

SUDAN & NUBIA

The Sudan Archaeological Research Society



Bulletin No. 15 2011

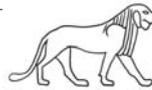




The map reflects the new territorial situation following the independence of South Sudan in July 2011.

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attributes including vessel form, decorative pattern, surface treatment and method of manufacture.

As indicated in Table 1, the number of pottery sherds at each site is variable and in some cases notably sparse. Complete vessels are entirely absent in the collections. The pottery repertoire presents a limited number of vessel forms.

Decorated sherds account for 53.4% of the total collection. The other specimens (46.6%) are either undecorated or

Table 1. Distribution of decorative patterns per site.

No	Type of decoration	Adid Raha	Abu Sinan	Abu Zumam	Alerbid	el-Qala es-Safra	Jebel el-Godran
1	Zigzag dotted straight	14	0	0	8	9	6
2	Dotted lines	7	0	1	0	2	10
3	Impressed straight lines	0	0	3	0	0	0
4	Linear impresions		0	18	0	0	1
5	Chevrons	1	0	0	0	0	1
6	Herring-bone	0	0	2	0	0	0
7	Zoned	2	0	0	2	0	0
8	Fingernail	5	0	1	0	0	2
9	Mat impression	4	0	6	0	0	11
10	Catfish impression	0	0	0	0	0	1
11	Plain (F)	6	0	5	0	1	0
12	Plain (C/0)	27	5	33	6	4	47
13	Total	66	5	69	16	16	79



Plate 1. Decorated pottery sherds.

their surface finish has been obliterated and hence cannot be determined for certain (Tables 1 and 2, Plate 1).

The surface colour of the pottery varies but is mostly light brown (7.5YR 6/4 Munsell soil colour chart). Fractures

mainly exhibit dark grey (5YN4/1; 7.5YR N4/0) and black (9.5YN3/0; 5YR 2/1) colours.

The potsherds indicate possible rim diameters between 120 and 270mm and probably belong to medium and large bowls. Almost all the rim-tops have been left undecorated (Table 3). The rare decorated rim-tops, ornamented with vertical and linear impressions, were from Jebel el-Godran (GN) and el-Qala es-Safra (AQS) respectively.

Bases are entirely absent in the collections. This could suggest that the pottery was mainly comprised of bowls in which the base has nearly the same thickness as the rest of the pot.

It seems that coiling was utilized in building the vessel walls. This could be inferred from some sherds that were broken along the coil-lines. Irregularities of several sherds also raise the probability that paddle and anvil technique could have been in use for thinning and smoothing.

The pottery fabrics demonstrate that both sand and chaff were utilized as tempering materials. The fabrics are hard and well-fired.

The pottery collections include three main groups that cover a wide time span from late prehistoric (Neolithic) to the historic (Jebel Moya and Meroitic) periods. The prehistoric pottery group represents the “Khartoum Neolithic”. The historic pottery group includes two components: Jebel Moya type pottery and a late Meroitic one that has been reported from several sites in Khartoum and the Blue Nile regions.

Table 2. Distribution of decorated and undecorated pottery. Specimens as percentages.

	AR	AS	AZ	AL	AQS	GN
Decorated	51.5	0.0	45.0	62.5	68.7	40.5
Undecorated and/or obliterated	48.5	100.0	55.0	37.5	31.3	59.5
No.	66	5	69	16	16	79

AR = Adid Raha; AS = Abu Sinan; AZ = Abu Zumam; AL = Alerbid; AQS = el Qala es-Safra; GN = Jebel el-Godran

Khartoum Neolithic type of pottery

The sherds of this group are similar to “Khartoum Neolithic” wares as represented at esh-Shaheinab (Arkell 1953, pls 31:3-5, 32:2-5, 34:9-10) and other related sites. The pottery of this category is occasionally coated with a red ochre slip. Surfaces of the potsherds are frequently burnished (Plate 1, rows 3, 5 and 6).

This type of pottery is represented by potsherds reported from most of the surveyed sites (Jebel el-Godran, Adid Raha; Alerbid, el-Qala es-Safra). The decorated specimens dominate the assemblage, amounting to 83% of the recorded sherds. A straight dotted-line zigzag is the most popular pattern.

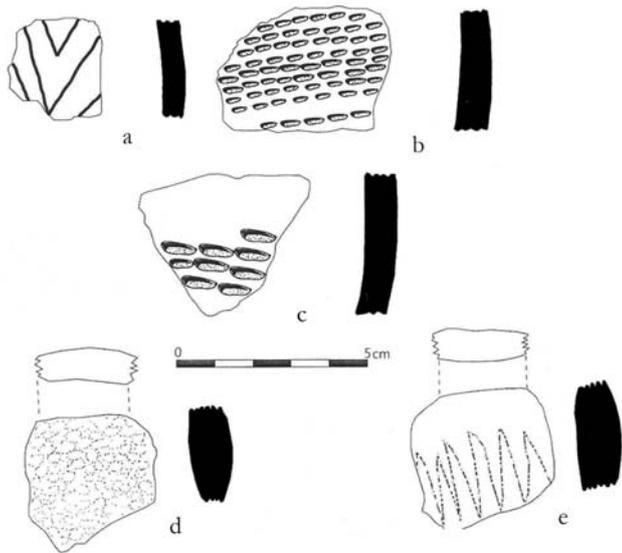


Figure 2. Adid Raha, decorated sherds, a - chevron, b - dotted straight lines, c - fingernail, d - mat, e - dotted zigzag, scale 1:2.

Linear impressed patterns are frequent (Figures 3b; 5; 6a-c, e). Less frequent motifs include mat impressions, dotted lines, fingernail and impressed straight lines whereas the catfish spine pattern is exceptionally rare (Table 1, Figure 6c, Plate 1, B.R., 6).

The colour of the sherds is mainly reddish brown with various shades (Munsell 5YR 6/4,7, 8YR6/4). Potsherds of light-red colour (2.5YR;1,10YR 6/5) though present are

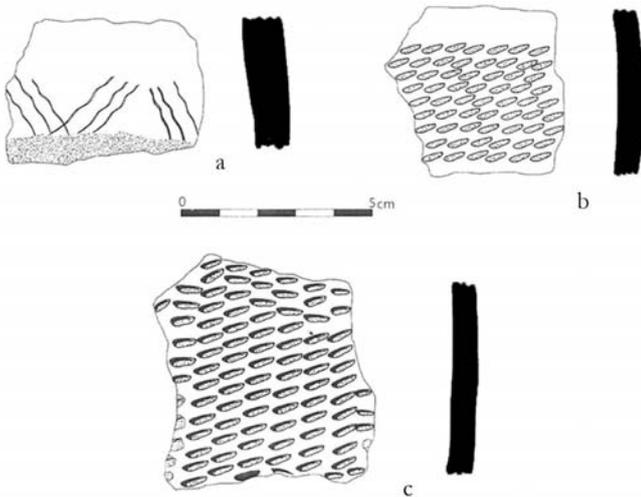


Figure 3. Abu Zumam, decorated sherds, a - herring-bone, b - linear impressions, c - fingernail, scale 1:2.

infrequent. Fractures are usually grey (5YR 5/1) whereas a pale red shade (10R 5/2) is rare. Rims are scarce comprising only 8% of the total “Khartoum Neolithic” potsherds.

Rims in most instances are a direct continuation of the vessel walls and they display pointed, rounded and flat tops (Figure 7 a, b1, b2, e1, e2). Everted (Figure 7-2 b3, b4) and inverted examples are in evidence (Figure 7-3 c1, c2).

Wall thicknesses generally range from 4-9mm with a few examples up to 14mm. Rims are usually between 3 and 7mm

Table 3. Distribution of rims and body-sherds as percentages.

	AR	AS	AZ	AL	AQS	GN
Rim Sherds	12.2	0.0	13.0	18.8	26.6	5.1
Body Sherds	87.8	100.0	87.0	81.2	73.04	94.9
No.	66	5	69	16	16	79

AR = Adid Raha; AS = Abu Sinan; AZ = Abu Zumam; AL = Alerbid; AQS = el-Qala es-Safra; GN = Jebel el-Godran

thick although some measure up to 11mm. Rim diameters are between 120-220mm and possibly belong to small and medium-sized bowls of hemispherical shape.

Coiling technique was used as could be inferred from the transverse breakage and uneven thicknesses of sherds. The pottery is of a hard fabric, mainly sand tempered and well fired.

Jebel Moya type of pottery

Pottery sherds decorated with a chevron pattern (Figure 2a) from Adid Raha and Jebel el-Godran are akin to some examples found at Jebel Moya (cf. Addison 1949, 204-205, pls XCVA, B: 1, 6, D: 1). On the other hand, herring-bone patterns (Figure 3a) from Abu Zuman are comparable to ones associated with large pots reported from Jebel Moya (cf. Addison 1949, pl. CX-1), Abu Geili (Addison 1951, pls

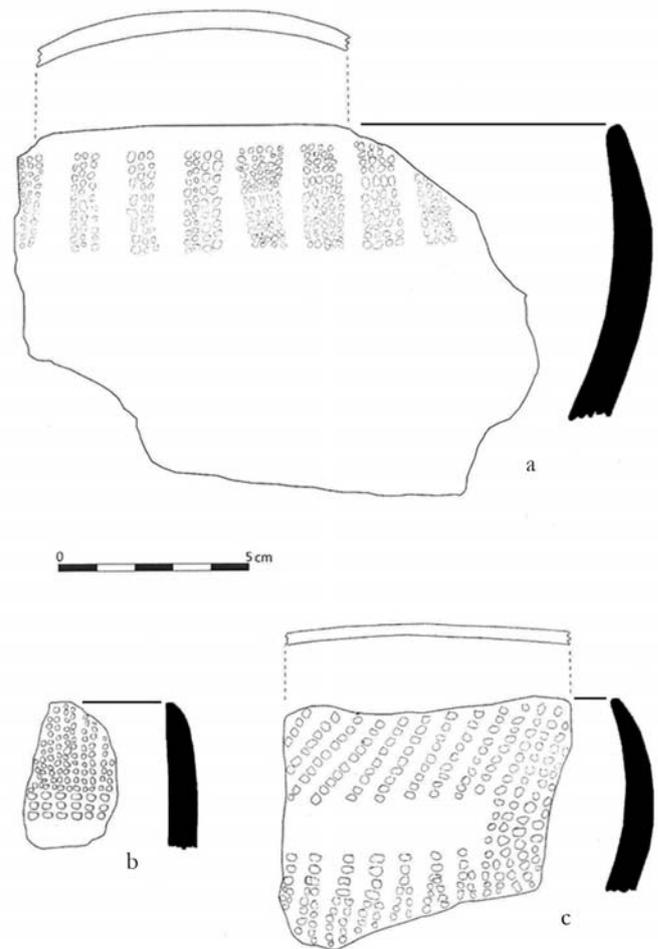


Figure 4. Alerbid, decorated sherds, a - zoned, b - atypical zoned, c - dotted zigzag, scale 1:2.

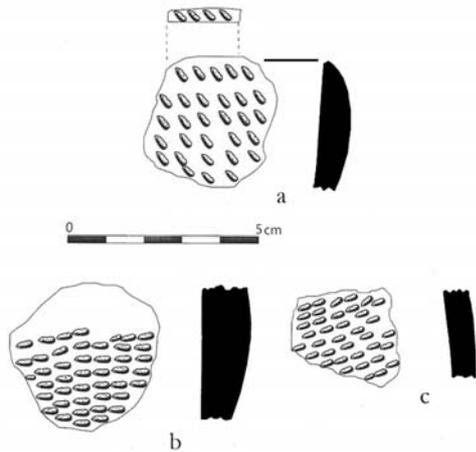


Figure 5. El-Qala es-Safra, decorated sherds, a - dotted oblique lines, b and c - possibly part of dotted zigzag decoration, scale 1:2.

XX111-V118, 12, 13; XXX III, 3, 5), Saqadi (Addison 1951, 122, pl. LXVII, A, 3, 5) and Dar el-Mek (Addison 1951, 65-167, pl. LXXXIII, A, 6-10; Eisa and Khabir 2006, 38, fig. 2) in the Blue Nile Province. Atypical linear patterns in the form of tiny finger impressions from Jebel el-Godran (Figure 6d) are comparable to the ones recorded from Jebel Moya (Addison 1951, pl. XC11, R1).

The surface colour of the sherds with chevron patterns is mainly light brownish-grey (10YR 6/2) whereas the fracture is dark grey (7.5YR N5/0). Herring-bone specimens are in a variety of brown shades (7.5YR 6/4, 10YR 6/4). Fractures are grey (7.5YR N5/0) or dark grey (7.5YR N4/0) in colour. Sherd thicknesses range from 9-10mm and rarely measure up to 13mm. The fabrics tend to show mixed tempering material (sand and chaff). The pottery is hard and well fired.

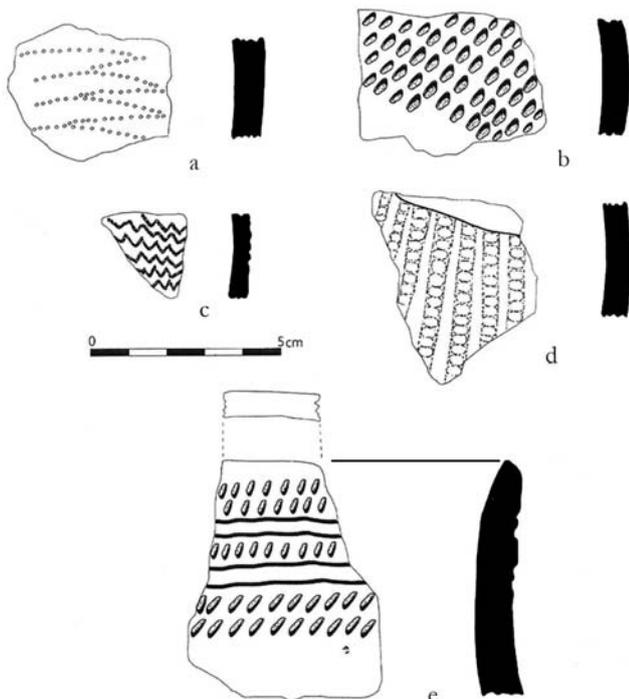


Figure 6. Jebel el-Godran, decorated sherds, a - dotted zigzag, b - fingernail, c - catfish, d - atypical linear, e - dotted straight lines, scale 1:2.

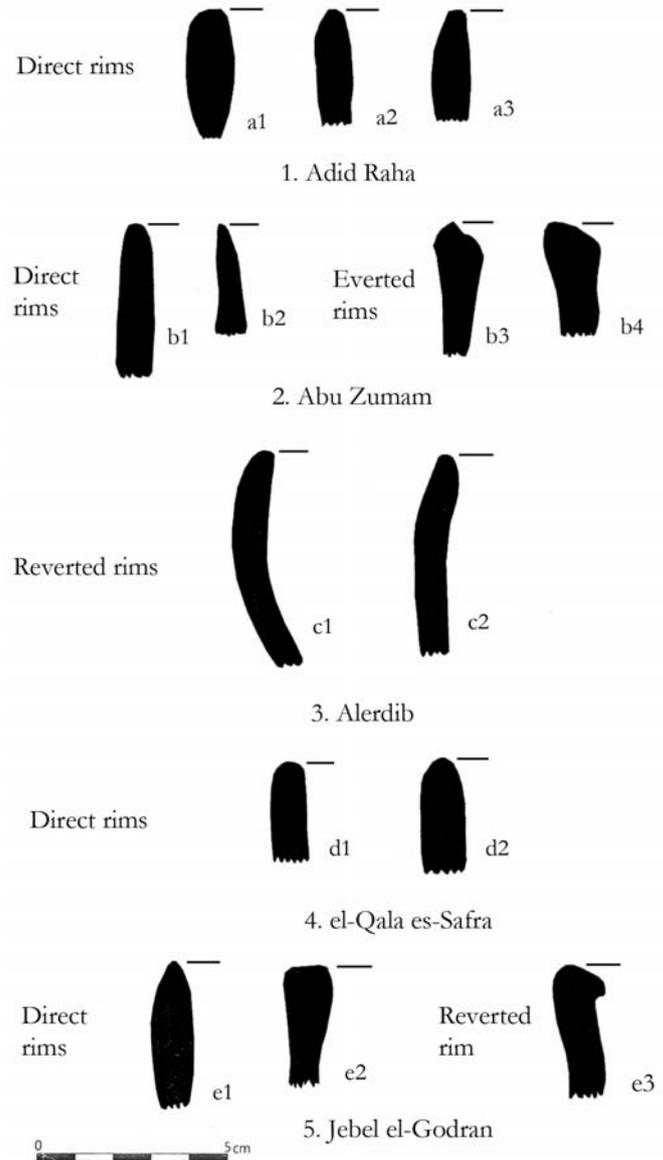


Figure 7. Rim types in the pottery samples, scale 1:2.

Meroitic type of pottery

Potsherds with zoned designs were attested at Alerbid and Adid Raha in very low percentages (Table 1, Figure 4a, b). The zoned designs on the pottery consist of rectangular dots arranged in a series of rows. This kind of decoration shows clear affinities with examples recorded from late Meroitic contexts at Abu Geili in the Blue Nile Province (cf. Addison 1951, pl. XXXIX-5). This type of zoned design is different from those found in the late Meroitic contexts at Khartoum (cf. Arkell 1949, 120, pls 106, 4; 107, 5; 108, 6; 110, 3; el-Hassan 1979, 179, fig. 19a-e and pl. G2); in the Blue Nile (Addison 1949, pl. XCVI, A, D, I; 1951, M46, pls XXXIX, B, 3, 1; LXV, 27-28; LXXXV-I; Gerhaz 1994, fig. 48; Manzo 1995, 13-15, fig. 2, C, d) and White Nile (Eisa and Khabir 2006, 38, fig. 2) regions.

The surface colour of the sherds ornamented with a zoned design is light brown (7.5YR 6/4 Munsell) whereas the fractures are grey (5YR 6/1) to very dark grey (7.5YR N/3) in colour.



Wall thicknesses range from 5-11mm. Rims are mainly direct or reverted in profile (Figure 7). Rim diameters are in the order of 200-250mm, often reaching 300mm, and were probably parts of medium-sized and large hemispherical bowls. The pottery is of a hard fabric, tempered with mixed material (chaff and sand) and well fired.

Concluding Remarks

The pottery reported from the six surveyed sites in Sodari district in northern Kordofan presents three pottery components covering a wide time span from the Neolithic to the late Meroitic periods. The pottery components (Neolithic, Jebel Moya and late Meroitic types) show developmental trends manifest in the occurrence of more refined workmanship over the passage of time. Chevron and herring-bone patterns tend to suggest cultural ties with pottery of the “Jebel Moya tradition” in the Blue Nile Province, Khartoum and along the White Nile. Pottery ornamented with zoned design differing from that recorded from the southern Meroitic provincial centres has been encountered on some of the surveyed sites (Adid Raha and Alerbid).

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