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PREDYNASTIC AND ARCHAIC VESSELS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN POZNAŃ*

Among the Egyptian antiquities in the National Museum in Poznań there is a collection of ceramic vessels¹. Before World War II, 28 vessels were registered, 23 of which had been classified in a very general way by K. Bulas². 23 more vessels (both complete and in fragments) were acquired after 1939. By the end of the war almost all vessels collected before had been lost (27 objects were not found). After the war, the remaining vessels, 11 in number, were preliminary identified by J. Kubczak and listed by him in the catalogue of the exhibition of antiquities in the National Museum in Poznań, which took

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¹ The collection of Egyptian vessels also includes two bronze and four alabaster objects (complete and in fragments).

² K. Bulas, Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, Pologne 3, Collections diverses, Varsovie 1936, Pl. 1 (117), 1—19 and Pl. 2 (118), 1—4.
place in 1983\(^3\). The present paper specifies from the discussed period three existing vessels (Cat. Nos. 1—3) and two missing ones (Cat. Nos. 4—5).

Three Predynastic vessels were presented in 1899 to Provinzialmuseum in Poznań by General-Verwaltung der Königlichen Museen in Berlin (see Cat. Nos. 1 and 4—5)\(^4\). In the existing inventory book of Provinzialmuseum, Zugangsbuch 1894 —, (pp. 109—110, entry No. 145) there is an information, dated 1900, concerning reception of two groups of Egyptian antiquities on December 4, 1899. The vessels concerned came from the collection of Dr. Reinhardt, the German imperial vice-consul in Bushehr (Iran) who had purchased the objects in Cairo\(^5\). The vessels were recorded in Zugangsbuch with inventory numbers 00.73—00.75. In the “Gegenstand” section there is a note: “2 Töpfe und 1 Schale ältester Zeit (vor 2800 v. Chr.), die Bemalungen vielleicht modern”. A short description of the vessels can be found in the existing card-file of Provinzialmuseum (Fig. 1). After Poland had regained independence, the vessels, along with other objects from Provinzialmuseum were included in the collection of the Great Poland Museum (Muzeum Wielkopolskie) in Poznań, established in 1919\(^6\). During World War II, namely a carinated bowl and a jar taper to the base, were lost (Cat. Nos. 4, 5).

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\(^{4}\) During Prussian rule, in 1857, Polish museum of Polish and Slavonic antiquities came into being, attached to the Society of Friends of Science in Poznań. In 1894, basing on the collection of Historische Gesellschaft für die Provinz Posen, German Provinzialmuseum was established. Among other things, both the Museums collected objects of ancient cultures. Presently, the remaining antiquities from both the collections are in the National Museum in Poznań, cf. J. Szymkiewicz, Dzieje zbiorów starożytności, [in:] J. Kubczak (ed.), Ziemia starożytności..., pp. 11—13.

\(^{5}\) Information from the card-files of Provinzialmuseum, preserved in the National Museum in Poznań.

\(^{6}\) In 1950 the “Great Poland Museum” (Muzeum Wielkopolskie) changed its name into “National Museum”.

Fig. 1. Card-file of the former Provinzialmuseum Posen, with a note concerning Cat. No. 1
In October 1958 an Egyptian jar was donated to the National Museum in Poznań (Cat. No. 3). In July 1981 Zbigniew Pieczyński (an archaeologist), presented the Museum with a few fragments of Egyptian vessels of unknown origin, including a fragment of a bowl (Cat. No. 2).

CATALOGUE

1. Inv. No. MNP A 147 (formerly 1900.75).
   Height: 4 cm, diameter: 14.5 × 10.5 cm (an oval). Red-brown silt, a small amount of fine mica added. The surface is washed with reddish-brown iron oxide. Glued from fragments. A bigger injury on one of the shorter sides of the saucer, a slight one on the rim of the longer side. The paint partly peeled. Chips of the red wash (especially outside). The injuries were repaired, with colours retouched. From: Königliche Museen in Berlin.
   Naqada I, ca. 4000—3500 B.C.

7 The vessel was found left in Gubin. It may come from a scattered private collection or from the collection of the old German museum in Gubin, founded in 1900 (it possessed, as we know, a certain collection of antiquities). Private and public collections in Gubin/Guben are mentioned in Kunsthändbuch für Deutschland, Königliche Museen zu Berlin, 1904, p. 166; and Pantheon Addressbuch der Kunst und Antiquitäten-Sammler und Händler etc., Eszlingen 1914, p. 166.
8 The presence of tiny flakes of mica indicates that the vessel was made probably in Upper Egypt, cf. A. Lucas, Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries, London 1962, p. 383.
9 A supposition made in Provinzialmuseum that the painting might have been counterfeited (a note in Zugangsbuch and files) repeated by K. Bulas in CVA Pologne 3, was not confirmed. On the basis of comparative examination of the surface washed with reddish-brown iron oxide it was established that its structure, colour and traces of polishing are analogous to those in vessels made with the use of a similar technique and recognized as original. When one compares the saucer on the photograph in CVA with its present form, one can see large fragments of its inside covered with residues and a fragment of a relatively clear painted decoration. Due to the changes of storing conditions in the half-century, the paint has partly crumbled away, leaving a trace in the negative. In the course of conservation works the petrified layer of white mineral residue was mechanically removed from the inner walls of the vessel and the hidden of the painting were exposed. This has finally refuted the suppositions about the counterfeiting of the painting. Specialist examination of the left-overs of the residue removed showed that it had properties of travertine calcium carbonate. I would like to thank Prof. Jerzy Fedorowski from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań for conducting the test. We can add that Prof. Dietrich Wildung (then director of the Egyptian State Collection in Munich), who visited the National Museum in Poznań in June 1984, did not question the saucer’s authenticity.
10 Conservation works carried out at the Laboratory of Painting Renovation in the National Museum in Poznań in 1980 and 1981.
11 A note in the files of Provinzialmuseum in Poznań, after the vessel had been taken over from Berlin: “Schale, rotbraun mit helleren Strichen bemalt, Thon, am Rande beschädigt. Die Bemalung vielleicht modern” (cf. Fig. 1).
Saucer of irregular oval shape. Flat bottom, sides of uneven height. Blackening on one side of the bowl, characteristic of black topped red pottery. The surface polished. Inside, traces of decoration painted in yellowish-white. On the shorter sides a schematic drawing of a tree; on the longer sides vertical lines meeting at the bottom, or single ones (?).

Shallow saucer, according to Petrie's classification (1921), can be included in white cross lined “C” group; he connects that type of vessels with early Amratian culture, S. D. 31—34 (1939). A similar symmetric composition covering the sides of a vessel can be found in Petrie 1921, Pl. XX, 6 L, while a similar “tree” and “fruticose” motif appears on vessels of different shapes of University College in London (see Petrie 1921, Pl. XX, 3 B, 3 M; Pl. XXII, 42 S, 43 M; Pl. XXV, 96 E). W. Kaiser classifies this type of vessel as belonging to phase Ic of Naqada culture.

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12 The decoration schema was reconstructed on the basis of the leftover paint and the painting negative.
Fig. 4. Saucer of irregular oval shape, Cat. No. 1


2. Inv. No. MNP A 660

Height: 5 cm; diameter: 17 cm. Grey-brown silt with large amounts of coarse organic admixtures. Only one third of the original vessel is preserved; glued from fragments with missing parts completed, colours retouched\(^{14}\). From: Z. Pieczyński's collection. Naqada culture, ca. 3200—3100 B.C. (†).

\(^{14}\) Cf. note 10.
Figs. 5—7. Deep bowl, Cat. No. 2
A deep bowl, with thick walls opening in a calix-shape. The bottom is concave from the outside. The lip of the rim flattened on top, forms a broad, flat collar. Traces of turning on the surface. The outer walls and bottom finished in hands; rough surface. Most of the surface is blackened; the rest reddish, inside the bowl is grey-brown.

According to Petrie’s classification, the bowl can be included in rough “R” group (1921). He connects that type of vessels with late Gerzean culture, S. D. 45—60 (1939). This, however, is not a definite classification for the vessel, as can be inferred from the blackened fragment, which produced only a partial result. W. Kaiser refers to a similar type of vessel (Petrie R 26 c) in II b, II d, and II d phases of Naqada culture. As follows from the above examples, the form of the vessel can be associated with Naqada II, while it is partly wheel-made.

Cf.: Petrie, Corpus, Pl. XXXVIII, 26 c, 27; Kaiser, Zur inneren Chronologie, Pls. 22 and 23.

3. Inv. No. MNP A 514

Height: 38.5 cm; diameter: 17.5 cm. Reddish-brown clay with granular mineral admixtures. Grey-yellowish and red surface. The inner surface is partly peeled. The vessel was glued from many fragments. Slight injuries repaired and colours retouched. From: Museum in Gubin (?). Late Predynastic/Early Dynastic, ca. 3100 B.C.

Bibliography: Kubczak, ed., Zbiorzy starożytności, Cat. No. 1, Fig. I; Szymikiewicz, Dział sztuki starożytnej, [in:] Nabytki Muzeum Narodowego w Poznaniu w 40-leciu Polski Ludowej, Poznań 1984, p. 57; Szymikiewicz, Dział sztuki starożytnej, Studia Muzealne 14, 1984, p. 35; Kubczak, Zbiory starożytności, Plock 1985, Fig. 6.

A conical jar of medium size, thick-walled, with rounded bottom. Parts of the body’s walls from shoulders down slightly flattened. The neck separated from the shoulders by an incised straight line encircling it. Rather short neck narrows upwards and ends in a distinct rim. The lip in the shape of a roll is flattened on the outside. On the body, diagonal traces of polishing, also traces of impressed sennit (a mat?) and wide stripes of numerous thin lines (a broom of hard fiber?). On the inner walls of the upper part of the vessel a combination of double parallel straight lines running obliquely. In the middle part of the body there is a pot-mark incised shallowly before firing (Fig. 10).

According to Petrie’s classification the vessel can be included in the late “L” group (1921). He connects that type of vessels with Semainean culture, S. D. 70—80 (1939). H.-Å. Nordström classifies a similar type of vessels within the group AXI (Egyptian hard pink unpolished wares, q-large wine jars, 1972). W. Kaiser includes such vessels (Petrie L 36 a) in his IIIa2 and IIIb phases of Naqada culture. K. Kroepfer and D. Wildung (1985) discuss an analogous

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15 Conservation works carried out in the Laboratory of Painting Renovation in the National Museum in Poznań, 1981.
Fig. 8. Conical jar, Cat. No. 3

Fig. 9. Conical jar, Cat. No. 3

Fig 10. Pot-mark incised on conical jar, Cat. No. 3
vessel type 2. B. 1.4, as dating from just before and during Narmer’s reign. The pot-mark on our vessel has a rather general counterpart among the marks published by Petrie 1939, Pl. XVIII, 93 and Kroeper-Wildung 1985, Fig. 213.


4. Inv. No. formerly 1900.73 (the object is now missing)\(^{16}\)

Height: 8.5 cm; diameter: 12 cm. Dark red silt. The surface is washed with red iron oxide. The rim jagged. From: Königliche Museen in Berlin\(^ {17}\). Naqada I, ca. 4500—3500 B.C.

Bibliography: CVA Pologne 3, Pl. 1(117), 1.

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\(^{16}\) Data for Cat. Nos. 4 and 5 from records of the former Provinzialmuseum as well as from descriptions and pictures in CVA Pologne 3, 1936.

\(^{17}\) A note in the files of the former Provinzialmuseum in Poznań: “Thongefäss, rotbraun mit helleren Strichen bemalt, am Ende des zweiten Drittels am breitesten, nach oben sich verjüngend, die Unterseite abgerundet. Am oberen Rande beschädigt, die Bemalung vielleicht modern”. 
Carinated bowl, rather carelessly modelled. On the outside a painted decoration\(^{18}\). In the upper part of the vessel a motif of “triangles” filled with vertical lines is placed.

According to Petrie’s classification, the vessel can be included in the white cross lined “C” group (1921). A similar motif in an analogous composition arrangement can be found in the upper part of the carinated bowl, Petrie 1921, Pl. XXIII, 64 H, and individual elements of landscape background on the slender vessel, Pl. XXV, 96 E. Petrie connects that type of vessels with early Amratian culture, S.D. 31—34 (1939). W. Kaiser classifies them in his phase Ic of Naqada culture.


5. Inv. No. formerly 1900.74 (now the object is missing)

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\(^{18}\) The type of decoration and its stylistic traits, similar to those on the saucer (the so-called “fruticose” forms, cf. Cat. No. 1) could suggest the same origin; the vessels might have been made in the same center. In such a case, the earlier questions concerning the painting’s authenticity (file and Zugangsbuch of the former Provinzialmuseum and CVA Pologne 3) can be explained like in Cat. No. 1, cf. note 9.
Height: 13 cm; diameter: 9 cm. Red-yellowish silt. Surface washed with red iron oxide. Rim slightly injured. The vessel was glued together from many fragments. From: Königliche Museen in Berlin. Naqada I, ca. 4000–3500 B.C.


Jar taper to the base with a smooth levelled bottom, rim slightly turned outwards. The surface is polished, blackened near the rim. According to Petrie’s classification (1921), the vessel can be linked with the black top “B” group. He connects that type of pottery with early Amratian culture, S.D. 31–34 (1939). W. Kaiser classifies them in his phase Ia of Naqada culture.

Cf.: Petrie, Corpus, Pl. III, 22a, 22b; Kaiser, Zur inneren Chronologie, Pl. 21.

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19 We think that problems concerning the painting (file and Zugangsbuch of the former Provinzialmuseum, also CVA Pologne 3) can, also in this case, be explained by observations made about Cat. No. 1, cf. note 9.