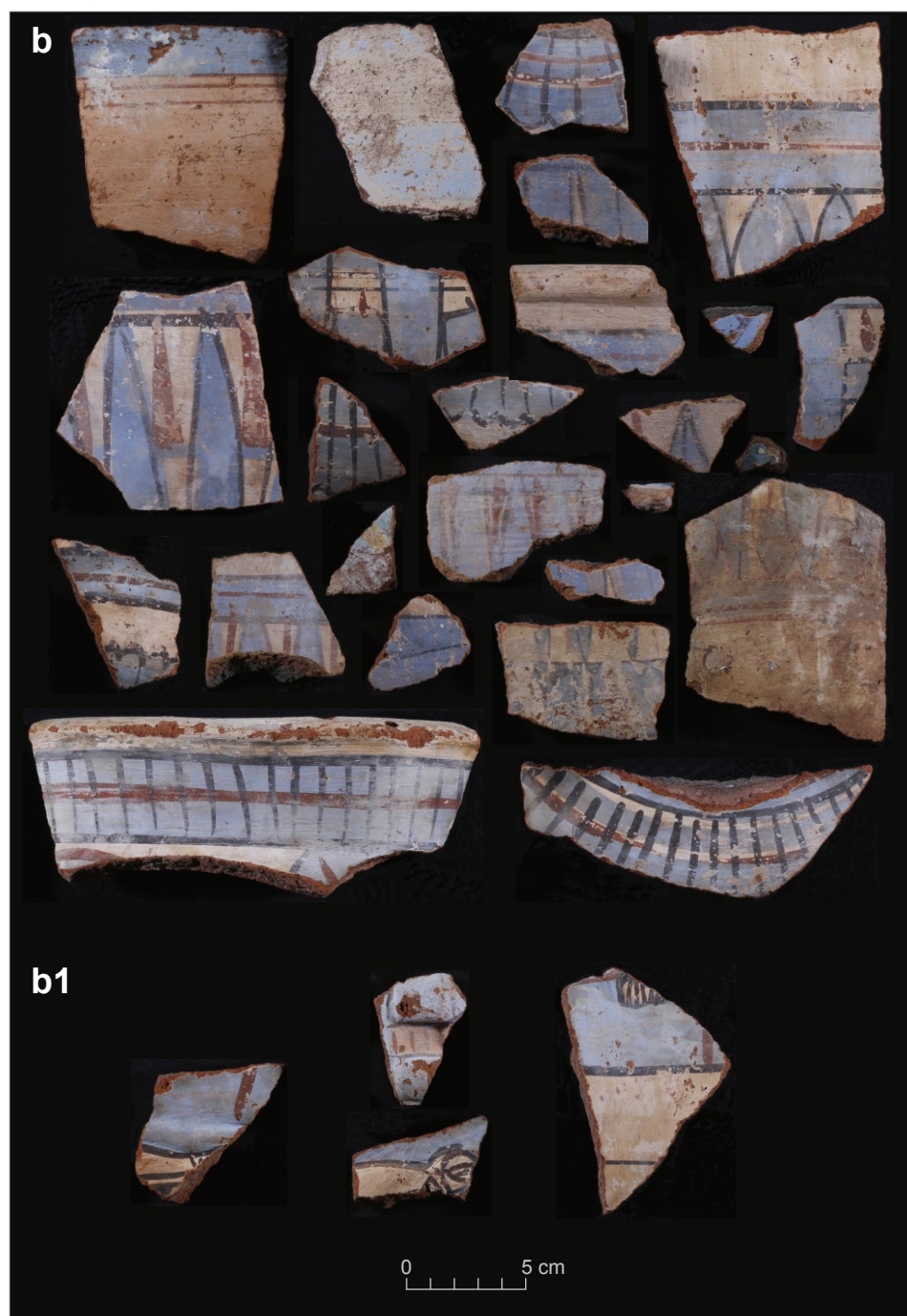


Fig. 11C. Blue-painted sherds, style (b), including sherds with modelled decoration (b1); New Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; plate design M. Momot)

common during most of the New Kingdom and is found on numerous sites such as Memphis (Bourriau 2010: 146, Fig. 36:3.8.5), the burial grounds in Memphis (tomb of Iurudef, Aston 1991: Pl. 47:12) and Thebes (tomb of Tjanuni, Brack and Brack 1977: 70, Pl. 66; and generally Valley of the Kings, Aston, Aston, and Ryan 2000: 17, Nos 15–17, 21–22, Nos 40–44), the Theban royal funerary temples (Seti I, Mysliwiec 1987: 38–58; Merenptah, Aston 2008: 56, Pl. 1:4–5, 61, Pls 3:41, 61, 4:45), Amarna (Rose 2007: 59, 199, Nos 116–120), Deir el-Medina (Nagel 1938: 181–182, Pls IX:356.41, X:359.137 and 1164.25), Elephantine (Seiler in Kaiser et al. 1999: 212, Fig. 48:4) and Saï island (Budka 2017: 128, Fig. 54:N/C 836.9, 130, Fig. 56: N/C 646.1–2).

Another vessel possibly dated to the New Kingdom is a small bowl with a sinusoidal rim, made of Nile B2 [Fig. 12]. It has traces of soot on its outer surface. Similar bowls were found in Deir el-Medina (Nagel 1938: 164, Figs 135–136), but they reveal no burning marks there.

Tomb MMA 28 also yielded many bases of beer jars [Fig. 14]. They are made of Nile B2 clay in a rather careless manner, and usually have deep fingerprints near the bottom and sometimes a hole in the base. They are not slipped, but many are covered with a more or less thick layer of white plaster; one was even filled with it [Fig. 15].

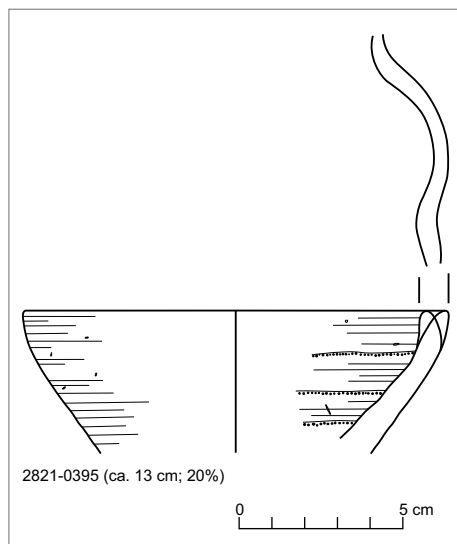


Fig. 12. Bowl with sinusoidal rim; New Kingdom (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

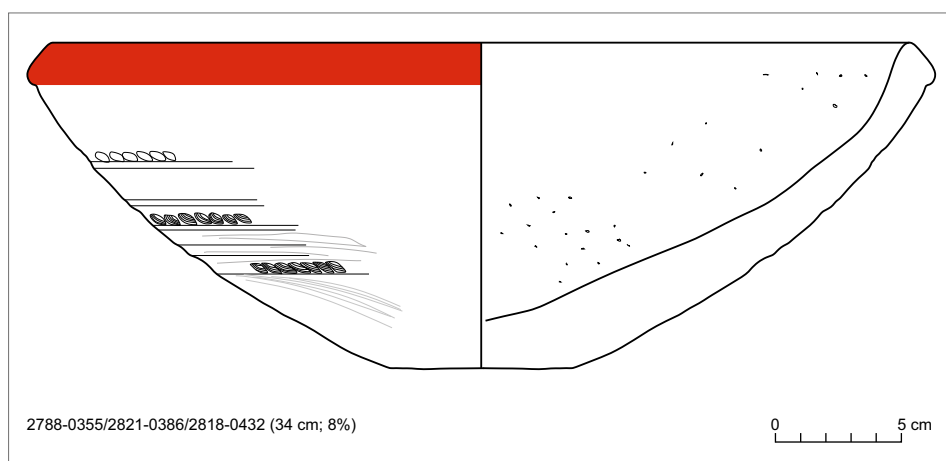


Fig. 13. Large bowl; New Kingdom (PCMA UW | drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda, A. Weźranowska)

This could attest to a ritual of some kind. All types of beer jars had similar bases; one cannot thus tell which type these belong to. It is probable, however, that they are Holthoer's BB2 or BB3 beer jars,

since only rims of this type were found in the tomb (see above). Beer jars are an extremely characteristic vessel of the New Kingdom and are found on virtually every site from this period.

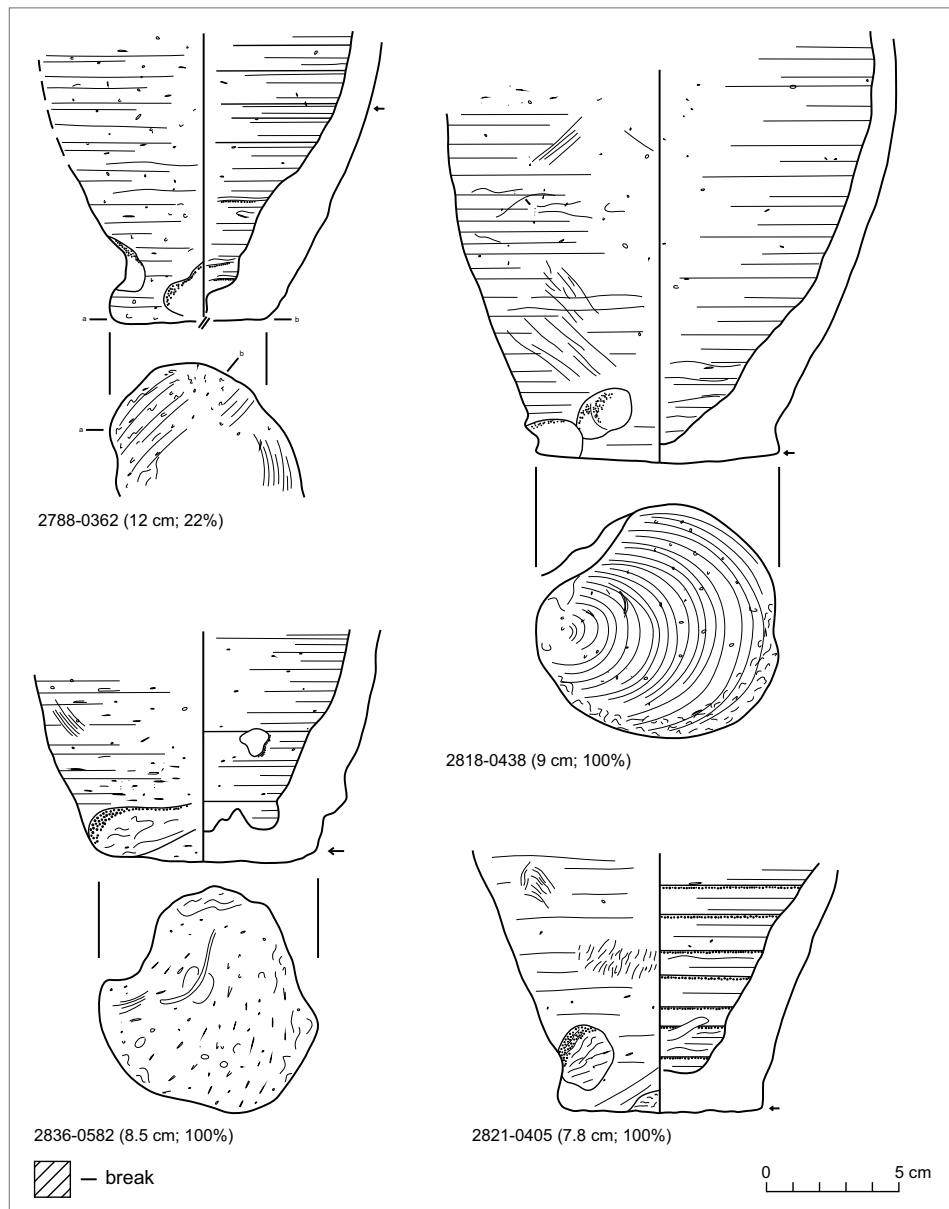


Fig. 14. Beer jar bases; New Kingdom (PCMA UW | drawing A. Weźranowska)

A base of a Marl Λ_4 closed form, most probably an amphora of Hope's type 1a, is dated to the Eighteenth Dynasty (Hope 1989: 111) [Fig. 16]. It is quite thick, rounded and slightly flattened at the bottom. The vessel is uncoated. Amphorae were used for transport and storage; they are Egyptian versions of the Canaanite jars in which imported goods came to Egypt (Aston 2004a:

176). Parallels for the base from tomb MMA 28 are reported from, among others, Ezbet Helmi (Aston 2007: Fig. 20:8945K), Memphis (Bourriau 2010: Fig. 46j), Saqqara (Aston 2007: Fig. 2:5), Amarna (Rose 2007: 132, 279, no. 613), Deir el-Bahari (Szafrński 1992: 54, 57), the Theban necropolis (Aston 2015: 24, Figs 6e, 8:C.041, 9) and Nubia (Holthoer 1977: 97–98, Pl. 22).



Fig. 15. Beer jar base covered and filled with plaster; New Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki)



Fig. 16. Base of an amphora; New Kingdom (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

Only one type of vessel from tomb MMA 28 is possibly dated to the Third Intermediate Period. It is a bowl with inverted lip, made of Nile B1 or B2 clay and cream-slipped. Parallels were found at

Deir el-Bahari (Rzeuska 2001: 317, Fig.13:26; Czyżewska 2011: 218, Fig. 3) and Elephantine (Aston 1999: 122, Pl. 35:1082), but they are either uncoated (Deir el-Bahari) or red-slipped inside (Elephantine).

LATE PERIOD

The only type of vessel securely dated to the Late Period, and more precisely to the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties, is a jar made of Nile B2 clay [Fig. 17]. It is usually uncoated, but one sherd is white-slipped on the exterior. It has a simple rim, a short neck, and a sharp angle between the neck and the body. The material from MMA 28 consists of rims only, but the shape is known to be hexagonal with a rounded or slightly pointed base. Parallels are notably found in the mortuary temples

of Thutmose III (Bader and Seco Álvarez 2016: 236, Fig. 38d), Seti I (Myśliwiec 1987: 54, 56, Nos 355–357, Pl. IX:2–3) and Merenptah (Aston 2008: 359, Pl. 143:2955) in Western Thebes.

Another vessel possibly dated to the Late Period is the inverted rim of a small closed form, with a groove on the exterior. The sherd is made of Nile B1 clay and is uncoated. A parallel for this vessel comes from the mortuary temple of Seti I in Western Thebes (Myśliwiec 1987: 66–67, No. 522), but it is made of marl clay.

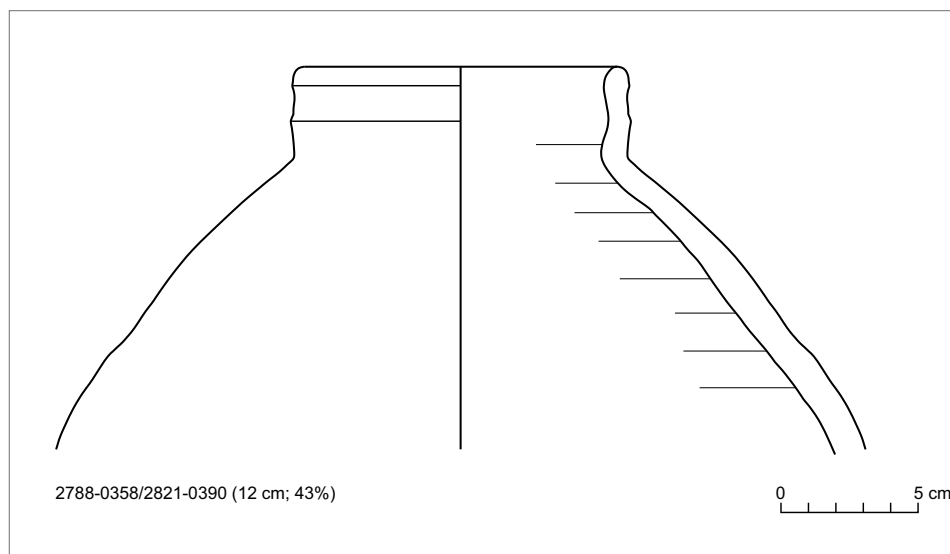


Fig. 17. Jar; Late Period (PCMA UW | drawing A. Pawlikowska-Gwiazda, A. Weźranowska)

PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

Sherds from the tomb dated to the Ptolemaic period are all painted. The only vessel shape recognized in the material is a large storage jar [Fig. 18]. It is made of Nile B2 clay, with red and cream slip outside, and cream slip inside in the upper part of the

vessel. This jar can be compared to the vessels showed by Gábor Schreiber in his work on Ptolemaic painted pottery from Thebes (2003: Pls 17–19).

Ptolemaic painted designs are monochrome in color, either brown or black.

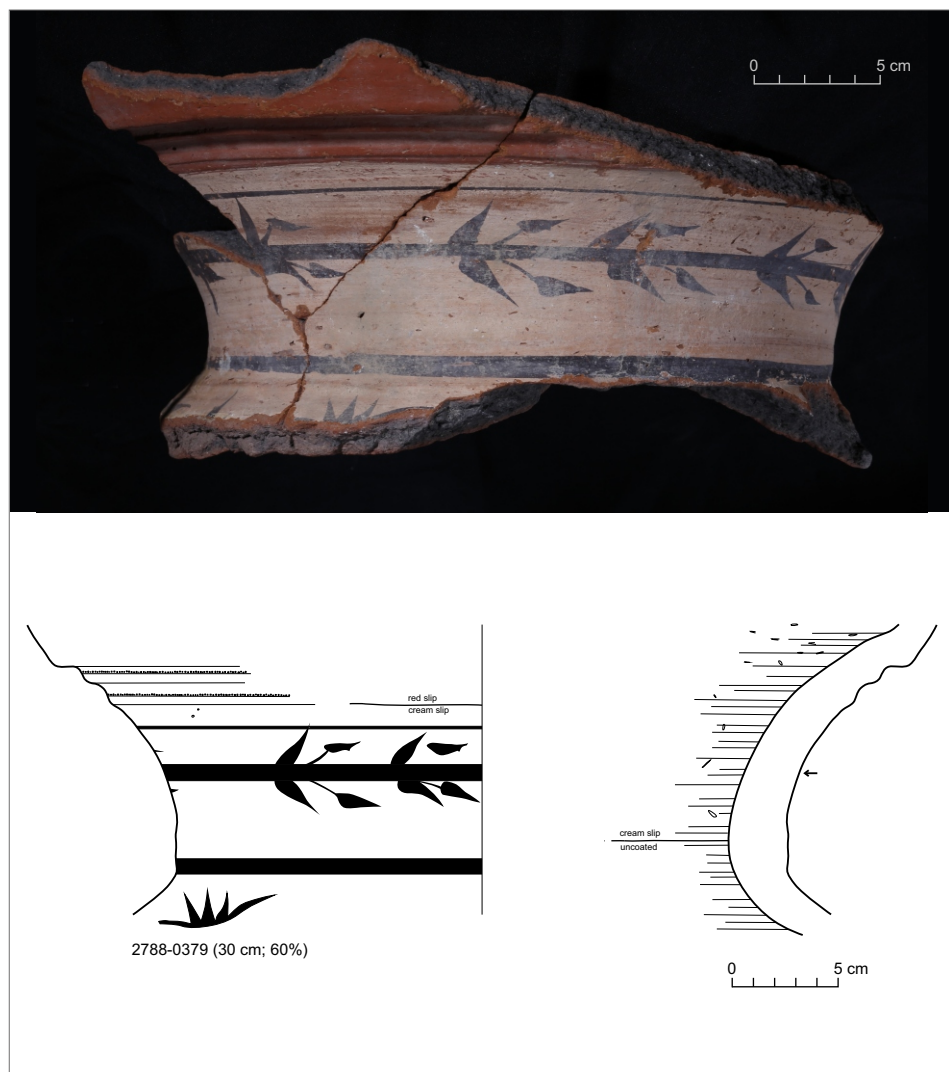


Fig. 18. Painted storage jar; Ptolemaic period (PCMA UW | photo M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska)

Paint on vessels made of Nile clay is applied on a light-colored slip. The most common motifs are lines, cross-hatching, and floral designs, some more elaborate than others. This style was called “lotus-flower and crosslined-band” by Arnold (1993: 100). Schreiber subdivided it into three categories (Schreiber 2003: 45–52); two of the latter are represented in the material from MMA 28. His “Floral

Style B” (Schreiber 2003: 50–52; 2016: 529) is visible on one larger Nile clay sherd [Fig. 19:b]. Sherds of a marl clay vessel and three Nile clay sherds [Fig. 19:a] as well as the jar [see Fig. 18] are decorated in what he calls “Floral Style A” (Schreiber 2003: 46–50; 2016: 527). It is analogous to the style of sherds found at the mortuary temple of Seti I in West Thebes (Mysliwiec 1987: 81–83).

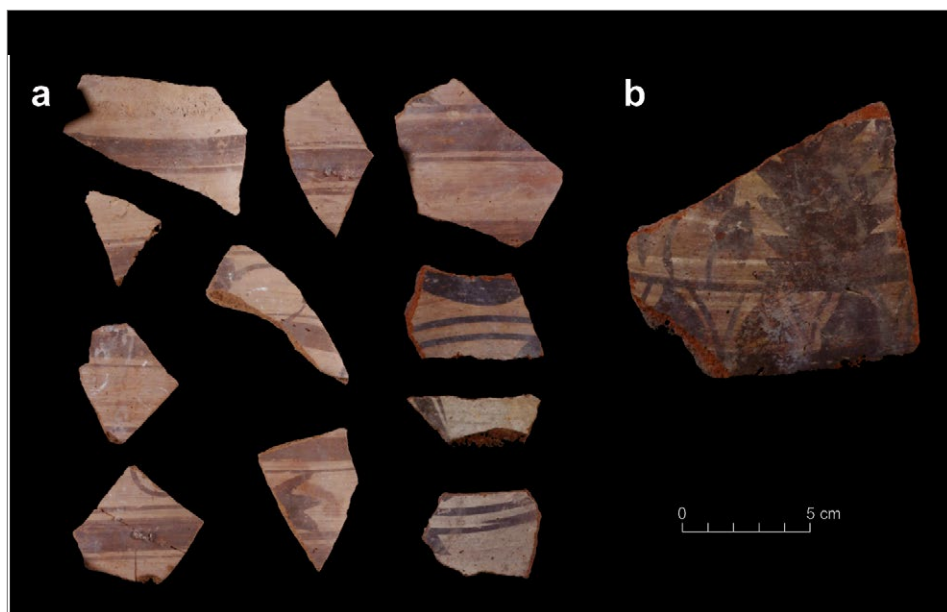


Fig. 19. Painted sherds, Ptolemaic period: examples of “Floral Style A” (a) and “Floral Style B” (b) (PCMA UW | photos M. Jawornicki; plate design M. Momot)

MODERN TIMES

A few modern (20th century AD) vessels were also found in the tomb. There are two fragments of open cooking/baking vessels, so-called *tajins* [Fig. 20 left], and an object which is probably a lid, with

a partly preserved label on top [Fig. 20 right]. The *tajin* could have been produced even earlier, in the 19th century AD, however it is currently difficult to give a more precise date.

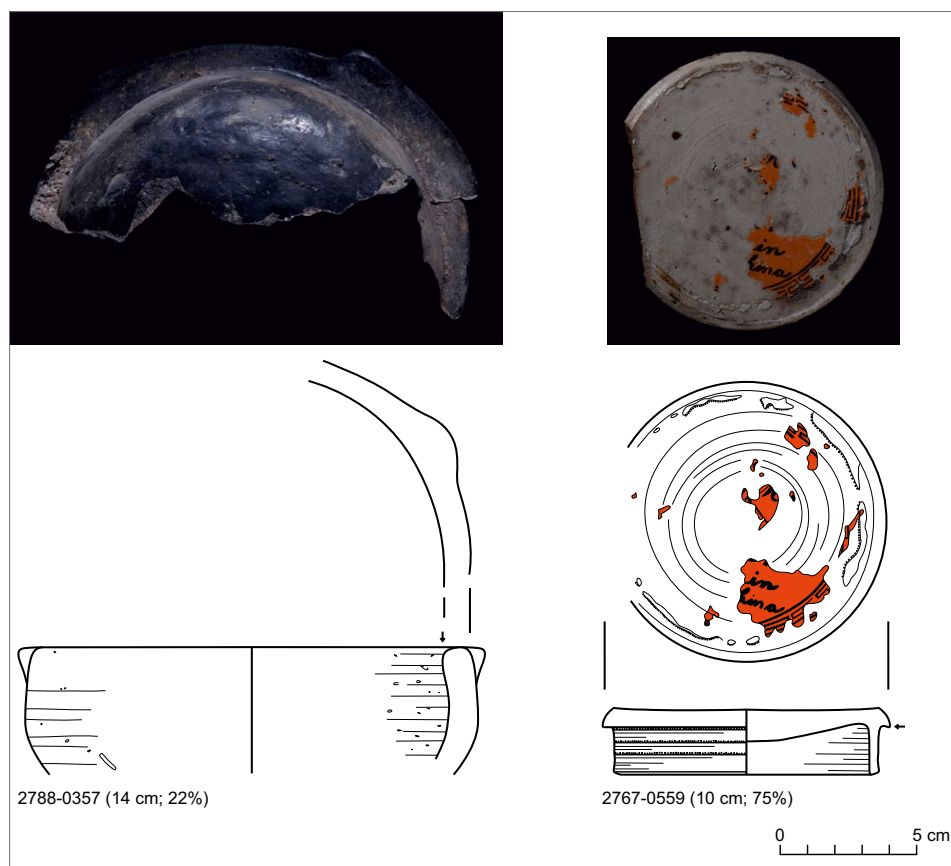


Fig. 20. Modern vessels (20th century AD): left, *tاجين*; right, lid with remnants of a label (PCMA UW | photos M. Jawornicki; drawing A. Weźranowska; plate design M. Momot)

CONCLUSIONS

The ceramic material from Tomb MMA 28 forms a mixed assemblage and its dating spans from the Middle Kingdom to modern times. However, there are many interesting and relatively well-preserved vessels among it. The vessels can be linked to the tomb's different phases of use. Bottles with pointed bases, Marl C jars and possibly hemispherical cups are linked to the original burial for which the tomb was carved in Middle Kingdom times, more precisely during the Eleventh to early Twelfth Dy-

nasty. Vessels of the early Eighteenth Dynasty (double or triple bottles, mono- and bichrome ware, kernoi, beer jar rims) as well as from the later New Kingdom (blue-painted sherds, large bowl, beer jar bases, amphora) attest to intensive use of the area, probably for the cult of Hathor, at the time of temple construction as well as throughout most of the New Kingdom. Vessels of the Third Intermediate Period and Late Period are much scarcer, because activity was reduced in the area of the tomb at

this time. The former can nevertheless be proof of secondary burial practices taking place in the tomb. Ptolemaic sherds can be linked to the cultic activity of the time;

Late Roman material (to be studied separately) to a Coptic monastery functioning on the site, and modern vessels probably to the 20th-century archaeological projects.

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