Seven tumulus graves were excavated in 2015 at El-Detti, Sudan, by the joint Polish-Sudanese team from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University (PCMA) and The National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM), under the direction of Mahmoud El-Tayeb. El-Detti village lies about 13 km downstream from Karima and 7 km upstream from El-Zuma. The explored tombs have been dated to the Early Makuria Phase II period, otherwise called the late post-Meroitic period (about AD 450 – 550).

Seven hundred and eight beads and pendants, together with some fragments, have been recorded during the excavations. They were usually found in grave chambers or shafts that were already robbed. Since the beads and pendants were picked up as dispersed items, types of beadwork cannot be indicated. The beads and pendants are made of a variety of materials (ostrich eggshell, bone, stone, glazed composition, glass, and metal-in-glass) and using diverse techniques. The majority of items can be paralleled at contemporary post-Meroitic sites. Some specimens find analogy in Lower Nubian royal tombs. Additionally, one pendant amulet is an earlier object and was clearly a reused item. Although no imports have been recognized in the pottery assemblage from the excavated tombs, several glass beads appear to be Indian or Sri Lankan products.

Ostrich eggshell

Twenty-six beads were made of ostrich eggshell. They are small disc cylinders perforated from both ends (figs. H.1, L.1). They belong to one of two types that have been recognized in the region. Small disc cylinders were especially common at post-Meroitic Lower Nubian sites. The El-Detti assemblage lacks the type of large discs with retouched edges that are observed at El-Zuma, a site that is contemporary with El-Detti.

Bone

A bone pendant (fig. I) is flat with a plain back and incised details on the slightly convex side. A lateral perforation runs through the head. The pendant consists of a head, a toroidal chest, and almost trapezoidal bottom. The head features big almond-shaped eyes, eyebrows, a triangular nose, very small mouth, and one preserved ear. The hair line at the top might be a feathered crown, and a vertically incised line between the head and chest could be a simplified beard. Tiny traces of blue/green glaze can be discerned in the incised lines delineating the nose and arched legs. Similar items made of faience, sandstone and glazed steatite have been identified as Bes or pseudo-Bes amulets with pentagonal face, and they were found between the First and the Third Cataract: in the Faras Region, at Buhen, Abri-Missiminia, and Amara West and ascribed to the Napatan Period. For another item the place of discovery is unknown. It might have been found in the Kawa or Napata region. Other example comes from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston collection, but it remains unprovenanced. In general this type of Bes is considered to

1 El-Tayeb and Czyżewska-Zalewska forthcoming
2 An overview of preserved objects made with beads and dated to late antique Nubia is given elsewhere (Then-Obłuska in press a)
3 El-Tayeb and Czyżewska-Zalewska forthcoming
4 Then-Obłuska in press a: Z24/49.1
5 Then-Obłuska in press b
6 e.g. Then-Obłuska in press a: Z28/15.1, Z28/17.1
7 Petacchi 2014: Fig. 2A-D, Table 2 and references therein
8 Ibid.: Fig. 2.E, Table 2: “Sample E”
9 MFA 72.4032
Fig. 1: Beads and pendant from El-Detti tumuli: A (D2/21), B (D2/22), C (D4/14.1), D (D4/23.1), E (D4/23.2), F (D4/23.3), G (D4/23.4), H (D4/23), I (D4/27), J (D5/9.1), K (D5/9.2), L (D5/9), M (D6/7.1), N (D7/8.1). Photos by Adam Kamrowski; plate design J. Then-Obłuska.
be made in a style that combined Egyptian tradition and indigenous form. Although found as a reused Napatan item in a post-Meroitic tomb, the El-Detti bone specimen is a new addition to the corpus of local variants of Bes. The re-use of Napatan and Meroitic Bes amulets has already been recorded in post-Meroitic and later contexts at Nubian, Eastern Desert and Red Sea sites.

Stone

Some long barrels or conical whitish beads might be made of marble (figs. B.1, E.1, L2). Similar beads can be observed from many post-Meroitic sites in the Fourth Cataract and to the south. For example, together with other beads they were part of circlet found at El-Ashamin and most probably a necklace from Kasserine Bahari.

Many small well-shaped globular beads were made of red agate and carnelian (fig. D). They were perforated from one end and show traces of a saw next to the larger hole opening. Larger specimens measure ca. 8 mm in diameter (fig. K).

Other small stone beads of unpolished red agate and black stone have elongated shapes, either oblate or conical (figs. G.1, N). Small stone beads of elongated shapes have already been identified from the region. Among unpolished red agate specimens, there are large globular beads measuring ca. 10 mm in diameter (figs. C, G.2).

A large lenticular bead is most probably made of dark carnelian or garnet (fig. F). It measures ca. 13 mm in diameter. It was pierced from both ends, which resulted in a double cylindrical shape of the perforation. What is more, traces of sawing are visible next to the hole opening, which is a characteristic feature of Egyptian and Nubian stone bead perforating. Similar large lenticular beads were found on a man’s left arm in Ballana Tomb 9. The man on whose skeleton the armlet was found was apparently a warrior. Another two bracelets were found on the right and left wrist of an adult in Ballana Tomb 47.

Glazed composition/faience

The overwhelming majority of beads is made of faience (n=565). They are small blue-glazed oblates (figs. B.2, H.3) and standard to long tubular beads (figs. A, H.2) that are well recognized in the Fourth Cataract region. Since the tradition of producing faience beads ceased in Egypt in the third century AD, they were most probably Nubian products.

Glass and metal-in-glass

Forty-four beads were made of glass and nine of metal-in-glass.

Drawn and segmented beads

Small blue glass beads were made of drawn tubes that were most probably segmented in molds. Such molds...
were found at Alexandria. Single- and double-segment beads could be discerned (figs. B.3, 3a, L.3).

Tubes made of a metal foil between two transparent glass layers were also drawn and then segmented into single- or double-segment beads (figs. J, L.6, 6a). The color of the foil is silver and silver-in-glass beads are often found in post-Meroitic assemblages in the region of the Fourth Cataract.

**Drawn, cut and rounded beads**

In contrast to beads that were sections of segmented tubes, other drawn tubes could be simply cut and more or less rounded. Semitranslucent green (n=8) and opaque orange (n=2) beads have been recorded at El-Detti in two graves (figs. B.4, L.4, 5). Drawn and rounded beads belong to the South Asian bead tradition and they have been recognized at Red Sea port sites and at other post-Meroitic sites in Nubia. Moreover, a study of the chemical composition of beads from Quseir port has recently confirmed their South Indian/Sri Lankan origin.

**Summary**

More than seven hundred beads have been registered from seven tumulus graves excavated during the 2014-2015 seasons at El-Detti. The site has been dated to the Early Makuria Phase II, otherwise called the late post-Meroitic period (about AD 450-550). In general, the El-Detti bead repertoire can be compared to that at the contemporary site of El-Zuma.

Among beads made of organic materials, many of them were disc cylinders made of ostrich eggshell. They are well recognized at other Nubian Nile Valley and Red Sea port sites. An outstanding pendant in the form of a Bes amulet must be a reused item, as it finds parallels only in objects described recently as Napatan. Finds of Napatan and Meroitic Bes amulets at post-Meroitic and later Nubian sites has been previously affirmed.

In comparison to the post-Meroitic assemblages in Nubia and at El-Zuma’s tumulus cemetery, the El-Detti collection lacks the well-known stone tear-drop pendants. The stone beads were perforated from one end, and show traces of a saw next to the larger hole opening. In addition to the small well-shaped globular carnelian beads and long square bicones, one large bead has a lenticular shape. This large bead finds parallels at El-Zuma, Firka, and the royal cemetery at Ballana. In the Ballana and Firka tombs these beads were found as elements of bracelets/armlets.

As at other post-Meroitic sites in Upper Nubia, the majority of beads from El-Detti was made of blue glazed composition/faience. Since the tradition of producing faience beads ceased in Egypt in the third century AD, they were most probably Nubian products.

Drawn and segmented blue glass and silver-in-glass beads dominate the glass bead assemblage at El-Detti. They are also very common finds in contemporary Egypt and Nubia. Green and orange glass beads, that were drawn, cut and rounded, are well known at Late Roman Red Sea ports and post-Meroitic Nubian sites, including the royal cemeteries in Lower Nubia. They are most probably of South Indian/Sri Lankan origin.

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**Zusammenfassung**


Wie auch in anderen postmeroitischen Friedhöfen in Obernubien ist der Großteil der Perlen in El-Detti aus einer blau glasierten Fayence hergestellt worden. Da die Fayenceproduktion in Ägypten im 3. Jh. n Chr. ihr Ende fand, sind diese Perlen hochwahrscheinlich aus nubischer Produktion.

Ein außergewöhnlicher Knochenanhänger in der Form eines Bes-Amulets muss ein wiedergenutzter Anhänger sein, da Parallelen dazu nur aus dem napatanischen Kontext bekannt sind.

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The Old Nubian Texts from Attiri is the first publication in the Dotawo • Monographs series. It presents heretofore unpublished material, an edition of a series of manuscripts discovered in the frame of the Aswan High Dam campaign at the site of Attiri, a rocky island in the Batn el-Hajjar region in the Sudan, and does so in an innovative way, through an intense collaboration of the editors under the name of the Attiri Collaborative. By bringing together their diverse backgrounds in linguistics, archeology, Bible studies, history, anthropology, and philology, the editors hope to have provided an example of a new model of collective manuscript editing and the results such collaboration can attain.

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