

FIRST-MILLENNIUM AGRICULTURIST CERAMICS
OF THE EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA: AN
INVESTIGATION INTO SOME WAYS IN WHICH
ARTEFACTS ACQUIRE MEANING

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Title:

First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics of the Eastern Cape, South Africa: an investigation into some ways in which artefacts acquire meaning

Summary:

Artefacts acquire/embody migratory meanings according to contexts of raw material manipulation, use, discard and discourse. First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics and concomitant private and public significances/use values are placed within aspects of a deep past Stone Age history of space and artefact usage in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Some thought paradigms and cultural contexts are examined as having directly influenced discourse, what artefacts were foregrounded, and in which manner writers of southern African prehistory considered them. Thereafter ceramic artefacts and associated technologies are focussed upon as being intimate to personal/community lifeways and worldviews. Domestic and ceremonial utilityware, figurines and masks, as well as clay usage in homebuilding and metalworking, and urges to apply a mark to malleable clay, or deliberately alter and/or bury ceramic artefacts, are explored as manifestations of medium and usage well suited to regularly reconfigured meanings.

List of key terms:

Artefacts; burials; ceramics; communication; community; death; engraving/incising; Early Iron Age; Eastern Cape, South Africa; figurines; First-Millennium Agriculturist; gender; grave goods; homestead; Kalundu Tradition; lifeways; masks; meaning/significance; prehistory; potters; rites of passage; sculpture; style; technology; thought; use value; utilityware.

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PREFACE

The invention of ceramic^I vessels for cooking stands out as an important event, or series of events, in prehistory^{II}. As a potter who is involved with clay every day I have a particular interest in the history of clay as medium, and in discourse regarding people who made and used prehistoric ceramic artefacts. In the relative absence of art historical literature geared to exploring prehistoric southern African ceramics technology, artefacts, and such indigenous knowledge systems as may have been expressed by prehistoric potters, such investigations are long overdue.

In this study my interests in clay and people have been specifically focussed on the region around my hometown East London, Eastern Cape, South Africa. My vantage point relies on meticulously documented fieldwork and commentary by various researchers. For the sake of a free flow of ideas, instances of detailed fieldwork and reports are appended to this dissertation. For ease of archaeological site^{III} identification, bold type^{IV} for sites is used, and maps are included.

^I I use this term loosely to refer to fired clay artefacts, usually as a result of human agency.

^{II} This invention facilitated the "development of 'wet' methods of cooking [such as] boiling, steaming, frying and the like" (MacLean 1998: 168-169). It should be noted that boiling foodstuffs without the aid of a ceramic vessel was previously possible. Arnold (1985) has discussed methods of cooking "like stone boiling in vessels of basketry, wood or hide" wherein heated stones were placed along with food and water. Such methods were, however, laborious, and required constant attention when compared with boiling food in a ceramic vessel on a fire.

^{III} A site, in archaeological terms, is regarded as "a cluster of artefacts that may range from one or two objects to a whole city ... places where archaeological work has taken place" (Hall, M. 1996(a): 12).

^{IV} Bold type is also used for place names, of farms for instance, which were visited by me but have not yet entered the canon of sites excavated and written up by professional archaeologists. Italics are used for emphasis.

I am grateful to many people for their encouragement, interest, and generosity with ideas, collections, and facilities. I would like to thank Marika Tucker, subject librarian for Art History at UNISA; Francois Coetzee, archaeologist and curator of the UNISA Museum; Janette Deacon of the National Monuments Council; Geraldine Morkom and the staff of the East London Museum; Manton Hirst of the Amathole Museum; and Antoinette Du Plessis: all people who collectively contributed to getting me started with confidence, and for keeping me going.

Special thanks also to Johan Binneman for the invitation to "come play all day", his selfless assistance and immense kindness in allowing me unlimited access, and for granting me permission to include as yet unpublished material. Thanks also to Lita Webley, and the Albany Museum for permission to photograph **Kulubele** and other ceramics in their care; to Victor Biggs for taking me to the **Kulubele** site and sharing his prodigious local knowledge; to Wesley and Colleen Sternberg for their generosity and hospitality on the occasions of visits to **Kulubele**; to Manie Opperman for in-depth discussions and facilitation of access and permission to photograph **Canasta Place** and other ceramics in the care of Fort Hare University.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Notes:

Some photographs of ceramics feature a matchstick (or a matchbox), measuring $\pm 4\text{cm}$ in length, as an aid in judging scale. Measurements, when given, are usually approximate.

Authors of graphics and photographs are accredited, when not the author of the work cited, if I am sure of alternative authorship. In much of the literature accreditation is not specific per graphic or photograph, so an assumption is made that the author is responsible for the visuals in such instances.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BP Before Present is used when radiocarbon dates are given. The Present is taken as 1950, when the first radiocarbon dates became available (Hall, M. 1996(a): 122).
- EIA Early Iron Age is replaced by First-Millennium Agriculturist in this text, except in quotations.
- F-MA First-Millennium Agriculturist is the abbreviation used only in conjunction with a quotation that features 'Early Iron Age'. First-Millennium refers specifically to the first millennium AD.
- FPS-MA Southern African First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist era.
- IA Iron Age, (which appears in some quotations), is replaced by First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist in this text, without abbreviation.
- LIA Late Iron Age, (which appears in some quotations), is replaced by Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist in this text.
- LSA This abbreviation for Late Stone Age will only appear in quotations.
- MSA This abbreviation for Middle Stone Age will only appear in quotations.
- PS-MA Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist. Second-Millennium refers specifically to the second millennium AD.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation recounts some of my reflections on ways in which prehistoric ceramics may be contextualised and acquire meanings, with particular reference to those artefacts created by First-Millennium¹ Agriculturist potters of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Ceramic artefacts constitute only a portion of known prehistoric material culture². While I believe that ideally such ceramics should be studied within a broader framework, this dissertation seeks to redress what appears to be a marginalisation of clay as medium in art historical literature pertaining to the prehistory of southern Africa. Consequently, I hope my focus on ceramics will contribute towards a more comprehensive understanding of the prehistoric material culture matrix.

Ceramics can be conceptualised as

an active, constitutive feature of human life, [taking into account a view that humans are symbolists and materialists simultaneously, that the production of human culture and the production of meaning is actively affected with material culture – material culture that both constructs and is constructed by cultural and social action (Conkey 1991: 71).

My investigation of lifeways, artefacts, praxis and discourse is a search for perpetually changing glimpses into the complexity of prehistoric visual art practices. In this process of examining primary texts I have aimed to create a visually vivid annotated record of the ceramics discussed, thereby formulating a unique secondary text. It is my hope that this secondary text will serve to draw greater attention to both ways of looking into the deep past, and at clay as an expressive medium eloquently manipulated by prehistoric southern African potters.

¹ First-Millennium refers to present usage AD timeframe.

² Metalworking, stone tool making, rock painting, house building, bead making, weapon making, and personal adornment are, for instance, all activities that contribute to creation of material culture.

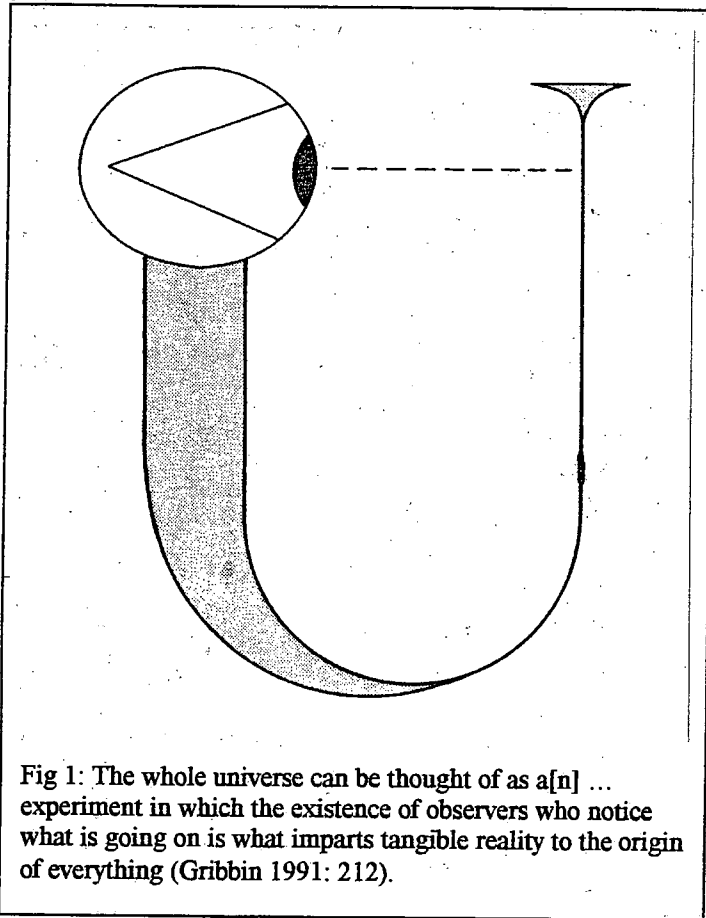


Fig 1: The whole universe can be thought of as a[n] ... experiment in which the existence of observers who notice what is going on is what imparts tangible reality to the origin of everything (Gribbin 1991: 212).

Prehistoric ceramics seem to be somewhat like Schrödinger's dead or alive cat³, used here as an extended metaphor which suggests that things remain hidden unless actively looked for, and that such an act of looking influences what is found (Gribbin 1991: 2) [fig 1]. Likewise, Tim Ingold (1993: 153) maintains that themes of archaeology, as set out in site reports, are like myths or stories that guide the attention of listeners/readers into the worlds of prehistory. But he cautions against a temptation to assume that since stories are stories they are, in some sense, unreal, for this is to suppose only one real reality, or true truth, from which we are excluded.

Both Schrödinger and Ingold seem to be implying that ideas of physical reality as incontrovertible fact could be suspended, but not at the expense of rigorous investigation. A line of theoretical inquiry adopted in this study is towards developing strands of ideas rather than towards formulating a definitive metanarrative. To this end I have chosen to foreground ceramic artefacts and ceramic praxis as a method of investigation into ways in which prehistoric objects and peoples embody/acquire meaning. In doing so, it is useful to probe both macroscale and microscale investigations into conceptualisations of prehistoric lifeways and material culture in order to at least partly reveal some underlying premises and interpretations that may or may not be useful.

Macroscale theories tend towards a grand picture of actors reacting to and manipulating the environment. Such an approach to prehistory has largely emphasised dichotomous thought, and attempted to establish distance between both investigator and the investigated, as well as between humankind and their physical

³ For a quantum physics account of Schrödinger's cat experiment see Appendix 1, and Gribbin 1991.

environment. Such an approach would, for instance, regard prehistoric potters as being mainly subject to

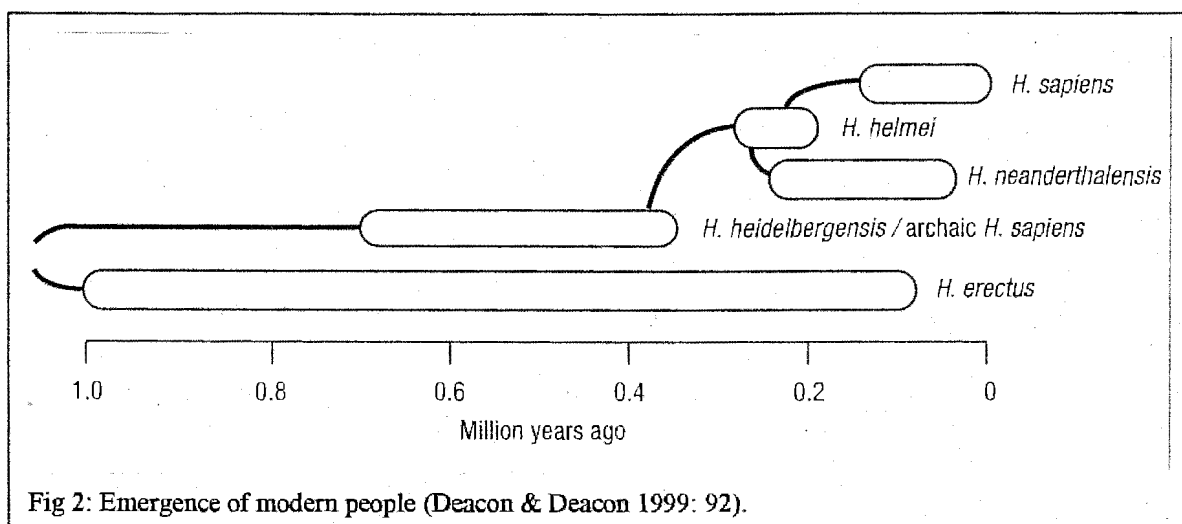
a structuring context ... that includes environmental conditions, physical constraints imposed by the nature of raw materials in tandem with the functional requirements of the artefacts being produced and used, and overall adaptive strategies created to promote cultural survival through technological means (Dobres 1995: 28).

Such macroscale suppositions are incomplete on their own, partly because focus on a grand picture precludes adequate attention being given to daily domestic life, individual intentionality, and an ebb and flow of decisions characteristic of life as lived.

Consequently, I favour a theoretical approach that acknowledges value in macroscale insights, but chooses to foreground microscale investigations into prehistoric ceramics praxis. Thus, clay artefacts are recognised at the outset as resulting from “unfolding actions and experiences of the hands, minds, hearts, practices, values, and social labour of technical agents engaging with each other while working the material world” (Dobres in press: 2). Furthermore, a suspension of conceptions of academic distance associated with grand picture investigations, so as to dwell in domestic detail and seek commonality with prehistory, is integral to my theoretical approach.

Thus I am suggesting that facets of prehistory may be entered into⁴ by the very act of enquiry itself. Recognition of some commonality in humanity and consciousness through time facilitates such an entry into prehistoric studies. Some commonalities, for instance, have been recognised in observations such as “all mtDNA in living populations can be

⁴ In a sense of conceptually becoming partially participant in prehistory.



traced back to a single ancestor ... in Africa" (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 88-92) [fig 2].

Other recognitions, such as that of a commonality shared by matter through time, serve to act as a further enabling mechanism that blurs boundaries between past and present. John Gribbin (1991: 229), in an interpretation of quantum theory, has related that the Aspect experiments⁵

tell us that particles that were once together in an interaction remain in some sense parts of a single system, which responds together to further interactions. Virtually everything we see and touch and feel is made up of collections of particles⁶ that have been involved in interactions with other particles right back through time ... Indeed, the particles that make up my body once jostled in close proximity and interacted with the particles that now make up part of your body. (My footnote).

Such suggestions as those made by Deacon & Deacon and Gribbin may seem problematic both because of their macroscale content and seemingly mystical approach. Yet such conceptualisations are useful as a point of entry towards theorising becoming into the deep past, and also facilitate an avoidance of entrenched dichotomous thought regarding ideas of past and present as being irreconcilable dualities.

Anne Solomon (1999: 55-56), in her recognition of Tim Ingold's 1993 contribution towards "a way of linking past and present via the experience of form", offers fresh insight:

⁵ These experiments were "designed to detect the underlying reality below the unreal world of the quantum" (Gribbin 1991: 3), and are fully described in Gribbin (1991: 215-234).

⁶ Stephen Hawking (1989: 70) has concurred with this view in his assertion that "everything in the universe, including light and gravity, can be described in terms of particles".



Fig 3: Part of an unexcavated area of **Kulubele valley** (27.51S; 32.25E), where the soil possibly covers an extensive Eastern Cape First-Millennium Agriculturist settlement (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 4: Mr Mkululi Ngqola at Fort Hare Archaeology Laboratory, and boxes of artefacts (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

Ingold's epistemology bridges past and present via the argument that 'the practice of archaeology is ... a form of dwelling' ... and 'the knowledge born of this practice is thus on a par with that which comes from the practical activity of the native dweller, and which the anthropologist, through participation, seeks to learn and understand' (Ingold 1993: 152). This acknowledges differences between 'original inhabitants' and researchers, while also specifying how contemporary researchers can nevertheless 'know' anything about past realities.

This knowing "decentres the present ... as we situate ourselves in a distant time, where we are forced to deal with snatches of information that may [seem to] have no place, significance, or utility in our own world" (Hassan 1998: 263).

From time immemorial people have left sketchy imprints on the landscape⁷ of the present. Some of these imprints, traces of material culture in combination with faunal and other residues, offer cameos of deep past lifeways. That such imprints present possibilities of becoming into a story of prehistoric ceramics returns me to an earlier observation: like Schrödinger's cat, prehistoric ceramics and associated context of social meaningfulness appear not to exist until specifically looked for.

Southern African prehistoric ceramic artefacts seemed at first to be barely visible to me: buried out of view [fig 3], or stashed away in cardboard boxes in specialised institutions [fig 4], or formally displayed without much explanatory text [fig 5, overleaf]. And yet, once I began to learn how and where to look,

⁷ Landscape is used here in the sense suggested by Ingold (1993: 171) of being "not a totality that you or anyone else can look *at*, it is rather the world *in* which we stand in taking up a point of view".



Fig 6: Potsherd projecting from a riverbank at **Kulubele** (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 7: Potsherd from a shell midden at **Shelly Beach**, West Bank, East London (Photo: John Steele, 2000).



Fig 5: Prehistoric ceramic artefacts, part of a "Research and Curation" display at the Albany Museum, Grahamstown (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

such artefacts are easily found. In the Eastern Cape they seem to be ubiquitous alongside inland watercourses [fig 6], in amongst shell midden debris on the coastline [fig 7], and carefully preserved for future study in some museum and university collections [fig 8 (a) and (b) overleaf].

Likewise, despite being vast, discourse featuring prehistoric ceramics seems to be confined largely to rarefied realms of specialist publications⁸. That southern African ceramic artefacts and praxis are less visible in art historical literature than rock art, movements of peoples, and general accounts of prehistory⁹, may well express depreciative attitudes towards clayworking and

⁸ A recent search through catalogues at the East London library, for instance, revealed a smattering of southern African rock art/prehistory publications. No literature was found that even cursorily exposed the extent of archaeological discourse pertaining to the prehistoric ceramic heritage of southern Africa. Furthermore, no mention is to be found of prehistoric southern African ceramics in publications such as Charleston 1969; Freestone & Gaimstér 1997; Peterson 1995; and Phillips 1996, all of which purport to cover aspects of African and/or world ceramic histories and traditions.

⁹ See, for example: Deacon & Deacon 1999, Dowson 1992, Dowson & Lewis-Williams 1994, Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989, Hall, M. 1996(a), Huffman 1989(a), Wadley 1997.



Fig 8(b): First-Millennium Agriculturist **Happy Rest** rimsherds [top], Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist **Eiland** bowl [middle], and Colonial Era **Moloko** vessel (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of UNISA, Witwatersrand University, and Northern Flagship: African Window, respectively).



Fig 8(a): Teaching display and workroom of Johan Binneman, Albany Museum, Grahamstown [above]; and display of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics at Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany, and Natal Museums).

dismissive attitudes towards artefacts associated with everyday use. Furthermore, Prudence Rice (1991: 436) has suggested that interwoven with ... pejorative attitudes is a set of simplistic, stereotyped beliefs about traditional domestic/household origins and continued practice of the craft, and artifactual associations between women and pottery. Pottery making is typically seen as 'women's work', and the roles of women's work and domestic activities have long been ignored or undervalued in research focussed on macroscale grand pictures of prehistory informed by patriarchy¹⁰.

¹⁰ I agree with Susan Kent (1998(b): 12) that "no one sex is more important to know about than the other. I think that it is relatively safe to say that in all societies both sexes contribute to the archaeological record in one way or another".

Redress of such assumptions and marginalisations exposed by Rice informs much of the substance of my search for ceramic artefacts and “women and men interacting and/or reacting to one another” (Kent 1998: 12) in prehistory. My study also probes for ways in which looking at prehistoric artistic praxis can be extended to include consideration of technology as it interfaces with thought (Solomon 1999: 59, citing Dobres in press) as an approach to finding ways in which artefacts acquire meaning.

Like Schrödinger, I have decided to take a specific look behind the scenes, in this instance, at specialist literature and First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic collections of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Artefacts of material culture, in original and present day context, offer palimpsests of visual art practices, daily life activities and thinkings of both First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples, and of some thinkings and practices of historic time researchers. Some researchers, for example, “use ceramics, and specifically the shape, decoration and placement of decoration on the vessel to construct traditions (cultures¹¹) as well as the movement (migration/diffusion¹²) of traditions through time” (my footnotes) (Francois Coetzee e-mail: 8/9/99).

Such macro-analytical approaches look at broad stylistic trends within an archaeological record, and individual ceramic styles of particular potters¹³, for instance, are subsumed within concepts of

¹¹ As a point of departure, culture may be regarded as “an aggregate of symbols that gives meaning and expression to social organisation, a series of rules to govern behaviour and a set of values to guide choice” (Huffman 1990: 10).

¹² The distinction here refers to the idea that technologies may be transferred without a mass movement of people (migration) taking place, although a gradual diffusion of peoples may occur, for instance, through intermarriage.

¹³ Regarding the readability of personal clayworking style, Garth Sampson (1988: 49), in writing about prehistoric ceramics of the upper Seacow (Footnote continued overleaf)

general stylistic and/or social identity. Furthermore, site specific ceramic styles and/or particular settlements of people in turn become subsumed, for instance, within traditions and complexes¹⁴.

Tom Huffman (2000: 1) has suggested that such researches are based on recognition that "material culture can express group identity because it forms an arbitrary but repeated code of cultural symbols". Specific design fields have been found to be a repeated code occurring on a wide variety of objects in such a way as to be recognisable by other groups of people, thus helping to contribute to identity. Furthermore, within the group, "material culture style can carry messages about aspects of social organisation and daily life, [and] ceramic products are actively involved with cultural dynamics".

On the other hand, without being mutually exclusive and often drawing on macroscale research insights, micro-analytical approaches look at what can be reconstructed of intimate domestic and other such details. Such researches have tended, for instance, to inquire into household and community "use value"¹⁵ of ceramics, and "various phosphenes underlying and incorporated into ceramic designs" (Manton Hirst e-mail: 18/7/99). In this approach, ceramics are regarded as a part of the

Valley in the Kalahari, has observed that "one decorator's hand can be distinguished from another's. Decorations are so varied, and individual idiosyncratic features are so common, that sherd matching is quite easy".

¹⁴ In terms of 'archaeology speak' ideas of area-specific space are thought of as follows: COMPLEX – two or more traditions; TRADITION – a series of related ceramic units; BRANCH – one of multiple sequences within a tradition; SUB-BRANCH – one of multiple sequences within a branch; PHASE – time segments of a tradition; and FACIES – ceramic unit. (Huffman 2000: 6).

¹⁵ "... meaning of an object resides not merely in its contrast to others within a set. Meaning also derives from the associations and use of an object, which itself becomes, through the associations, the node of a network of references and implications" (Hodder 1982(b): 9).

daily "visual environment", one of the elements in everyday life that "orchestrate signification, deploy and stage relations of power, and construct and embody ideologies through the establishment of frameworks of legibility" (Preziosi 1989: 169).

Both macro and micro approaches to researching First-Millennium Agriculturist prehistory have found ceramic style to be a useful characteristic of identity, a trace of group or individual expressive conventions. Some style theorists conceptualised ceramic and other artefacts as signalling both individual assertive and group emblematic (Weissner 1983, 1984, and 1985) design phosphenes. "One of the reasons for the wide ranging conformity in ceramic decoration produced by southern Africa's first farmers might be that common pottery decoration signified for people living in separate villages connections of mutual dependence" (Hall, M. 1996(a): 199). Furthermore, Garth Sampson (1988: 16)¹⁶ has suggested "group signals (via decorative motifs) will be expressed more emphatically under conditions of stress and competition for resources".

Weissner and Sampson focussed on communicative capacity articulated by stylistic variation. This particular focus is contrasted with that of James Sackett (1986: 275), who in his model of isochrestic style was more concerned with "where style resides". He concluded that in ceramics, isochrestic style might be seen in decoration choices, and in choices made "with respect to clays, tempers¹⁷, shapes, and techniques of construction and firing". This perspective was concerned with "time-space systematics" (Hegmon 1992: 518), rather than with "the

¹⁶ Sampson cited Hodder 1982(a); and Weissner 1984.

¹⁷ Temper refers to types of strengthening additives that may be worked into raw clay prior to shaping. In present ceramics terminology potters use the word "grog" to indicate the addition of prefired crushed clay as an additive. Other additives could include grass fibre or river sand.

intentions of artisans" (Sackett 1986: 275)¹⁸, drawing no distinction between style and utility. Sackett's theoretical approach also contrasted with an earlier contribution made by Martin Wobst (1977: 321) who foregrounded information exchanges, but as separate from "utilitarian functions".

Ian Hodder (1982(a): 212) identified another approach by conceptualising style as active, asserting that "material culture transforms, rather than reflects, social organisation according to the strategies of groups, their beliefs, concepts and ideologies". Consequently, "style is 'a way of doing', where 'doing' includes the activities of thinking, feeling, being" (Hodder 1990: 45).

To this way of thinking focus on "use of style-bearing objects ... has been broadened to include active human agents. Researchers ... have recognised that style is not a unidimensional phenomenon" (Hegmon 1992: 521, 522). Style was thus conceptualised as "a way of doing something ... [that] involves a choice among various alternatives" (Hegmon 1992: 518, 519)¹⁹. Another fundamental observation is that human agency and an understanding of ceramic stylistic variation are separate yet intertwined issues.

Tom Huffman (2000: 4) has maintained that most archaeological analysis that includes ceramics is based on the principle that ceramic styles can be reliably defined by considering combinations of vessel profile, layout of decoration design field, and motif. He suggested that, for the purpose of finding a group style, such elements as vessel function and individual expressive

¹⁸ "*Isochrestism* ... is not a theory of stylistic behaviour and claims no insights into the intentions of artisans" (Sackett 1986: 275).

¹⁹ Hegmon cited David et al 1988; Hardin 1984; Hodder 1990; Sackett 1982; and Weissner 1990 in support of this way of thinking.

traits be treated as extraneous²⁰. Thus, "an interrelated series of types is formed when the motifs and layouts of simple types occur as components of the most complex type". It is further suggested that "analyses of stylistic structure help to connect archaeological entities with historically known groups of people" (Huffman 2000: 4). It has, however, also been noted that "material culture is not necessarily isomorphic to living cultures" (Hegmon 1992: 527).

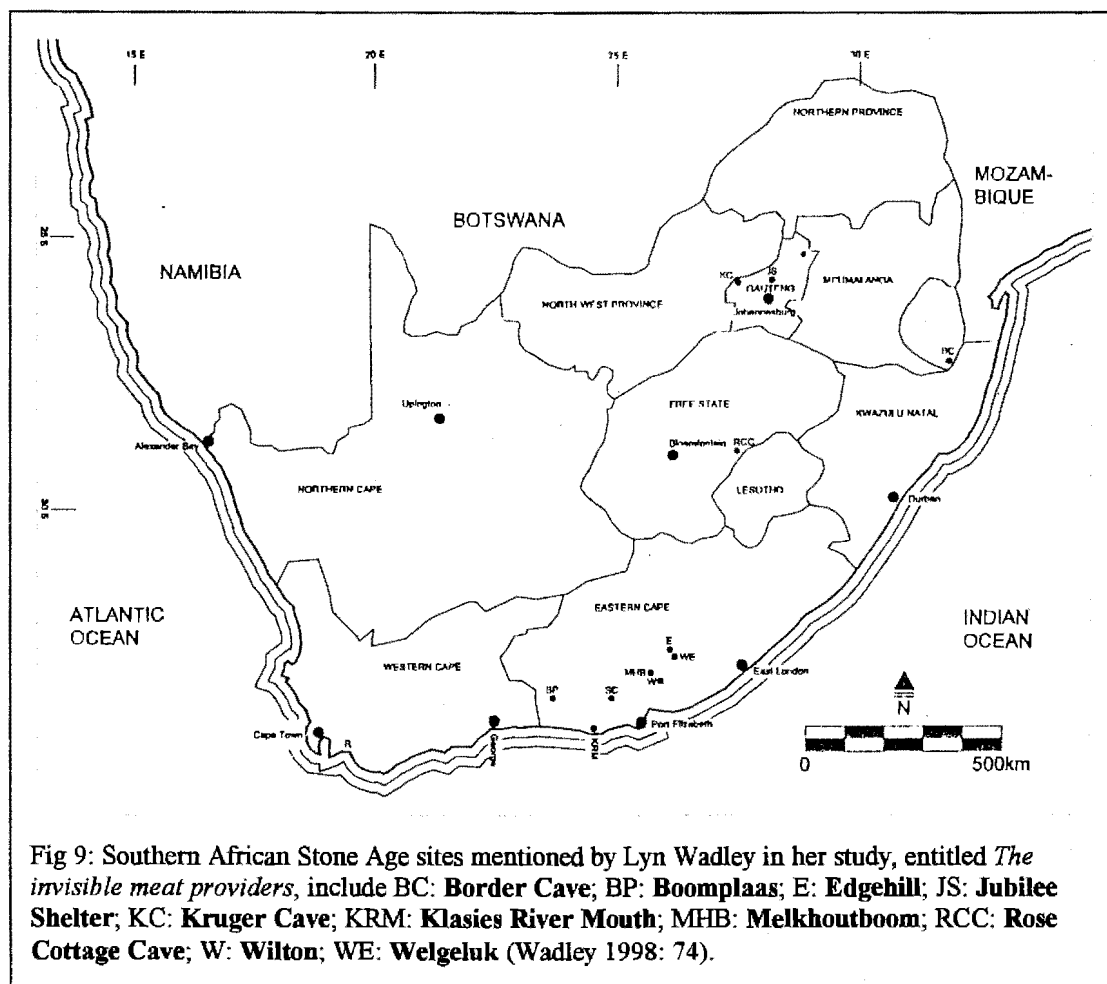
Studies of prehistoric artefacts and what is known of social and cultural practices can also, as suggested by Gero and Conkey (1991: 5), aim to "identify participation in gender relations, gender ideologies, and gender roles". It is thought that this focus on gender²¹ could facilitate the probing of "underlying assumptions about gender and difference" (Gero & Conkey 1991: 5), both within prehistoric and contemporary contexts.

Lyn Wadley (1998: 69) has shown some of the unspoken assumptions about gender stereotypes that have previously characterised research into prehistoric lifeways²² to be obfuscatory:

²⁰ That vessel function and individual expressive traits are treated as extraneous when searching for a group style is understandable because otherwise too many variables are introduced. But this does not diminish the importance of vessel function and individual expressive trait for researches focussed on microscale aspects of prehistoric ceramics praxis.

²¹ Gender, as conceptualised by Kent (1998: 9-11), is regarded as the "interaction between females and males as constructed by culture ... Gender defines what it is to be a woman or a man in a particular society and the kind of behaviour and thought that is considered to be feminine or masculine. While the sex of individuals is a basic biological division among humans, gender is the cultural construction of that division". Furthermore, "the engendered nature of human activities is not in doubt" (Kohl 1993: 14-15 cited by Dobres & Hoffman 1994: 240).

²² Dobres & Hoffman (1994: 240) cite studies by Conkey and Spector 1984; and Gero 1983, 1991 (a) and (b), as examples that "unmask the culturally specific gender biases inherent in ... the practice of archaeology". They also cite Dobres 1992; Gifford-Gonzalez 1993; and discussion by Wylie 1991 for studies on similar biases inherent in "the analytical categories and interpretations presented for various points of time in the past".



For many years, archaeologists uncritically labelled Stone Age man as 'man the hunter', 'man the butcher', 'man the meat provider', and 'man the toolmaker'. Since cultural development is often considered to be linked to technological development, the unspoken assumption was that man was the agent of change. This left woman as the passive bearer of children and collector of plant food, so it is not surprising that Stone Age woman went almost unnoticed in the archaeological record. She was often absent from archaeological reports except where she was mentioned in her capacity as 'woman the plant food gatherer'.

Wadley's (1998: 69) study of some southern African Stone Age sites [fig 9] led her to deduce that "such gender stereotypes illustrate an androcentric and ethnocentric view of gender roles; ... [and] are almost certainly inappropriate for people in the past". Her research suggests that the interpretation of women as nonhunters or as exclusively plant providers is largely a Western construct. Likewise, Stone Age women are "unlikely to have waited passively for men to produce tools for them ... [and that] they are most likely to have produced their own flakes" (Wadley 1998: 73, and 81).

Likewise, Susan Kent (1998: 53) has asserted that "there is no archaeological evidence of which I am aware indicating that only men made or used stone tools ... I do not see lithic tools ... as gendered artefacts". She thereby called for "new critiques ... made from gendered perspectives without seeking gender attribution" (Dobres 1995, cited by Wadley 1998: 69).

Lita Webley (1997: 171), of the Albany Museum in Grahamstown, has further observed that

the meaning of artefacts can be ambiguous, implicit, re-interpreted or manipulated. They have multiple meanings at different levels. An item can be interpreted in a number of different ways by different interest groups and

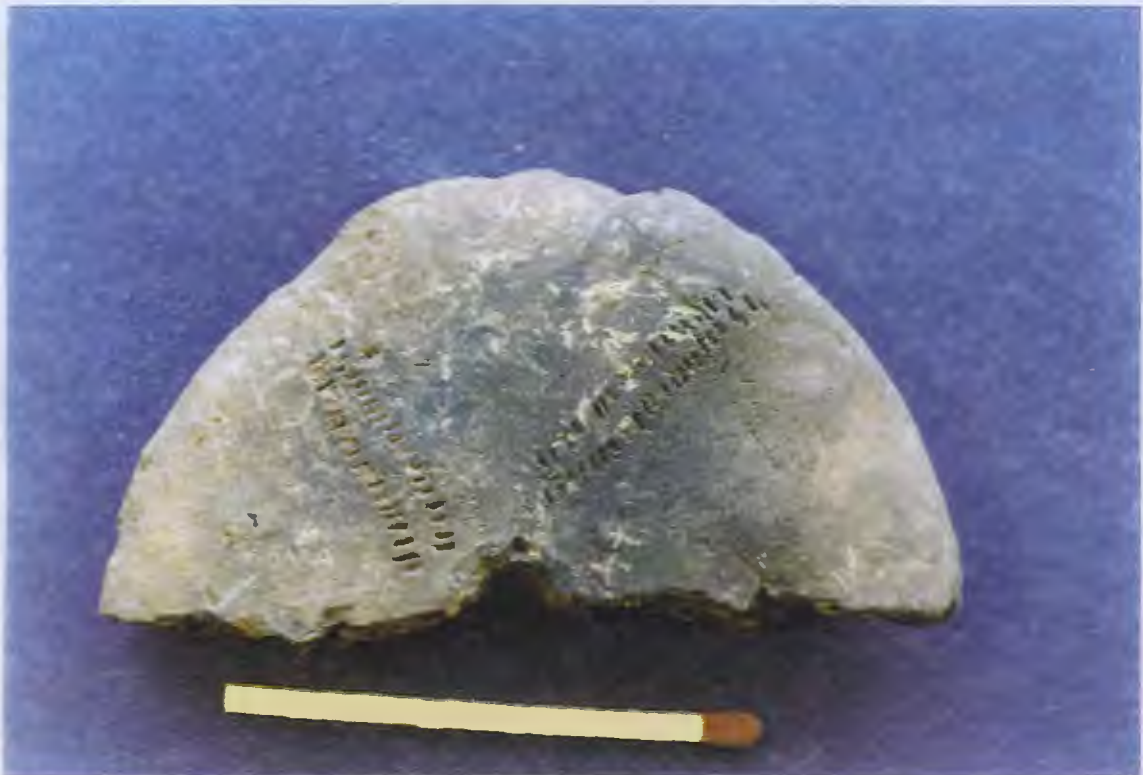
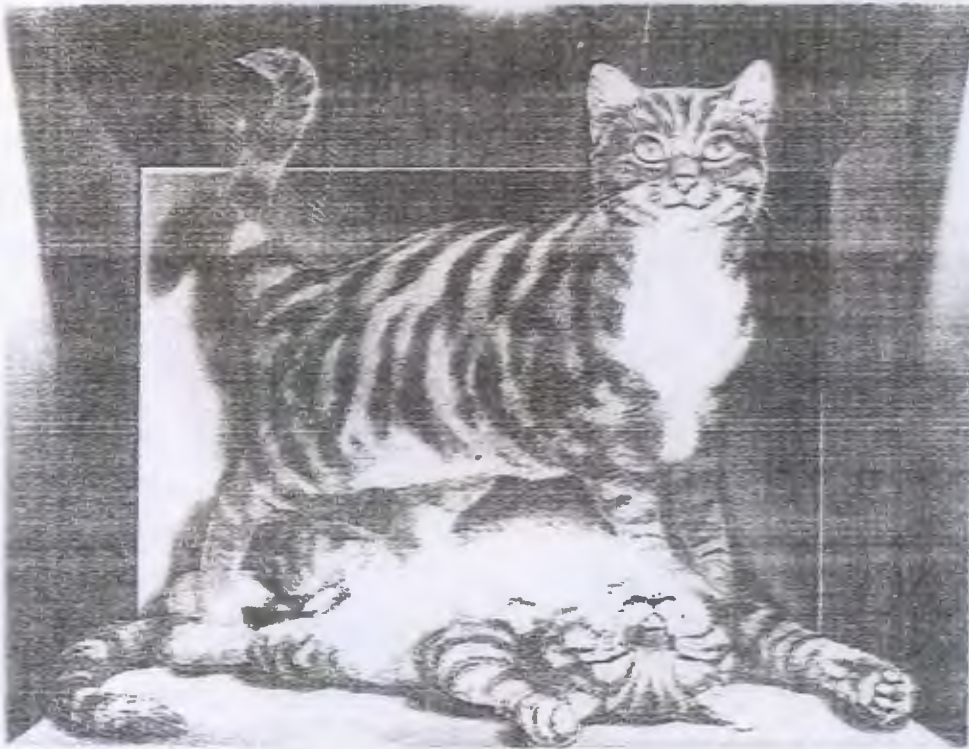


Fig 10: Schrödinger's cat [above], as depicted on the cover of Gribbin 1991, and portion of a Kulubele engraved ceramic disc with deliberately made centre hole. This artefact seems to be just as intriguing and mysterious as Schrödinger's cat. Furthermore, certainty regarding use value is denied. Diameter 64mm; thickness at edge 4mm; thickness at centre 11mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

there is a continuing process of change and negotiation. Material culture may be used to support a particular ideology or to mask inequalities in the system. Thus particular fired clay artefacts that will be introduced into this discourse may be regarded as “multitextual hints about the prehistoric past” (Steele 1999: 2), as intramatrixial signifiers from the “out of focus passageway” (Lichtenberg-Ettinger in Pollock 1994: 12) of prehistory. In this view, meaning is migratory and veiled rather than fixed.

All the while the researcher, by virtue of choices made about which aspects of prehistory to valorise, “interferes with and is part of the system that is being observed” (Gribbin 1991: 175). In terms of the metaphor drawn from quantum theory, it is only by looking that the cat referred to by Schrödinger can be pronounced dead or alive, and then only from a specific point of view [fig 10].

My use of the term *First-Millennium Agriculturist*²³ in the title of this dissertation reflects a specific point of view, and is a response to an ongoing debate about nomenclature. My usage is specific to Africa, and refers to a first millennium AD culture until recently generally referred to as *Early Iron Age*. The term *Iron Age* seems to have entered southern African discourse in 1933 when LH Wells wrote about an expedition to Cathkin Park, KwaZulu-Natal area (Maggs 1993(a): 70). Wells (1933: 183) noted that “it may be suggested in explanation of the rarity of finds of metal implements on Iron Age sites that the metal was difficult to prepare, and that in consequence metal tools were used as long as possible and then melted down and re-worked”.

²³ I am indebted to Gavin Whitelaw (e-mail: 5/5/2000) for drawing my attention to this phrase.

Fifteen years later the term was used again by John Schofield (1948: 37), when writing about rock art, to describe a time sequence. He said the researcher could "ascribe the paintings to the latest Stone Age occupants of the caves, and regard them as being contemporary with the pottery, and thus with the opening phase of the Iron Age". Then Revil Mason (1952: 70) attempted to formalise the idea of a local Iron Age. He suggested "the term 'South African Iron Age'... indicates the period subsequent to the introduction of iron-working, but prior to the appearance of European metal artefacts within the area defined". He went on to note that he did "not imply a rigid, chronological separation of the Stone and Iron Ages; the division between the two appears to vary and some sites ... suggest contemporaneity between the late Stone Age and Iron Age".

Thereafter the term found widespread usage and is still, with some modifications, in use. Len Van Schalkwyk (1991: 4) described the Iron Age in southern Africa, according to then current usage, as

known to have extended over approximately the last two millennia. As a cultural term it designates groups of people who were iron producing and metal using mixed-farmers; who first colonised the Zambezi and Limpopo Basins, the East coast littoral, and the Eastern and north Eastern Plateau slopes (following Wellington 1955), between circa. AD 250-900. These Early Iron Age (EIA) people are held to be directly ancestral to the Late Iron Age (LIA) Bantu speakers²⁴. (My footnote).

Tim Maggs (1992: 131) has, however, suggested that "Iron Age is not really a suitable or desirable term ... it seems not only

²⁴ Van Schalkwyk cited Hall, M & Vogel 1980; Huffman 1970, 1979, 1982; Maggs 1977, 1980(a), 1984(a), and (b); and Phillipson 1977, 1985 as having contributed to this view.

technicist but it also tends to relegate these communities to an impersonal and subjective status in history". He also cited Simon Hall (1992: 12) as stating that the term Early Iron Age is a "misnomer since it was imported from the European sequence with its Copper and Bronze Ages, and where it therefore has different connotations". I agree with these sentiments, and have thus decided to use First-Millennium Agriculturist as an indicator of era, culture and economy. My choice of this era is not intended to suggest a time specific beginning and ending of particular ceramic and cultural practices. Rather, the placing of a time/culture/economy framework is meant to provide a focus for study within a wide prehistoric context.

This dissertation has been formulated around a structure that proceeds from a whistle stop placement of First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples and ceramics of the Eastern Cape within a broader time/space prehistoric context in Chapter One, The Stage and Main Players. Thereafter, in Ways of Seeing, preconceptions, and ways in which they have influenced what has been seen and reported about First-Millennium Agriculturist sites and ceramics are examined. Ceramic artefacts from specific sites are also introduced, and assemblages are compared.

In Chapter Three, Spaces in the Landscape, the presence of clay as a component in household construction techniques of the era is used as a point of departure for an investigation into ways in which homestead and village organisation may have expressed notions of gendered space. In this Chapter the idea that ways of thinking influence what is seen is explored further in a context of homestead and village organisation, and conceptions of gendered technology are examined with specific reference to clayworking and metalworking practices. In Chapter Four contextualisation of First-Millennium Agriculturist lifeways is taken a step further

with reference to ceramics from the site **Kulubele** (27.51S; 32.25E), and the urge to make a mark, in the form of engraving a ceramic surface, is explored.

In Chapter Five, utilisation of ceramics is found to be integral to an articulation of Experiences of Death and Transformation in some First-Millennium Agriculturist societies. Instances of deliberate burial of ceramic vessels, whole or deliberately broken prior to internment, (right way up, or sometimes upside down), with and without human remains, are recounted and contextualised. In Chapter Six, Figurines and Evulsions, specific rituals and modes of thought, possibly evidenced by sculpted solid clay figurines and hollow masks, and the practise of dental evulsion, are considered as ways in which the passage of time was marked by some First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples. In conclusion, with reference to ceramics assemblages already discussed, it is found that despite being elusive, meanings are both inherent to an artefact, and arise as a result of discourse. Specific research results are articulated in an attempt to probe for further avenues of inquiry.

Nahoon footprints are 200 000 years old

By KERRY THEOBALD

THE NAHOON FOOTPRINTS have now been confirmed the oldest existing evidence of the Homo sapiens species.

Discovered in 1964 the footprints were originally thought to be about 29 000 years old. With modern sophisticated dating techniques, however, Dr Dave Roberts of the Cape Town based Council for Geoscience has found, as he initially suspected, that these footprints are actually 200 000 years old.

This has sparked even greater interest because with the revelation of their true age comes the realisation that these footprints hail from a critical stage in human evolution. "This was a very interesting time when the archaic form was evolving into Homo sapiens species as it is today" said Roberts during a visit to the museum last week.

Furthermore, they are of important paleontological and anthropological interest worldwide as there is very little anatomological evidence from that time.

With these footprints, unlike with fossils, one can measure exactly how big the feet were. At 19 centimetres long these footprints could be those of an eight or nine year old



A WEALTH OF INFORMATION: Dr Dave Roberts and Kevin Cole, deputy director of East London museum, enthuse over the find that the footprints found at Nahoon in 1964 are 200 000 years old.

child if measured by today's standards of size.

"It would be revealing to know what maximum size the ancients were. Theory has it that the ancient people were larger and more robust than modern man but we cannot be sure" reflected Roberts.

A lot of anatomical evidence on size, stride, direction and speed of movement can also be drawn from the Nahoon footprints.

Current thought is that the one set of prints are those of an animal running downhill and the other of a human walking uphill. "The find certainly sheds a lot of light on our ancestors", he added.

layers of sand drifted over them they would have been preserved in their original form.

The confirmation of the age of these footprints is also of great significance to East London.

The city's museum houses the original sandstone slabs containing the historic set of prints. The set are one of only four known sets of ancestral human prints. And the only set in the Eastern Cape.

"This makes one incredibly aware of how important they are as the oldest set of Homo sapiens prints and it was all a set of fortuitous events that made the discovery possible" said Roberts.

When asked by East London museum deputy director Kevin

Cole, what role the museum had to play as keeper of the footprints Roberts suggested pushing to have the discovery site raised to conservation or national heritage status.

"The site is a remote undeveloped area which could be developed into a major educational site or tourist attraction" he said. There is also no threat to the evidence as the originals are safely preserved in the museum.

"The museum has made a permanent exhibition of the prints and will be pushing for more public interest" said Kevin also expressing appreciation for the hard work Roberts and Geoscience have put into research on the Nahoon footprints.

"The prints are extremely enigmatic. We have to assume that there was one real attraction. Having gone back to the site we have got a better idea of what it was"

The sandstone slabs hold evidence not only of one human and one animal but a variety of animal and bird life. The attraction of which Roberts speaks could have been an area of wetland.

The well preserved status of the original footprints lends itself to the theory that there may have been a couple of days of misty rain.

When the sand dried and hardened loose sand may have been blown into the hollows left by the prints. As



Fig 11: Nahoon footprints, 200 000 years old (Theobald 1999: 3); and Kevin Cole [foreground] at work with Dave Roberts on site (Photo: John Steele, 2000).

Chapter 1

THE STAGE AND MAIN PLAYERS: A BRIEF LOOK AT SOME ASPECTS OF EASTERN CAPE PREHISTORY, AND RELATED ARTEFACTS

Before specifically looking at First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics it is appropriate to peer even further back into the southern African past, at some deeper prehistory of the Eastern Cape area, so as to place these artefacts in a context of time, space, and culture.

The concept prehistory, as used here, covers ideas of an immense time frame, from roughly the emergence of *Homo sapiens* species through to beginnings of so-called documentary sources in written form. As it happens, artefacts and other evidence indicate human occupation of the Eastern Cape region from earliest times. Some footprints [fig 11], for example, have been found on the coastline that are currently held to be “the oldest existing evidence of ... *Homo sapiens* as a species ... dating to c.200 000 BP” (Theobald 1999: 3). At the other end of the prehistory timeframe, written records seem to begin with pre-colonial, early explorer-type accounts²⁵.

²⁵ These early writings, dating back to “contact with early Portuguese seafarers and later European colonial expansion between the 16th and 18th centuries” (Van Schalkwyk 1991: 4) are well documented by, for example, Dietrich 1993. Much of this literature tended to chronicle “only the decimation by European pioneers and farmers” of the indigenous population (Sampson 1974: 1-2). Martin Hall (1984(b): 262) has observed that since then “the prehistory of the subcontinent has so far been written by observers with foreign cultures who are from groups in political and economic dominance of indigenous communities”.

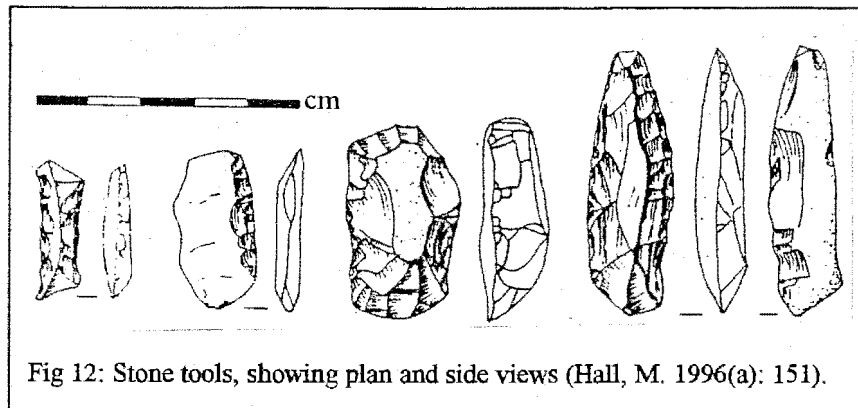


Fig 12: Stone tools, showing plan and side views (Hall, M. 1996(a): 151).

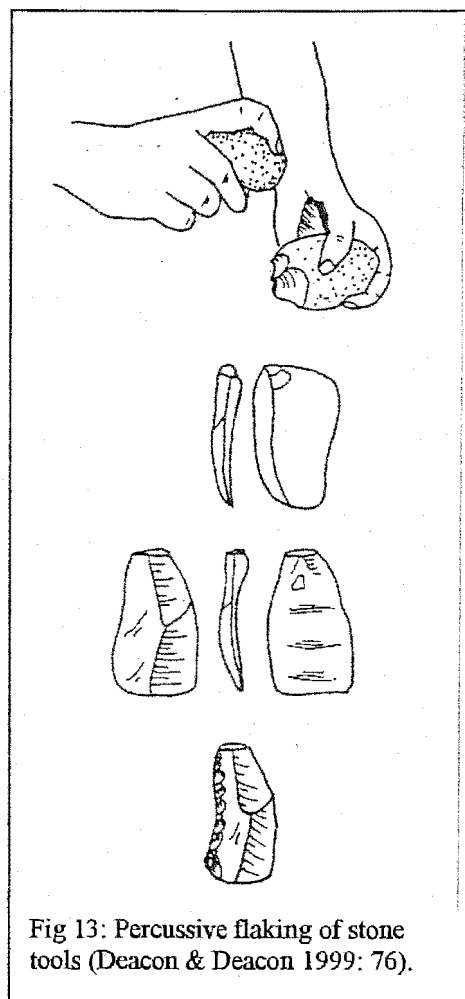


Fig 13: Percussive flaking of stone tools (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 76).

Reliance on stone-tool making and usage is regarded as being one of the characteristics that “distinguish early true humans from the australopithecines and paranthropines”²⁶. Furthermore, due to their durability, such stone artefacts²⁷ [fig 12] are regarded as “the most important trace fossils of true humans” (Deacon and Deacon (1999: 71-72).

The technology of percussion flaking, whereby a stone tool is created, is said to be “learnt by imitation and becomes routine through practice” (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 73) [fig 13]. Thus, such an application of technology can be regarded

not merely as a means to exploit the environment but as sets of culturally-embedded conceptual frameworks, as sets of ideas and performances that are potentially sources for creating and maintaining symbolically-meaningful daily lives, experiences, and as praxis (Conkey 1991: 79).

It should be noted, however, that making and use of tools is “not limited to human beings, nor even our closest cousins, the chimpanzees” (Ingold 1991: 270). It is thought that a distinguishing factor, according to Ingold (1991: 270-271), “is that of self-conscious planning, the harnessing of the range of possible behaviour patterns to the realisation of an intentional project”.

The perceived antiquity of prehistory in southern Africa is explored at length in Deacon and Deacon 1999²⁸. Thus my choice

²⁶ See, for example, Deacon and Deacon (1999: 30-70) for a review of primate ancestry, and Hall, M. (1996(a): 9) for a concise summary.

²⁷ Artefacts are “things fashioned by human agency, whether these be stone tools, pottery vessels, houses, ships or landscapes” Hall, M. (1996(a): 8). Ingold (1993: 162) stresses the aspect of human agency more heavily by foregrounding aims and objectives. In this view “an artefact is an object shaped to a pre-conceived image that motivated its construction, and it is ‘finished’ at the point when it is brought into conformity with this image”.

²⁸ Other, earlier, general overview publications which can be consulted include Clark 1959; Deacon, HJ. 1976; Deacon, J. 1984; Ingold, Riches & Woodburn 1991; Inskeep 1978; Klein 1984; Opperman 1987; Phillipson (Footnote continued overleaf)

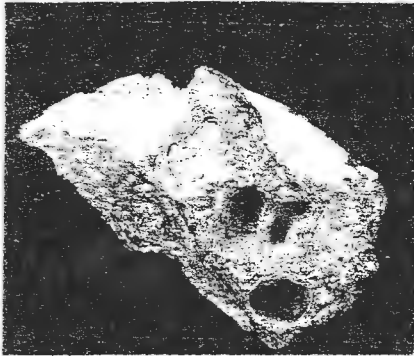


Fig 14: Burnt maxillary fragment of a young male from the base of the **Klasies River** deposit dating to 120 000 years (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 104).

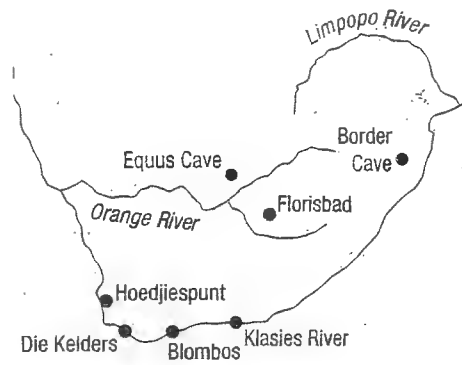


Fig 15: Location of **Klasies River** (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 93).

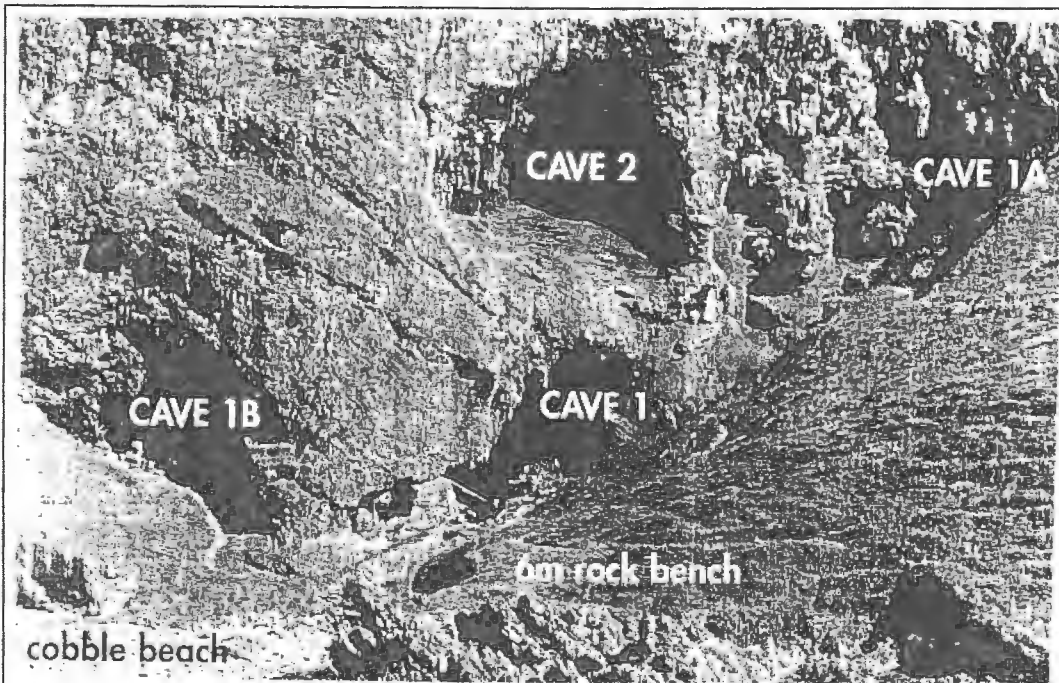


Fig 16: **Klasies River** main site (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 102).

of entry into this prehistoric tale is not specifically in terms of a chronology, but rather in terms of briefly sketching some aspects of the milieu into which, according to current researches, First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples and ceramics are placed at a later date.

To this end, two sites of pre-ceramic industry Middle Stone Age occupation, and two Late Stone Age (early ceramics era) sites have been chosen for a whirlwind narrative-type look at the region. This look at thinkings regarding peoples and lifeways in the past will also serve to facilitate an introduction to some aspects of archaeological tools and praxis, and to ways and means whereby some kinds of information about the past are gleaned from sites and artefacts. **Klasies River**²⁹ and **Strathalan Cave B**³⁰ sites represent examples of Late Pleistocene/Middle Stone Age habitation, respectively dated at c.120 000³¹ and c.29 000 years ago.

Human remains [fig 14] from **Klasies River** [fig 15] “are those of individuals of short stature, with marked sexual dimorphism. The shape of the forehead, the lack of brow ridges, the form of chin and tooth size are some of the features that indicate this was an early modern population” (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 104). The **Main Site** [fig 16] at **Klasies River** is particularly significant

1977; Sampson 1974; Smith 1992. Some specific site analyses of relevance to the area of study include Binneman 1997; Binneman & Hall, S. 1993; Hall, M. 1990; Leslie 1989; Mazel 1993, 1996, 1997; Opperman 1992, 1996; and Opperman & Heydenrych 1990.

²⁹ **Klasies River** (34.59S; 24.24E) is located on the Indian Ocean between Cape St Francis and Plettenberg Bay.

³⁰ **Strathalan Cave B** (30.59.22S; 28.23.19E) is situated 1 340 m above sea level in the foothills of the Drakensberg range approximately 10 km northeast of Maclear (Opperman & Heydenrych 1990: 93).

³¹ When layers are too old to date by radiocarbon, other methods, including oxygen isotope measurements, uranium disequilibrium dating, electro spin resonance dating, and amino acid dating techniques are used (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 103). These, and other approaches to dating, are discussed in Deacon & Deacon (1999: 11-15).

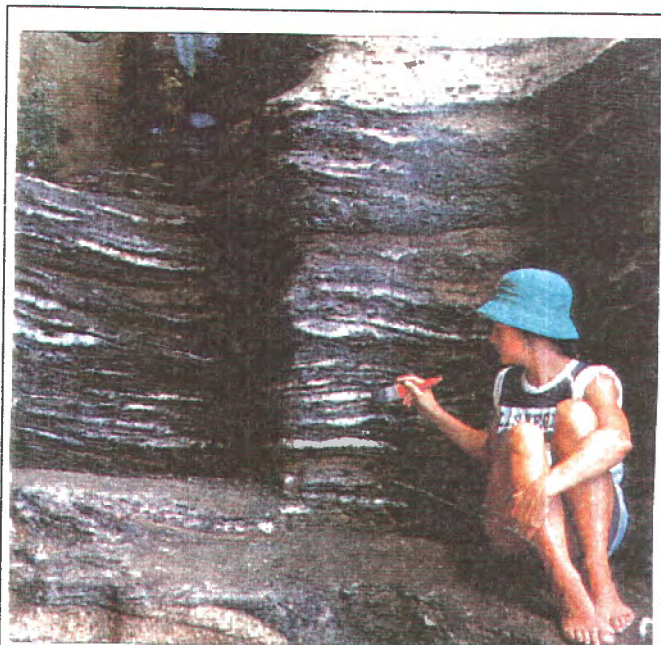


Fig 17: The Howiesons Poort artefacts at **Klasies River** occur stratified in a sequence of dark carbonised and ash layers (Deacon & Deacon 1999: back cover).

partly because assemblages³² have given indications, by means of an analysis of floral and faunal remains, of the foodways (hunter-gatherer) of the people who had lived in the shelters.

This site also provides evidence for the presence and lifeways of anatomically modern people living in southern Africa between 110 000 and 120 000 years and more ago. These dates are earlier than those for which anatomically modern people are known from archaeological sites in Europe or Asia (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 102, 103; Hall, M. 1996(a): 228), and gives credence to the statement that "the mtDNA ancestor lived in Africa" (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 92).

Excavation at **Klasies River** began in 1967³³, revealing stratified archaeological deposits up to 20 m deep [fig 17], and has generally indicated that "shelters were visited sporadically; and sometimes there were long periods of absence ... Regular seasonal movement between the coastal region and the mountain

³² An assemblage is an "analytical abstraction ... to designate a group of artefacts that were made at one place and in a specific time period". In this context, the term 'feature' also refers to the idea of artefacts, but they are generally thought of as "non-movable attributes of sites" such as hearths, pits and so on (Hall, M. 1996(a): 14).

³³ Changes in attention to archaeological detail since this early documented excavation is evident in differences between the techniques adopted by Singer and Wymer on this occasion, and in a subsequent effort by Deacon and Geleijnse. The former team, (which only published its excavation results in 1982), "sieved selectively, and through a coarse mesh. As a result, many of the smaller stone artefacts and bones had not been collected. Larger bones not considered identifiable had been thrown away". The team of Deacon and Geleijnse "sought to correct the sample biases in the earlier assemblages by recovering the maximum amount of material possible. Sediments from each unit were sieved through a 3mm mesh and the residue was washed with sea water" (Hall, M. 1996(a): 230).

Such changes in technique are also evident at Early Agriculturist sites such as **K2** (Northern Province, near **Mapungubwe**) from whence Gardner (1963: 40-51) reported on more than one "skull and bones smashed by pick" during their 1935-1940 expeditions. Such excavation techniques are regarded as unacceptably destructive these days. Steyn et al (1999: 102) have also commented that earlier researchers at this site "paid little attention to stratigraphic and contextual detail".

areas [was] in response to the seasonal availability of plant foods" (Hall, M. 1996(a): 231, 236).

Other lifeway glimpses include Hilary Deacon's (1993: 236) assessment of "small hearths with food debris and stone tools scattered around them as suggesting that each represents the domestic focus of a nuclear family". However, it may also be that the implication of small groups of people drawn from "small hearths" was no more than just that. For nuclear families to have functioned then as they do today denies possibility of change in inter-personal relations through time, and also assumes that paternity was recognised. Nonetheless, it is interesting that people, even so long ago, may have chosen to group themselves with mates of one sort or another, even if such grouping was, for example, by gender, mother and siblings, activity or age.

There is also evidence for management of "plant food resources with fire, as indicated in the collection of geophytes"³⁴ (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 102). Furthermore, artefact patterns through time indicate style in artefact design, and the presence of red ochre and yellow sandstone raise possibilities that these people practised personal adornment. There are also signs of food sharing, and suggestions have been made that use of the environment was essentially the same as the subsistence strategies followed in the Holocene and by San hunter-gatherers of the historic era (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 237)³⁵.

³⁴ Geophytes are a class of plants in which the new bud forms underground. They have potato-like corms or bulbs, which are carbohydrate-rich food stores (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 98).

³⁵ The authors cited Deacon, HJ. 1985, 1993; Thackeray 1989; and Singer & Wymer 1982 in support of this viewpoint.

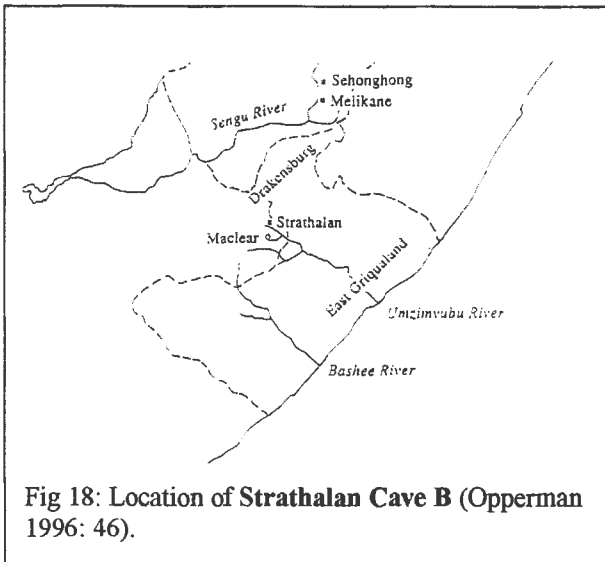


Fig 18: Location of Strathalan Cave B (Opperman 1996: 46).



Fig 20: Strathalan Cave B: preserved 29 000-year-old plant remains in the hearth area (Opperman 1996: 48).

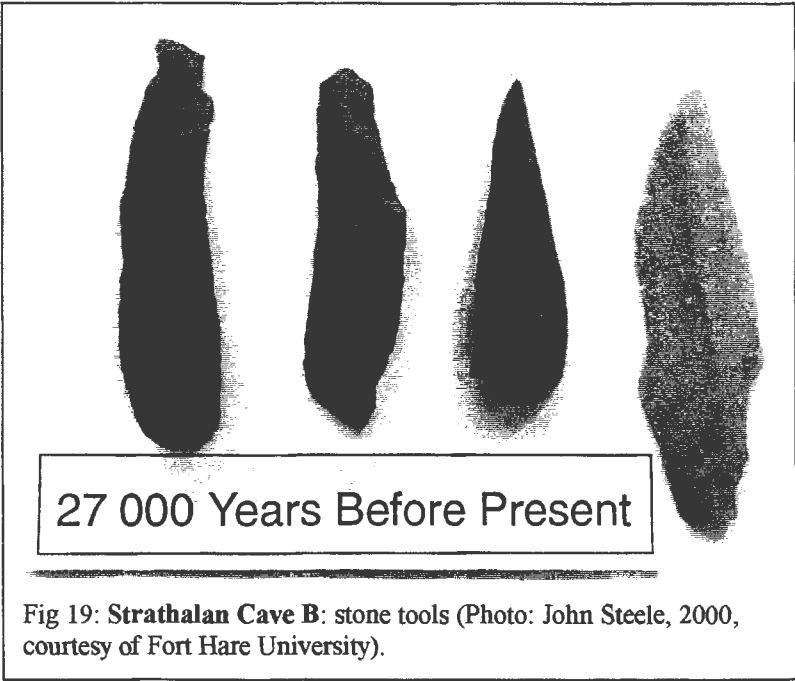


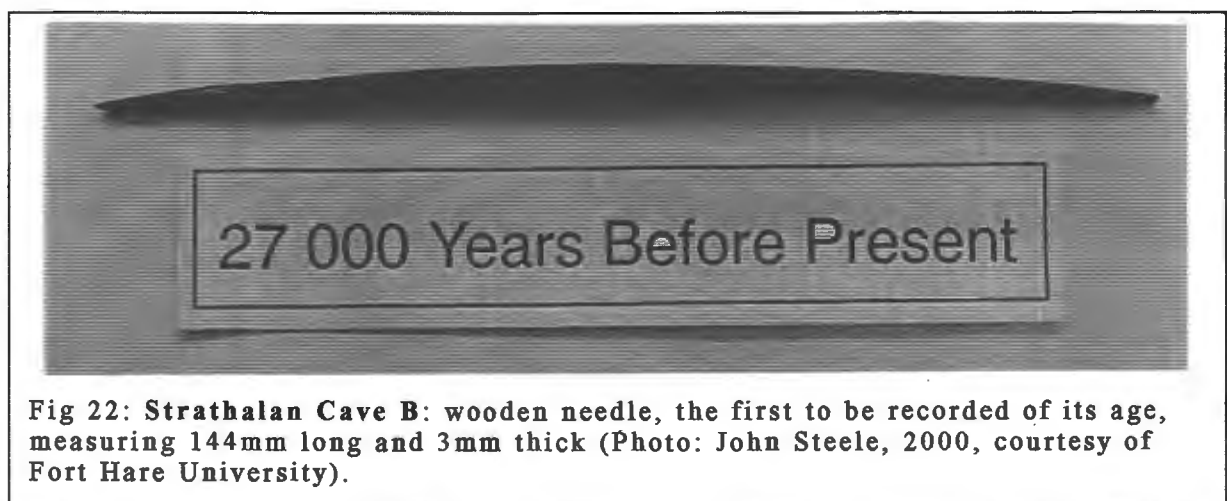
Fig 19: Strathalan Cave B: stone tools (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).



Fig 21: Strathalan Cave B: knotted plant stems (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

Hermanus Opperman (1996: 52) has taken a cautious view of the probable extent of such continuities as a result of his excavations at **Strathalan Cave B** [fig 18]. He maintained that “observations at the site suggest the MSA inhabitants were in some respects behaving like Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers and in others not. This makes the use of recent hunter-gatherer analogues difficult for a full understanding of MSA behaviour”. People living at this site in the mountains left behind stone tools [fig 19] and other indications of their lifeways that are well preserved. These offer tantalising partings of the veil of time, going way back to an era of habitation between 29 000 and 22 000 years ago (Opperman 1996: 45). Approximately 110 square metres of cave floor featured hearths [fig 20] and grass bedding that suggests visits to the site by two or three small groups of between 8 and 10 people (Opperman 1996: 52). Knotted plant stems [fig 21] (Opperman 1996: 51), and a wooden needle sharpened on both ends [fig 22] (Opperman 1992: 100, 102), contribute further to beginnings of an intimate picture of domesticity.

Lifeways in this region came under pressure just before the onset of the Last Glacial Maximum (Opperman 1992: 98). Research has shown that the major cooling of the Last Glacial Maximum “was



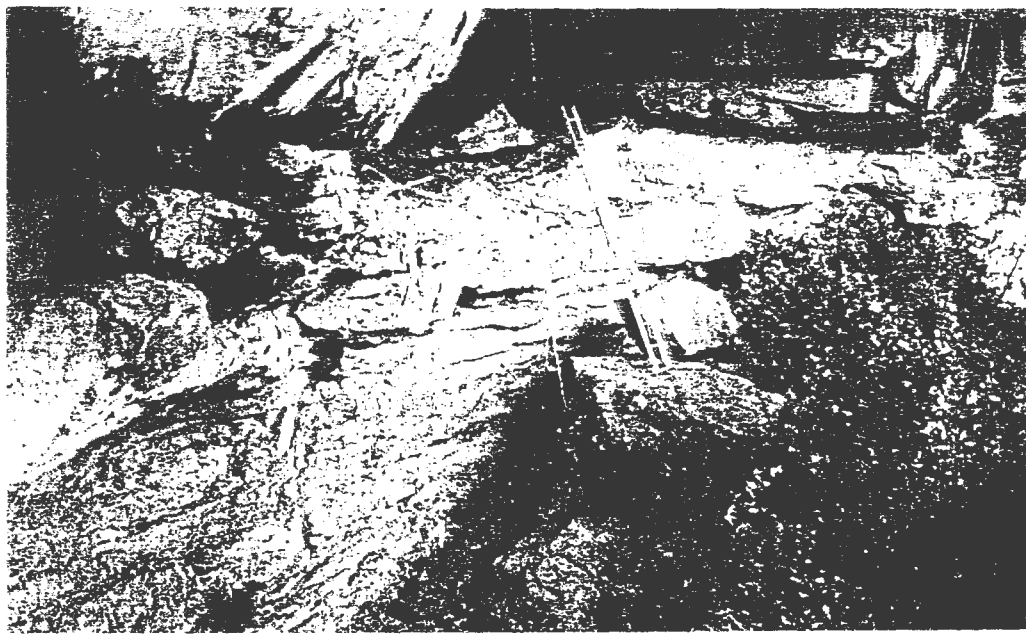


Fig 23: Strathalan Cave B: The top of the ladder indicates the entrance (Opperman 1992: 99).

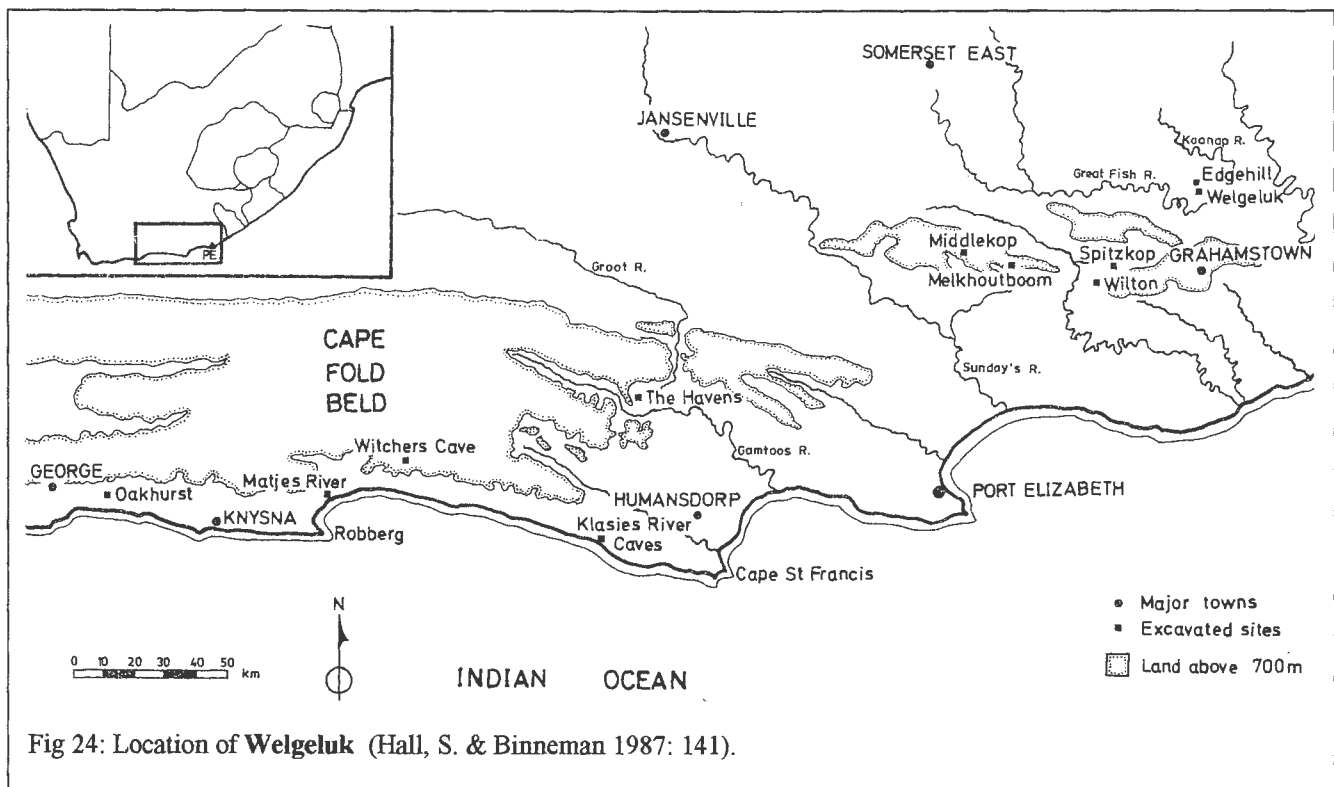


Fig 24: Location of Welgeluk (Hall, S. & Binneman 1987: 141).

at its most intense at 16000 BP [when] normal annual temperatures ... in the southern Drakensberg may then have been 13°C lower than at present" (Feely 1987: 46).

Opperman has suggested an increasingly cold climate may have led to use of this difficult to access [fig 23] and cramped cave because it could be more effectively warmed up³⁶ than two neighbouring sites which were more accessible, spacious and also gave good protection against the elements. The onset of the Last Glacial Maximum, confirmed by an analysis of pollen samples³⁷, coincided with departure of hunter-gatherers from the cave approximately 22 000 years ago (Opperman 1996: 52).

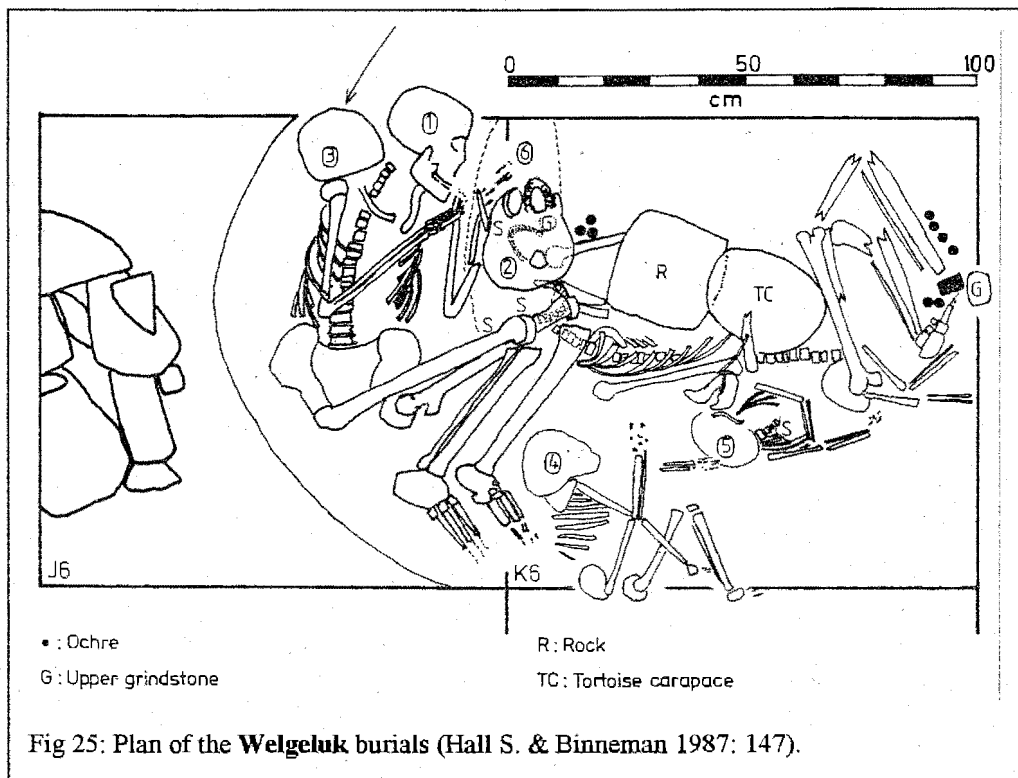
Excavations at **Welgeluk**³⁸ [fig 24] have given an idea of some social changes that took place over the next 15 000 or more years in parts of the Eastern Cape region. Simon Hall (1990: iii) has suggested that social organisation

changed from open network, inclusive social systems, to more closed networks, restricted settlement ranges and increasingly exclusive social behaviour wrought by competitive self interest. The analyses of these sites within a broader regional context show that changes in risk management can be recognised by a shift towards more intensive exploitation of freshwater mussels, fish, crab and tortoises, as well as the development of storage pits in order to prolong access to seasonally restricted oil rich seeds. This intensification is apparent from about 4 000 BP.

³⁶ An experiment using fire and temperature measurement was conducted (Opperman 1996: 45-53).

³⁷ Opperman (1996: 51) cited other evidence for a temperature decline at this time as coming from **Border Cave** on the KwaZulu-Natal/Swaziland border, and from Lesotho caves of **Melikane** and **Sehonghong** (Carter, 1976; Butzer et al 1978; Butzer, 1984). This climatic event coincided with the phasing out of MSA stone technology in much of the western part of the sub-continent (Thackeray, 1992) while it lingered on in the Drakensberg region.

³⁸ **Welgeluk** (32.59.5S; 26.31.56E) is located on the Koonap River some 90km as the crow flies from the Bathurst coast.

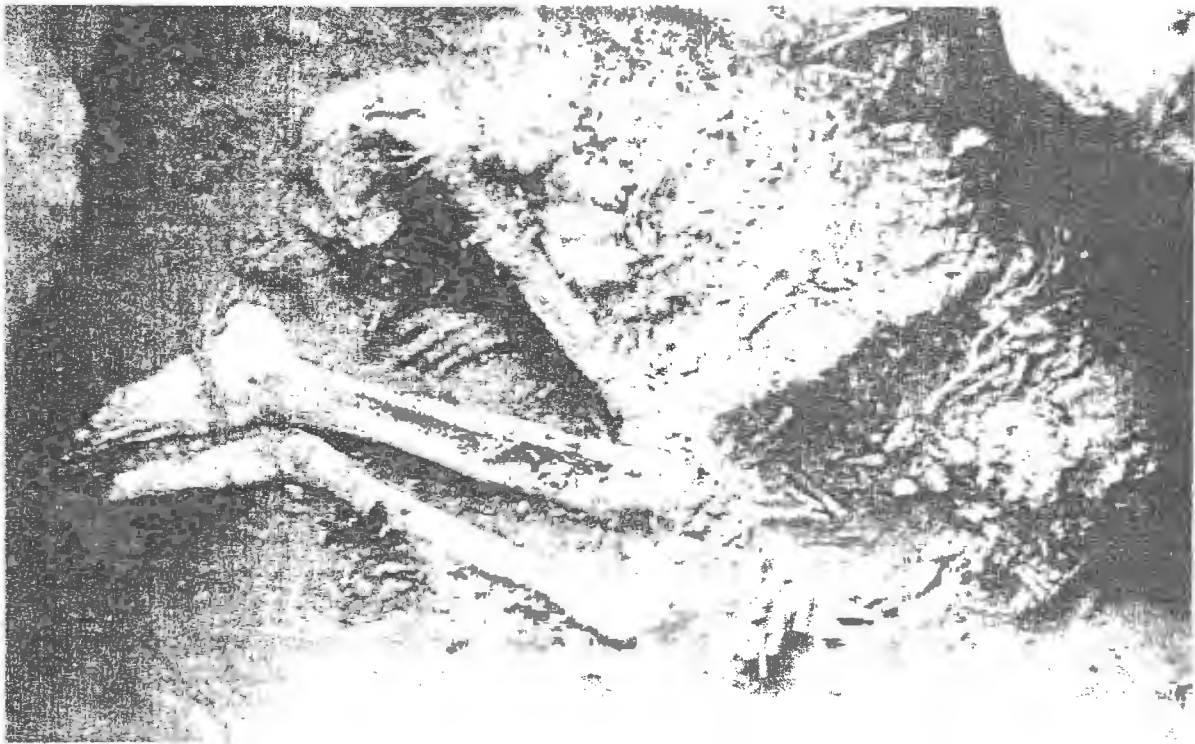


Relative sedentism, in this particular region, resulted in what Simon Hall (1990: iii) has referred to as “a firmer identity between people and place. This identity is regionally signified through the manipulation of lithic raw materials and more locally through the practice of focused cave burial”.

Burials are particularly significant as time capsules reflecting particular beliefs and practices, and thus offer insight into lifeways. A burial network at **Welgeluk** [fig 25] has revealed six bodies covered by a stone cairn, with the whole complex lying directly on bedrock, and dated to between c.6 000 and 4 500 BP. Martin Hall (1996(a): 182) commented that “burials can be seen as symbolic activities that relate people to places in special ways: they are ritual ways of passing on rights from generation to generation”, emphasising a commitment to people and place. He has also suggested that “cave burial indicates ‘exclusive’ social identity – part of the way in which social identity is maintained and established in the face of competition”.

The burial complex, (two males approximately 65 years old, another adult approximately 30 years old, a “disarticulated sub-adult”, and two infants closely placed and “of like age suggest[ing] some relationship, possibly twins”), represents “a minimum of two and possibly three separate burial episodes” (Hall, S. & Binneman 1987: 145-146). The infants were invested with by far the greater proportion of grave goods³⁹. To arrive at a

³⁹ “A string of ochre stained ostrich eggshell beads was found around the waist of infant WG/4, as well as a single lump of yellow ochre. Four *Polinicies Tumidus* shells were found upon the chest of the other infant, WG/5. Three were positioned so that the anterior bases were joined and presumably this facilitated threading through the pierced whorls so that the shells could be suspended in a cluster. Ochre stained ostrich eggshell beads and a palm sized river pebble were also found, but their direct association was not clear” (Hall, S. & Binneman 1987: 145-146).



Unusual controversial archaeological discovery

During April this year, Dr Johan Binneman, an archaeologist at the Albany Museum, was busy with routine observations at a rock shelter in the Kouga mountains near Joubertina. Although he is regularly involved in surveying archaeological sites and has been involved in many projects around the province, what he discovered here was quite unusual.

In a grave about 80 cm deep were the mummified remains of what is thought to be a San person. While clearing the debris away from one of a number of holes at the back of the cave, Dr Binneman found a flat slab of stone with paintings on it. This in itself was an important find because it is thought to be the first record of a painted stone used for marking a grave of a San person.

Under the painted stone were two layers of sticks and branches. When these were removed, there was a lot of the plant called *izichwe* or *gifbol* found underneath.

When the plant material was cleared away, the well-preserved feet of a human being were revealed, still covered with skin tissue. Careful excavation took place, and it was revealed that the body was still covered with a thick layer *gifbol* leaves between the pelvis and the skull.

The body had been buried lying on its left side, in the traditional position facing east and the back wall of the cave.

The sex of the mummy is not yet known, but will be determined once it has been carefully studied.

The discovery of the mummified remains sparked a flurry of interest — and controversy. Several stakeholders who identify themselves with Khoisan heritage issues came forward and two major groupings emerged — the East Cape Council of Khoi Aborigines and the Khoisan Awareness Initiative.

But everyone agreed on the tremendous historical, cultural and scientific significance of this discovery, as it has the potential to shed light on a very important aspect of the history of humanity in Southern Africa. It was finally agreed that the mummy be exhumed and taken to the Albany Museum in Grahamstown where the remains "will be handled in a dignified way and not put on public display". The Albany Museum is now in an agreement with the University of the Witwatersrand to complete the scientific studies. In the meanwhile, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture is consulting with stakeholders and looking at practices in the rest of the world before they decide on the final resting place for the remains. One of the options is to rebury the remains in a specially constructed 'house of memory' near Joubertina.

Mrs Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela, the permanent secretary of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, said: "This archaeological discovery symbolises our shared heritage. The information that its study will contribute to our understanding of the development of humankind in this part of the world. We already know that the Eastern Cape was an important place in the development of modern humans. We hope this discovery will further enhance our understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of the people of the Eastern Cape. The knowledge we gain from its study will contribute to the African Renaissance."

Fig 26: An in situ mummy, and unaccredited accompanying article (Artreach 4(2): 7).

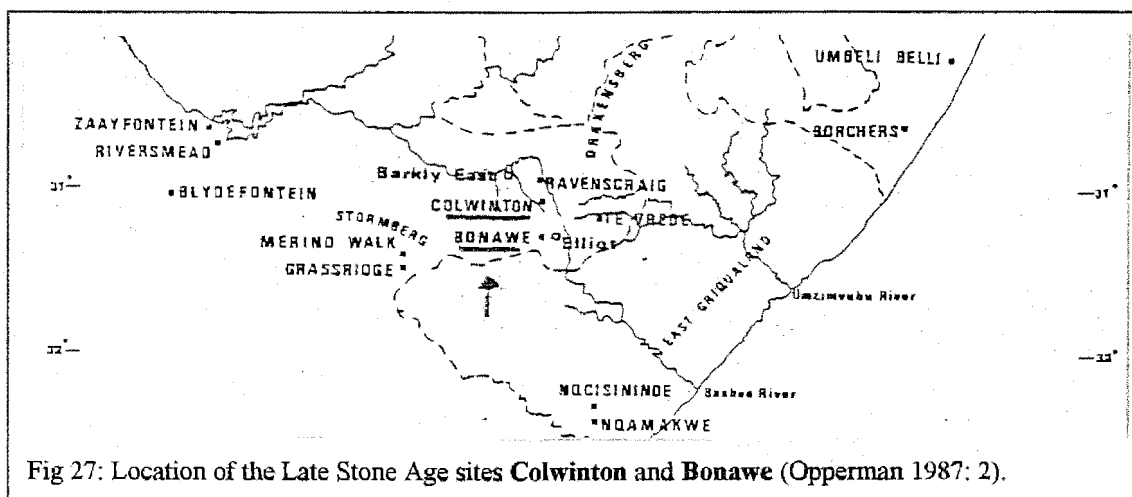
plausible explanation for the variability of grave goods the authors turned to recent ethnographic researches for a context within which to place the relationship between possessions and death.

Simon Hall and Johan Binneman (1987: 148-149) related that among the !Kung there exists the institution of *hxaro*⁴⁰ which results in a world view that prioritises the inheritance of social relationships which may still have been current at the time of death, rather than straight inheritance of material goods. "Thus an individual's possessions are part of a continuous cycle of exchange, even after that person has died. Those unfortunate to die at a very young age may have had the possessions [buried with them] because the reciprocal side of their exchange relationships have not yet been formalised".

It has also been observed that the "flexed position of the skeletons is characteristic of the Late Stone Age" (Hall, M. 1996(a): 181). This burial position, where the body had originally been placed with the arms and legs drawn up towards the chin, can be clearly seen in the mummified remains of a Late Stone Age burial excavated by Johan Binneman, Albany Museum, in 1999 [fig 26]. This mummy, provisionally dated to about 2000 years ago, was discovered in a shelter in the Kouga Mountains near Joubertina, and like the burials at **Welgeluk** roughly 2000 years earlier, was covered by stone, indicating remarkable continuity of practise.

⁴⁰ *Hxaro* is a method of social storage in which exchange partners are established in other land right areas, thereby creating reciprocal responsibilities with a partner (Hall, S. & Binneman 1987:148).

Ceramic remains in southern Africa are not known to appear in the archaeological record much before about 2000 years ago⁴¹ (Mazel 1992: 3-7). Hermanus Opperman (1987: 96) has confirmed a c.2000 years ago time frame associated with the emergence of ceramics in the Eastern Cape with excavations at **Colwinton** and **Bonawe**⁴² [fig 27].



Excavations at these sites have accounted for some of the oldest known ceramics discovered so far in the escarpment area of the present Eastern Cape. Charcoal fragment dating and stratigraphic evidence has led Opperman (1987: 96) to state that "a reasonable deduction is that pottery appeared between 1 600 and 2 000 BP in the vicinity of **Bonawe** ... such a date would correlate with the arrival of pottery at **Colwinton** shortly after 2 000 BP".

These cave sites are particularly interesting partly because they may have been related seasonal sites. Opperman (1987: 122, 180)

⁴¹ This timeframe, give or take a few hundred years, seems to me to be relatively recent, and I expect that older dates may emerge out of the archaeological record in due course.

⁴² **Colwinton** (31.07.45S; 27.44.22E) is located on the eastern side of the Langkloof valley in the Drakensberg mountains, 1 830m above sea level (Opperman 1987: 40, 87).

Bonawe (31.20.37S; 27.46.30E) is a well secluded cave, 1 500m above sea level, in the sandstone of the Molteno Formation, and lies against the northern slope of a kloof that ends in the west in undulating grassland (Opperman 1987: 87, 89).



Fig 28: Part of the escarpment near Elliott that may have been traversed between **Colwinton** and **Bonawe** (Photo: John Steele, 1999).



Fig 29: Looking from an edge of the escarpment towards the sea (Photo: John Steele, 1999).



Fig 30: **Colwinton** rock shelter, situated on the eastern side of the valley.

The rock shelter is "a large cavity in the light coloured sandstone of the Clarens Formation, is 38m long, 10m deep inside the dripline, and approximately 13m high at the drip point" (Opperman 1987: 40). (Photos: John Steele, 1999).



Fig 31: Northeasterly [above], and southwesterly views from **Colwinton** rock shelter across the Langkloof valley (Photos: John Steele, 1999).

has speculated that "faunal remains of **Bonawe** together with the artefact assemblage support the viewpoint that ... the bands that visited the shelter were essentially mountain dwellers [as at **Colwinton**] wishing to replenish their winter supply of meat". This suggestion offers an alternative to those of "seasonal transhumance (Carter 1970; Cable 1982) from the Drakensberg in the summer", and over the escarpment [fig 28] towards the coast in winter [fig 29].

Colwinton rock shelter [fig 30] was intermittently "occupied over a time span of probably 10 000 years ... and the site was regularly visited by hunter-gatherers up to historical times". The positioning of the site is such that a river runs in the valley about 120m below, and clear views across this valley, as well as towards the northeast and southwest [fig 31] are offered. Thus shelter, a close at hand water source, and a good vantage point for seeing the comings and goings of people and game are some of the advantages of the site; some disadvantages being exposure to cold winds and regular snow in winter (Opperman 1987: 40, 69, 84).

The lithic artefact assemblage recovered from the **Colwinton** deposit includes many stone tools spanning the entire era of intermittent occupation. Other finds that tell a story of lifeways at the time include bone awls (for leatherworking), bone hooks (that could have been used for fishing or catching frogs), bone points (possible arrow points), ornaments of bone and ostrich eggshell for personal adornment, and some domestic ceramics (Opperman 1987: 43, 48-51).

The grit tempered unengraved 174 bodysherds, and 18 rimsherds, (mostly about 7mm thick) recovered at **Colwinton** are too fragmentary to reconstruct any whole vessels, but probably



Fig 32: Colwinton potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

represent parts of quite a number of vessels. "Most of the shards have a black colour although some are red-brown or brown ... the rimforms are rolled" [fig 32], and are similar to those of **Bonawe** [fig 33] (Opperman 1987: 51, 121).

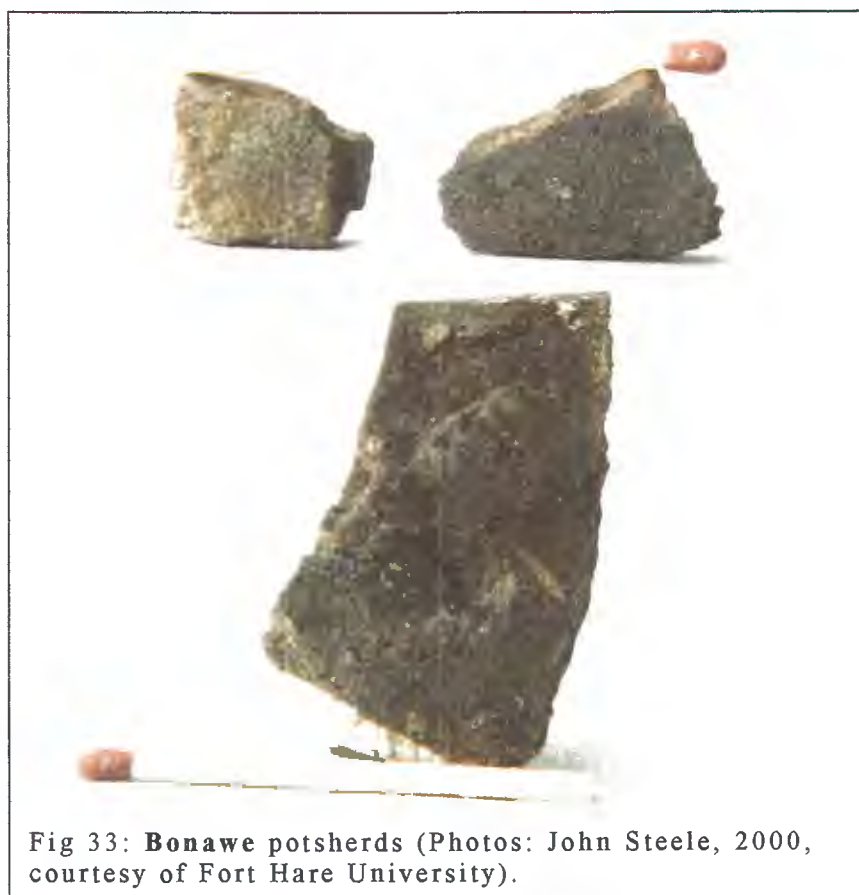


Fig 33: **Bonawe** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

Before moving on from **Colwinton** and **Bonawe** it is worth noting that potsherds are by no means evident in all living-space caves in the region. I closely examined the floor (and beyond the dripline) of a well-sheltered cave that appears to have been lived in [fig 34, overleaf], on the farm **Glass Nevin**, for traces of ceramics without success. On the other hand, a trip to view rock art on the farm **Bushy Park**⁴³ revealed potsherds [fig 35, overleaf] possibly associated with Khoi pastoralist lifeways⁴⁴, at

⁴³ Respectively situated near Rhodes village, Barkly East area, and near the town of Cathcart, inland from East London.

⁴⁴ Johan Binneman, personal comment 2000.



Fig 34: View from inside a rock shelter on the farm **Glass Nevin** (Photo: John Steele, 1999).



Fig 35: Ceramics from a rock shelter on the farm **Bushy Park** (Photo: John Steele, 2000).

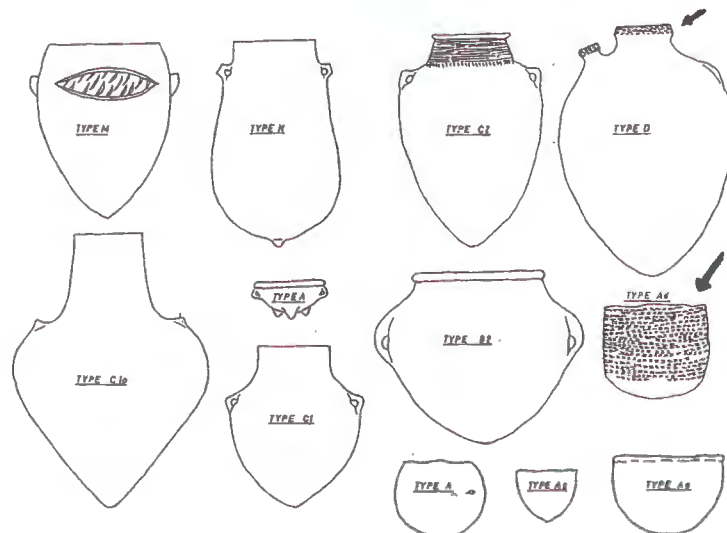


Fig 36: Pottery type 'Ad', seen middle right (Rudner 1979: 13), has been associated with Eastern Cape Khoisan (Rudner 1979: 11, 12 citing Kannemeyer 1890; and Dunn 1931).

one of the two rock shelters visited. The punctated and/or parallel impressed engravings of these sherds, similar to a style seen on types "D" and "Ad" mentioned by Rudner (1979: 11, 12) [fig 36], serve as a further indication that the Eastern Cape was by no means an 'empty space' during prehistoric times, nor inhabited by people of only a hunter-gatherer economy.

Remembering that part of First-Millennium Agriculturist economy was based on hunting and gathering, it is appropriate to try and find a context that in turn helps establish a frame of reference for noticing farmer/hunter-gatherer lifeway similarities and differences. What signs are there of the real people who procreated, raised children, lived, fished, swam, walked the mountains and valleys, made fire long before the invention of household matches, and created ceramic vessels so long ago?

Part of an answer lies in clues offered at the **Colwinton** rock shelter. The ceramics from this site and some rock art of the area can reasonably be considered to be coeval, and their creation to have been broadly synchronic within hunter-gatherer culture of the era. That "there is no real distinction between the material aspects of human life and the social, economic, political, or symbolic ones" (Herskovits 1960, cited by Dobres and Hoffman 1994: 231) suggests ceramics were part of daily experience that incorporated a cosmology of vast mythological depth⁴⁵.

Opperman (1987: 40) has noted that **Colwinton** is "situated in a region well known for its rock art [but] only a few, very faded,

⁴⁵ Southern African hunter-gatherer practices and cosmology have been extensively researched and will, regrettably, not be engaged in here. See, for instance, Dowson 1992; Dowson & Lewis-Williams 1994; Lewis-Williams 1981; and Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989 for some of these researches, as well as Solomon 1997, 1998, and 1999 for further research and incisive commentary.

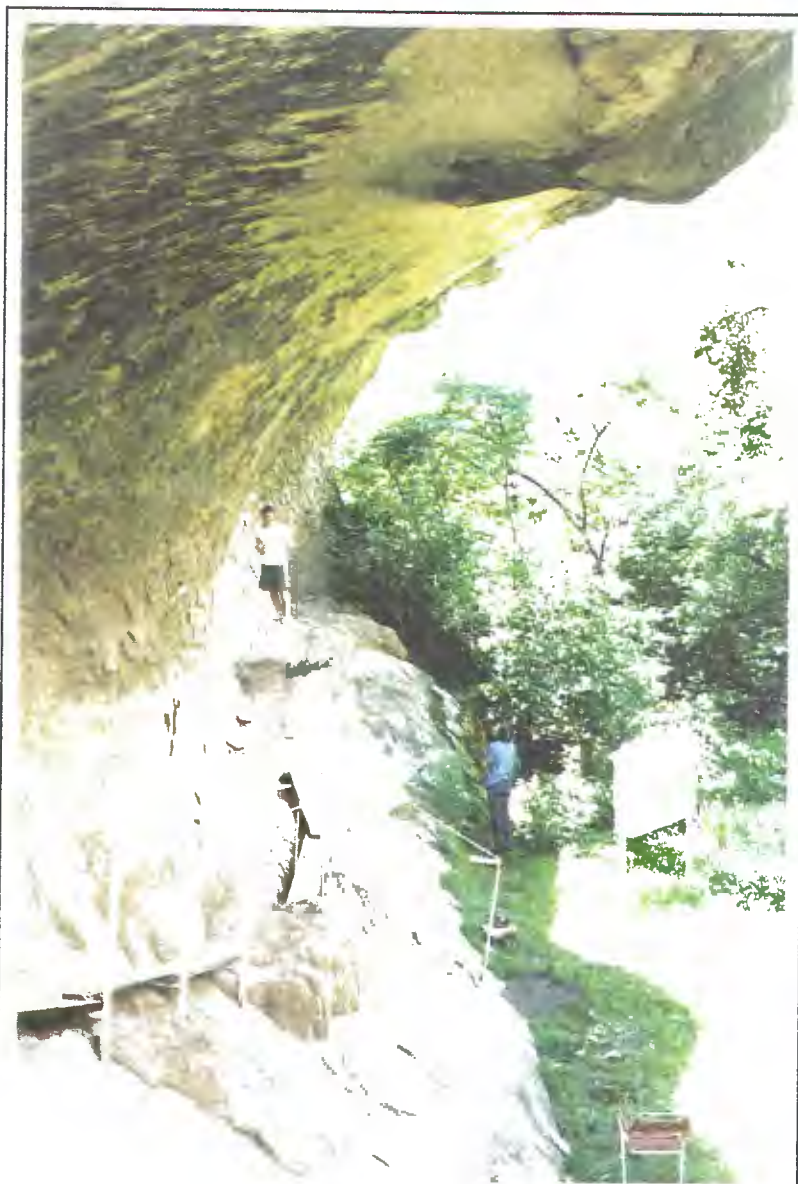


Fig 37: Dylan Perlman (left), and Vanessa Weyer, at the **Dinorben** rock art site (Photo: John Steele, 1999).

red paintings can be seen against the back wall". However, just over the hill⁴⁶, on the farm **Dinorben**⁴⁷, is located a more than 40m long rock art panel [fig 37]. This site may have been a communal gathering place because, located on the edge of a dell [fig 38, overleaf], it does not provide the sort of shelter usually associated with daily living. The existence of such an area where several families, or groups, may have intermittently come together suggests a possible differentiation between private and public community/ritual space.

Furthermore, elaborate scaffolding, or some sort of 'leg-up' assistance would have been required to reach up to much of the **Dinorben** panel, some areas of which are not even accessible from the modern walkway. This factor of inaccessibility suggests that at least some of the acts of painting must have been a co-ordinated social enterprise. In this regard, Marcia-Anne Dobres offers useful insights towards peopling the prehistoric landscape, a brief look at which will serve to give an idea of ways in which her approach to looking at Palaeolithic European rock art offers points of departure that can be applied locally.

⁴⁶ This hill can be seen in the southwesterly view from **Colwinton** rock shelter [fig 31].

⁴⁷ In 1999, when I visited **Colwinton** and **Dinorben**, I was told by two different sources that during living memory regular "Bushmen hunts" had taken place in this area of the Drakensberg. Arnold Hechter, owner of the farm on which the **Colwinton** rock shelter is situated, related a story of "a last Bushman hunt" which apparently took place in his youth. He told my companions and I that his father was involved on that occasion, and that this last hunt took place on the farm **Dinorben**. Apparently smoke from a fire gave away the whereabouts of a particularly elusive band of "stock thieves". They were then trapped in a kloof on the farm and systematically exterminated. Subsequently, Neil Whetmore, headmaster of Rhodes School, told me a similar story. I am not sure how these stories can actually be verified, but feel that there is substance to them. The late Tannie Fransina van Rensburg, of Rhodes village, also once told me a story in the early 1970s of a "Bushman hunt" in which her father participated in the Rhodes/Barkly East area.



Fig 38: Approach to **Dinorben** rock art panel (Photo: John Steele, 1999).

Dobres (in press: 10) asks “where ... do we draw the line between the utilitarian [such as ceramic vessels] and symbolic contributions [such as paintings] to meaning in the making, even if practical technical activities were spatially separated from their symbolic counterparts?” She goes on to suggest that “*The hands involved* [may] have been the same, as would their connection to the social body in which such work was undertaken”. An implication here is that drawing a distinction between utilitarian and symbolic acts is artificial, and that utilitarian and symbolic aspects of meaning in the making can be regarded as everyday complementary activities.

Insight into social significances and ways in which communal activities may have come about have been offered by Dobres (in press: 13, 14) in her reference to difficult to access Palaeolithic rock art sites. She has suggested:

It is likely that technical decisions as to the ‘proper’ size for a particular image as well as its physical placement (high or low) on a wall were informed by social rather than objective considerations, specifically to either include or exclude group participation⁴⁸ ... Effective implementation required workers to acquire the wood for, and erect, the scaffolds; to mine and properly prepare ores and binders for mixing into pigments of the ‘right’ composition; and even to feed the group. Taking these material and technical issues into consideration makes it likely that the very way certain images materialised on the walls – through collective hands, stocks of technical knowledge, and participation of the community – was a thoroughly meaningful endeavour ... reflecting operative social, symbolic, and ideological rules within which technical choices are made.

⁴⁸ Original footnote: “This does not mean to suggest that once an image was in place its viewing, or what is signified, was not also meaningful – certainly it was” (Dobres in press: 13).

Such observations may well apply to the rock art panel at **Dinorben**, and be extrapolated so as to generate awareness of significances that may be associated with individual and communal activities of First-Millennium Agriculturist and other peoples. Whether people were engaged in farming, herding, hunting, creating ceramics, burying their dead, or any other social undertaking, such activities would have involved technical decisions based on experience and be geared towards successful outcomes.

This conceptual approach of foregrounding intentionality is useful in that it facilitates recognition of artefacts, social organisation, and change, as deliberate outcomes of life experience rather than as ad hoc responses to environmental and other pressures. In this regard it is fundamental to bear in mind that people do not live, and have not lived, in a static timeless and spaceless vacuum. Furthermore, particular sites usually afford only immediately local glimpses into past practices. "Generalising between areas risks masking differences in the same way as does generalising from the San ethnography into the past" (Hall, S. 1990: 275).

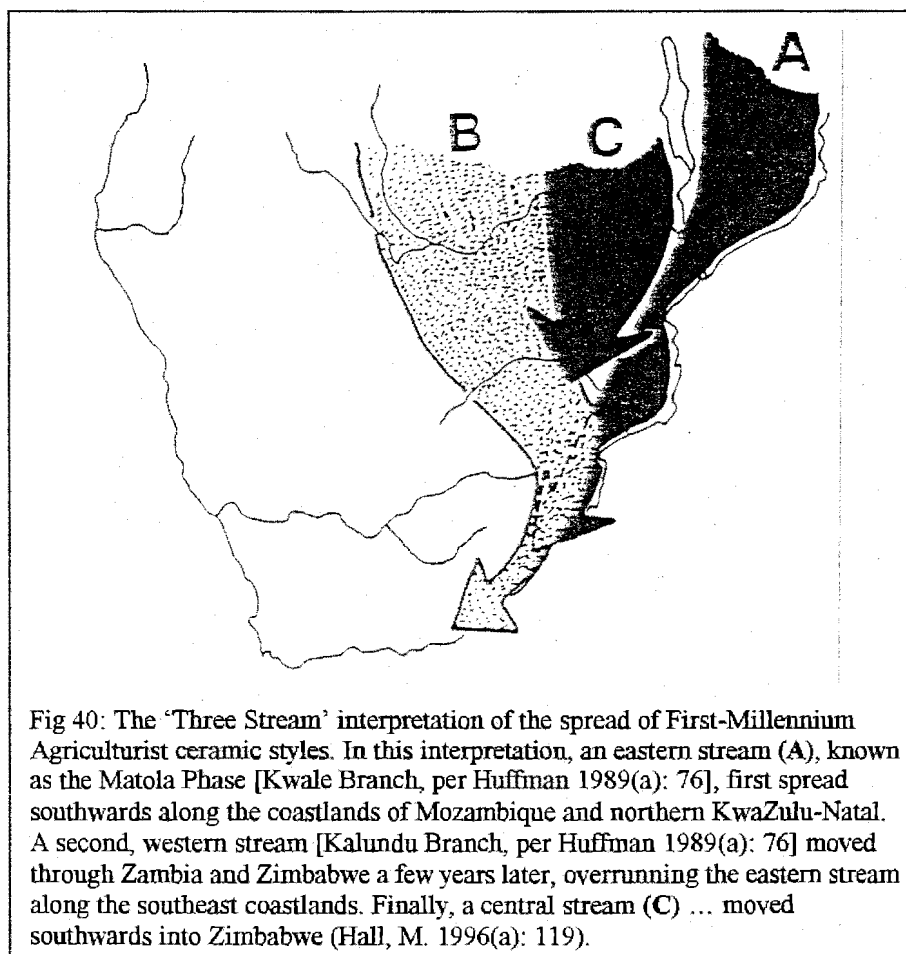
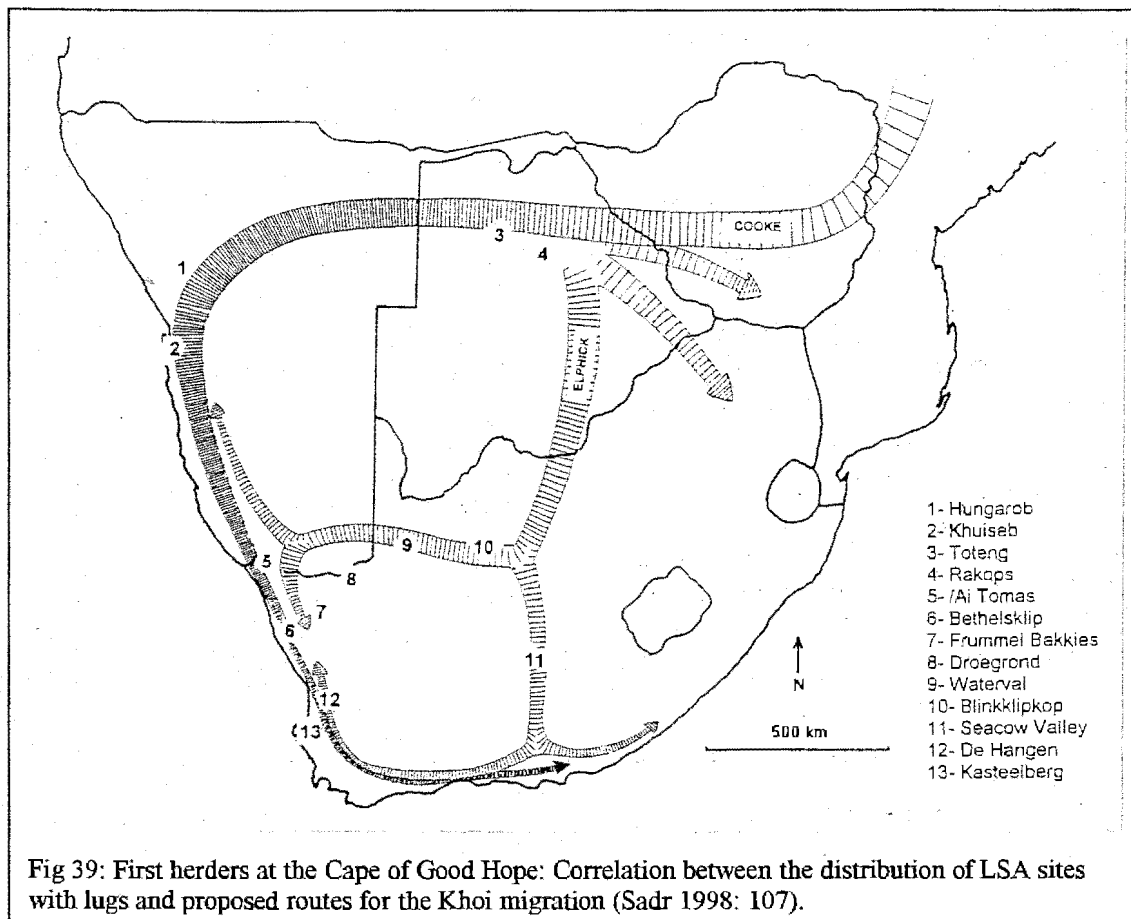
Simon Hall (1990: 269), citing Parkington 1984, has pointed out that hunter-gatherer pre-contact [with pastoralist and/or mixed farming and metalworking peoples] social, economic and demographic contexts in the Eastern and Western Cape were quite different from each other. "In the Western Cape the pre-contact structure emphasises few people, large territories, few sites, large mean food parcels and a narrow diet breadth that contrasts in all respects with the evidence from the Eastern Cape". That some continuities and comparative practices may have existed is not specifically denied, but caution against generalisations is indicated.

The theoretical shift away from viewing hunter-gatherer groups as conflatable, and homogenous through time, has also been applied to the way in which 'contact' has been conceptualised. There has been a shift away from viewing hunter-gatherers and food producers [pastoralist and/or mixed farmers] "as social isolates". Thinkings have rather tended towards taking into account that "social, economic and cognitive frontiers are continually breached in efforts to confront and find solutions ... within the synchronic range of potential interaction" (Hall, S. 1990: 243-244)⁴⁹.

Simon Hall's (1990: iii, 268) study has also shown that the impact upon hunter-gatherers in the **Welgeluk** area by food producers "was by no means one of eradication and dispersal ... Cultural contact does not merely create acculturation or similarity on the part of the weaker party, [but should rather be seen as exerting] mutual forces that restructure groups ... hunter-gatherers remained active 'players' within this complex social landscape". He thus proposed a "diachronic perspective of hunter-gatherers and farmers as a continuum" (1990: 8, citing Lourandos 1985: 389). Thus, differing lifeways can be thought of as behaviour patterns with varying emphases in economy and lifestyle approach rather than as mutually exclusive opposites.

Details of establishment of pastoralism and/or mixed farming as lifeways, "whether as a result of migration or local adoption of a new economic strategy" (Lane 1998: 200), are in themselves vast topics, most of which is beyond the immediate scope of this study. Briefly, two widely held views regarding the emergence of these lifeways, and associated ceramics, place them as 'arriving'

⁴⁹ Here Simon Hall (1990: 244) cited Campbell 1987 ... and Parkington 1984, as other proponents of this view.



in differing parts of southern Africa, at roughly 2 000 years ago. The accompanying maps respectively feature Karim Sadr [fig 39] and Martin Hall's [fig 40] conceptualisations of pastoralist and agriculturist material culture 'arrival' routes, thinkings that are frequently revised, as new information is unearthed.

The question of 'who' brought these changes remains debatable. With regard to the emergence of pastoralist lifeways, Karim Sadr (1998: 103) has suggested that

the majority opinion currently favours the Khoi migration hypothesis (Walker 1983: 91; Parkington 1984: 122-123; Parkington et al 1986: 317; Smith 1992: 93-94; Boonzaier et al 1996: 25-27). The alternative is that at least some of the first livestock diffused southward from one to another group of hunter-gatherers (Deacon et al 1978: 39; Deacon 1984: 275; Klein 1986: 9; Kinahan 1995: 218). Overall, the migration hypothesis seems to enjoy the upper hand with the help of Occam's razor⁵⁰. Since both the Khoi-speakers and the earliest livestock [sheep] had to have come from the north (as indicated by linguistic studies and the absence of the wild progenitors of livestock in southern Africa), parsimony favours the interpretation that they came together. (My footnote).

Yet, typical of the complexities, Sadr (1998: 126) also pointed out that ethnographic and archaeological evidence suggests there are no significant theoretical barriers to the diffusion hypothesis. He also pointed out that those peoples practising hunter-gatherer, hunter-herder and pastoralist lifestyles were not necessarily different, nor that the form of economy was stable.

Sadr (1998: 128) has asserted, for example, that "hunter-gatherer societies of the far Western Cape ... successfully (albeit only for a short while) made the transition to a true pastoralist adaptation

⁵⁰ The reference to Occam's razor is meant to suggest that no more causes should be utilised than are necessary to account for the facts.

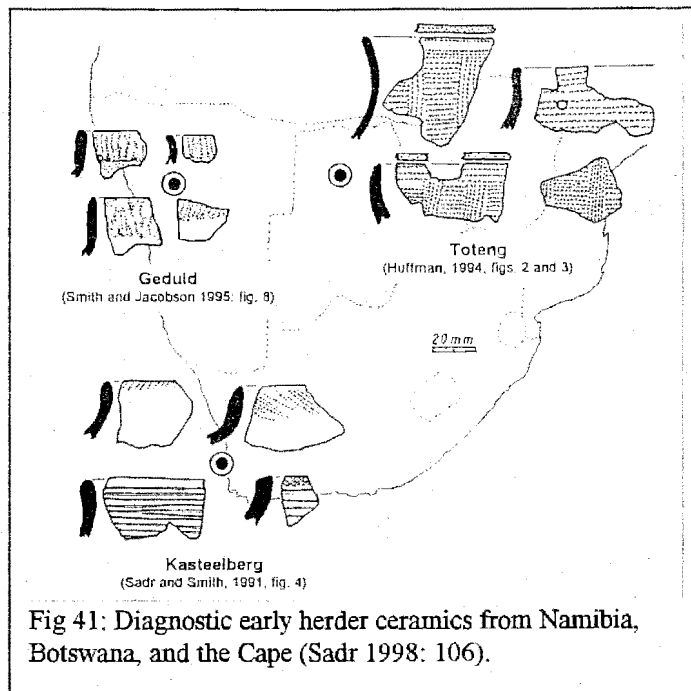


Fig 41: Diagnostic early herder ceramics from Namibia, Botswana, and the Cape (Sadr 1998: 106).

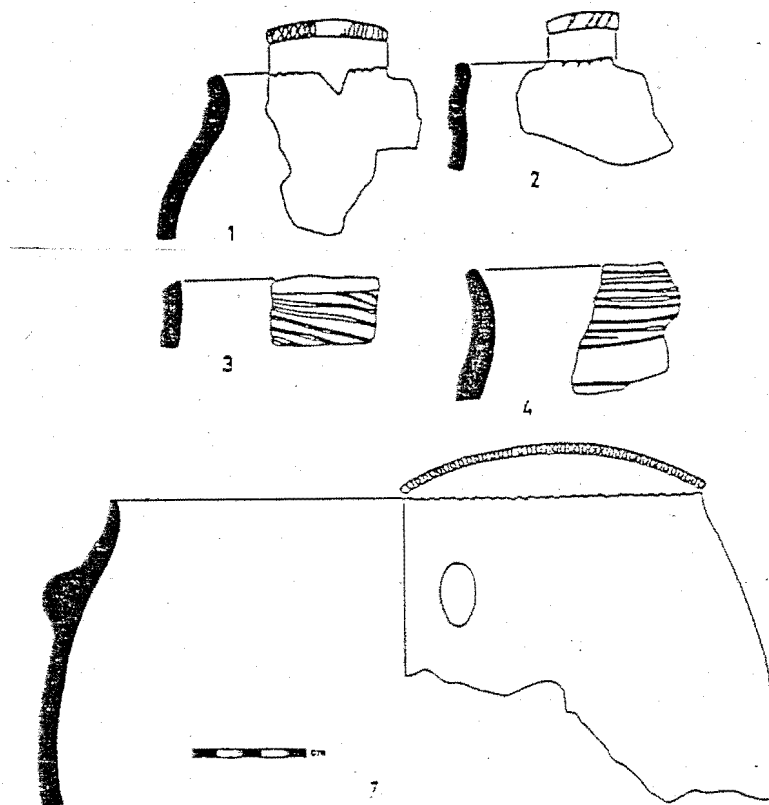


Fig 42: **Welgeluk** type ceramics. Numbers 3 and 4 (pottery unit 1B) represent the stratigraphically lower component, usually embellished with horizontal or diagonal incisions on the neck, and is dated to 1980 ± 50 BP (Pta-3984). Numbers 1 and 2 (pottery unit 1A) represent the more recent component, usually embellished with incisions across the lips of the vessels, and is dated to 510 ± 50 BP (Pta-3934). "An original interpretation of the **Welgeluk** pottery sequence (Hall, S. 1985) saw the upper assemblage as indicative of an increasing mixed-farmer presence on the landscape based on its repeated association with Bantu speakers (Schofield 1948). There may still be some validity to this viewpoint but a rim nicked vessel from the Winterberg foothills near Adelaide, number 7, has unpierced vestigial lugs that may be relict pastoralist features. It cannot be ruled out that the upper pottery assemblage reflects the emergence of mixed Khoi and Xhosa groups, which appear historically as the Gonaqua and Ghunukhwebe. From the foregoing it can be seen that complexities of interpretation are intensified by the relative absence of many examples of whole pots from a wide spectrum of quite closely related sites (Hall, S. 1990: 251-254).

in the middle of the first millennium AD". These observations are helpful towards conceptualising subsistence economies as malleable rather than as strictly locked into particular mutually exclusive practices. Maggs and Whitelaw (1991: 11) concurred, suggesting that a "complex intermeshing of the two subsistence modes has been giving rise to compound economies for two millennia".

People's lifeways are likely to have changed with realignment of subsistence locus:

It does seem that pastoralism created the potential for the emergence of societies where males can acquire a special status or rank on the basis of violent activities, through either defending territories or raiding. Pastoralism, as well as farming, also provides the potential for accumulating wealth. And farming and pastoralism both held the potential for expansion through control of land and labour (Hassan 1998: 275-276).

Establishment and integration of pastoralism in southern Africa, and associated clay-working practices [fig 41] do, however, fall out of my current frame of reference⁵¹.

Hassan's observations are, nonetheless, crucial with regard to conceptualising ways in which people, influenced by a prevailing economy, may have modified daily interactions with each other. Peoples of pastoralist and of mixed-farming economies have been identified as leaving particular signature traces of their presence and influence on each other in the archaeological record. At **Welgeluk** [fig 42], for example, the "pottery components ... stratigraphically record the increasing influence of firstly, Khoi

⁵¹ This topic is thoroughly dealt with by, amongst others: Barnard 1992; Boonzaier et al 1996; Deacon & Deacon 1999; Denbow 1986; Elphick 1977; Hall, M. & Smith 1986; Kinahan 1991; Rudner 1968; Smith 1992; Sadr 1997, 1998; Sadr & Smith 1991; and Webley 1992.

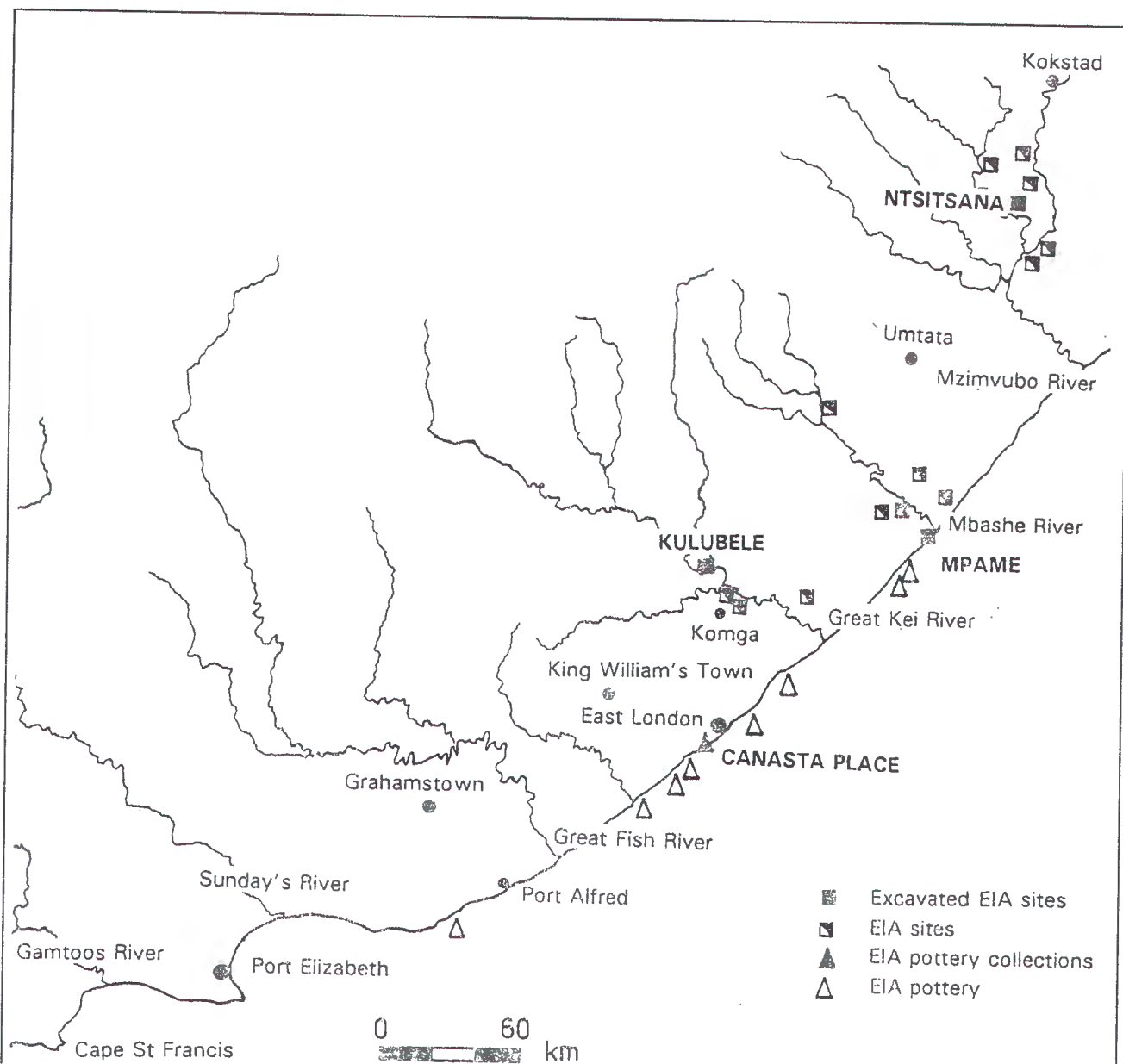


Fig 43: Location of **Kulubele** and **Canasta Place** (Binneman 1996(a): 30). [Note: EIA = F-MA].



Fig 44(a): **Canasta Place** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

herders and, secondly, Xhosa⁵² mixed farmers in the area" (my footnote) (Hall, S. 1990: 255).

The stratigraphic record thus extends right into the Precolonial Second-Millennium and Colonial Agriculturist eras wherein oral history, written historical accounts⁵³, ethnographic records, and archaeological stratification support Simon Hall's reference to Xhosa mixed farmers. On the other hand, because of a lack of continuity and supporting stratigraphy, no such certainty exists regarding the precise identity of First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples who made pots and occupied the sites **Kulubele** and **Canasta Place**⁵⁴ [figs 43, and 44 (a); and 44(b) and (c) overleaf] in the Eastern Cape region. Ceramics at **Canasta Place** "probably represent the most southerly evidence of an Early Iron Age [F-MA] settlement in Southern Africa" (Binneman 1996(a): 28).

Despite lack of certainty Johan Binneman has nonetheless hinted at possible Xhosa (Nguni)⁵⁵ ancestral links with First-Millennium Agriculturists at these sites, noting that "today AmaXhosa compose the majority of the people in the region" (Binneman 1996(a): 28). Direct ancestry is impossible to verify because of

⁵² The terms Khoi and Xhosa refer to peoples differentiated by some aspects of language, economy, culture, and time.

⁵³ Binneman (1996(a): 28) commented "we know ... from historical records that [AmaXhosa] people were living in permanent settlements [as far south as the] Sunday's River [near Port Elizabeth] in approximately 1789 (see Peires 1981; MacLennan 1986)".

⁵⁴ **Kulubele** (27.51S; 32.25E) is situated "on the west bank of the Great Kei river valley in the Stutterheim district ... some 200 m below the plateau and 60 kilometres inland from the coast" (Binneman 1996(a): 29). **Canasta Place** (33.00S; 27.47E) is located about 12 kilometres west of East London on the west bank of the Buffalo river.

⁵⁵ Jim Feely (1987: 3) suggested that "there is a variety of evidence [linguistic, religious, genetic and place name studies 1987: 38] supporting the proposal that the Xhosa language, and the biological affinities of its speakers, are an indigenous development in [the then] Transkei and Ciskei".

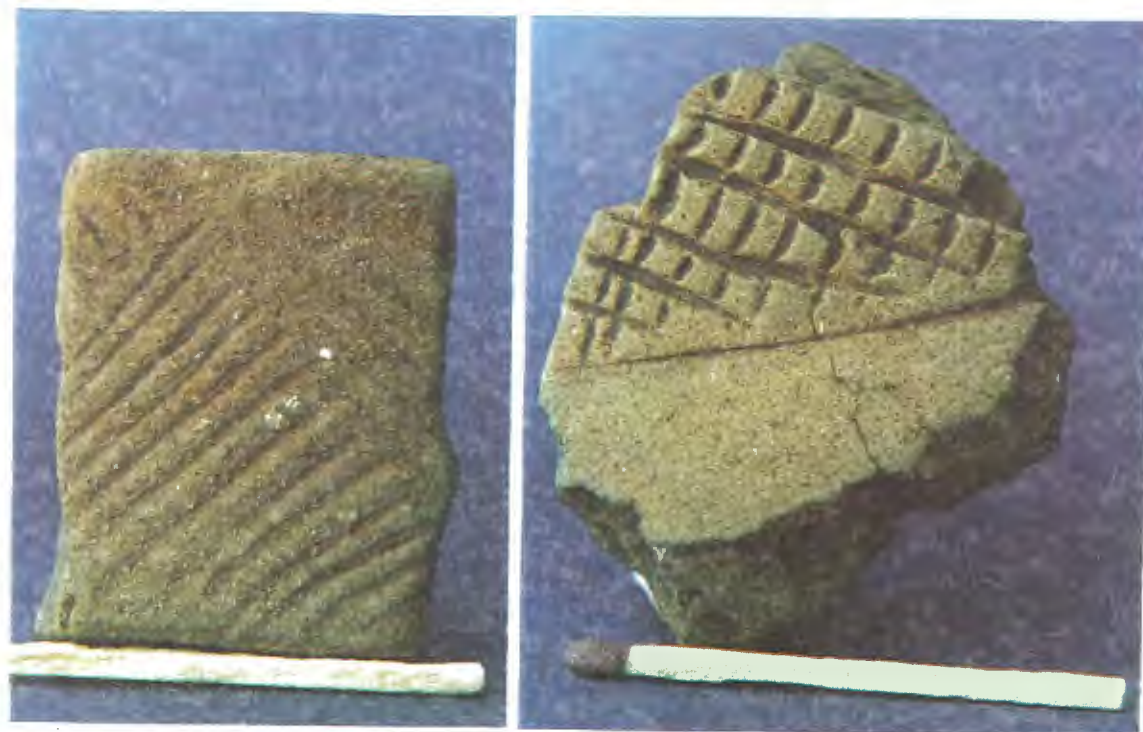


Fig 44(c): **Canasta Place** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

the vast time depth, but certain cultural continuities can be said, sometimes contentiously, to suggest such a connection⁵⁶.



Fig 44 (b): Canasta Place potsherd (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Fort Hare University).

Furthermore, it has been suggested that **Kulubele** [fig 45, overleaf] and **Canasta Place** ceramics assemblages are stylistically⁵⁷ placed within an African ceramics tradition that was “already present some 1 800 years ago” (Binneman 1996(b): 72). This northwestern connection, known as the western stream

⁵⁶ First-Millennium Agriculturist/Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist continuities are by no means taken for granted. See Hall, M. 1987; Huffman 1998; Maggs 1994-1995; Maggs & Whitelaw 1991; Prins 1993; Van Schalkwyk 1991; and Whitelaw 1994(b) for examples of debate between researchers who favour the idea of continuity and those who do not.

⁵⁷ Per “vessel profile, decoration motif and decoration placement” (Binneman 1996(a): 28).



Fig 45: Kulubele potsherds showing some different engravings that identify them as Msuluzi Phase, Kalundu Tradition ceramics (Binneman 1996(b): 72).

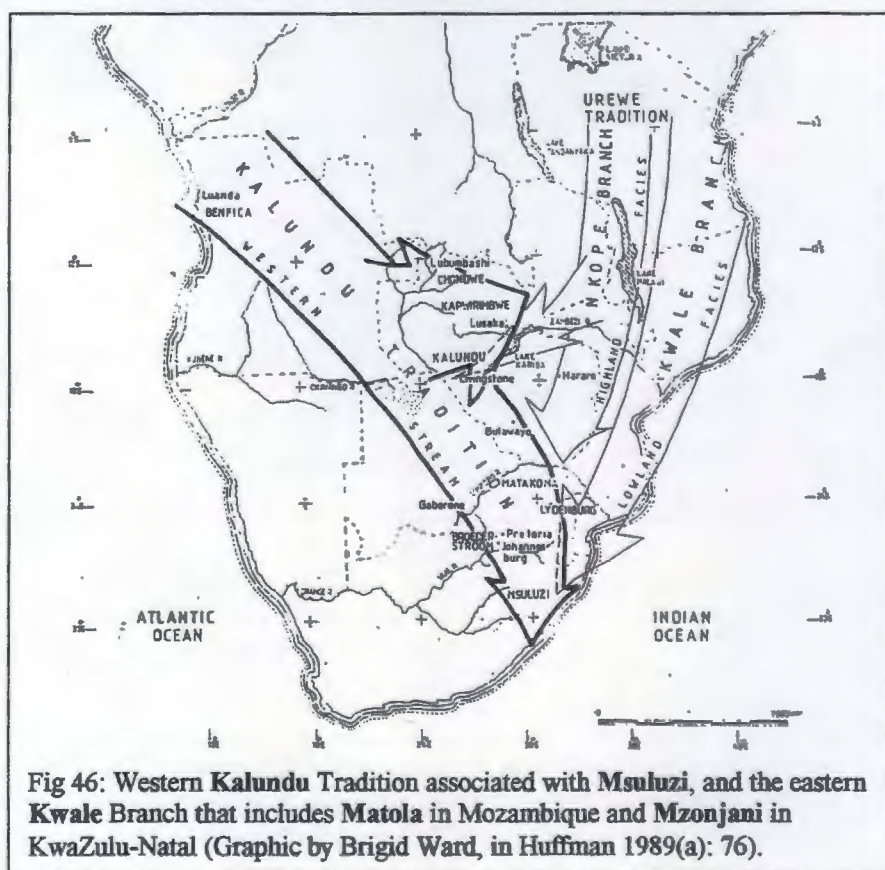


Fig 46: Western Kalundu Tradition associated with Msuluzi, and the eastern Kwale Branch that includes Matola in Mozambique and Mzonjani in KwaZulu-Natal (Graphic by Brigid Ward, in Huffman 1989(a): 76).

Kalundu Tradition⁵⁸ [fig 46] is thought to extend into southern Africa from as far afield as the Democratic Republic of Congo, **Kalundu** in Zambia, and **Benfica**⁵⁹ in Angola. The **Kalundu Tradition** also includes ceramic stylistic correspondences found, for example, at **Maunatlala** in Botswana (Denbow 1986), **Lydenberg** in Mpumalanga, and **Msuluzi** in KwaZulu-Natal (Huffman 1989(b): 76).

According to this view, stylistic elements of western stream **Kalundu Tradition** First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics are differentiated from those originating along the southern African east coast. The eastern stream **Kwale Branch** of the **Urewe Tradition** includes **Matola** in Mozambique and the site **Mzonjani** in KwaZulu-Natal, where the ceramic style at the latter site has been dated to about 100 years prior to the arrival in that area of **Kalundu** style ceramics (Maggs 1980(c): 71).

Extensive research at First-Millennium Agriculturist sites in KwaZulu-Natal has resulted in the establishment of a calibrated chronological and typological framework⁶⁰ [fig 47, overleaf] within which the site **Kulubele** can be contextualised. The early **Mzonjani**⁶¹ phase dates calibrate from AD 420 to AD 550 (Whitelaw 1996: 76), and the **Msuluzi** phase dates from AD 650 to AD 790 (Binneman 1996(a): 30)⁶². **Kulubele** ceramics, which date from approximately AD 790 to AD 857, are stylistically

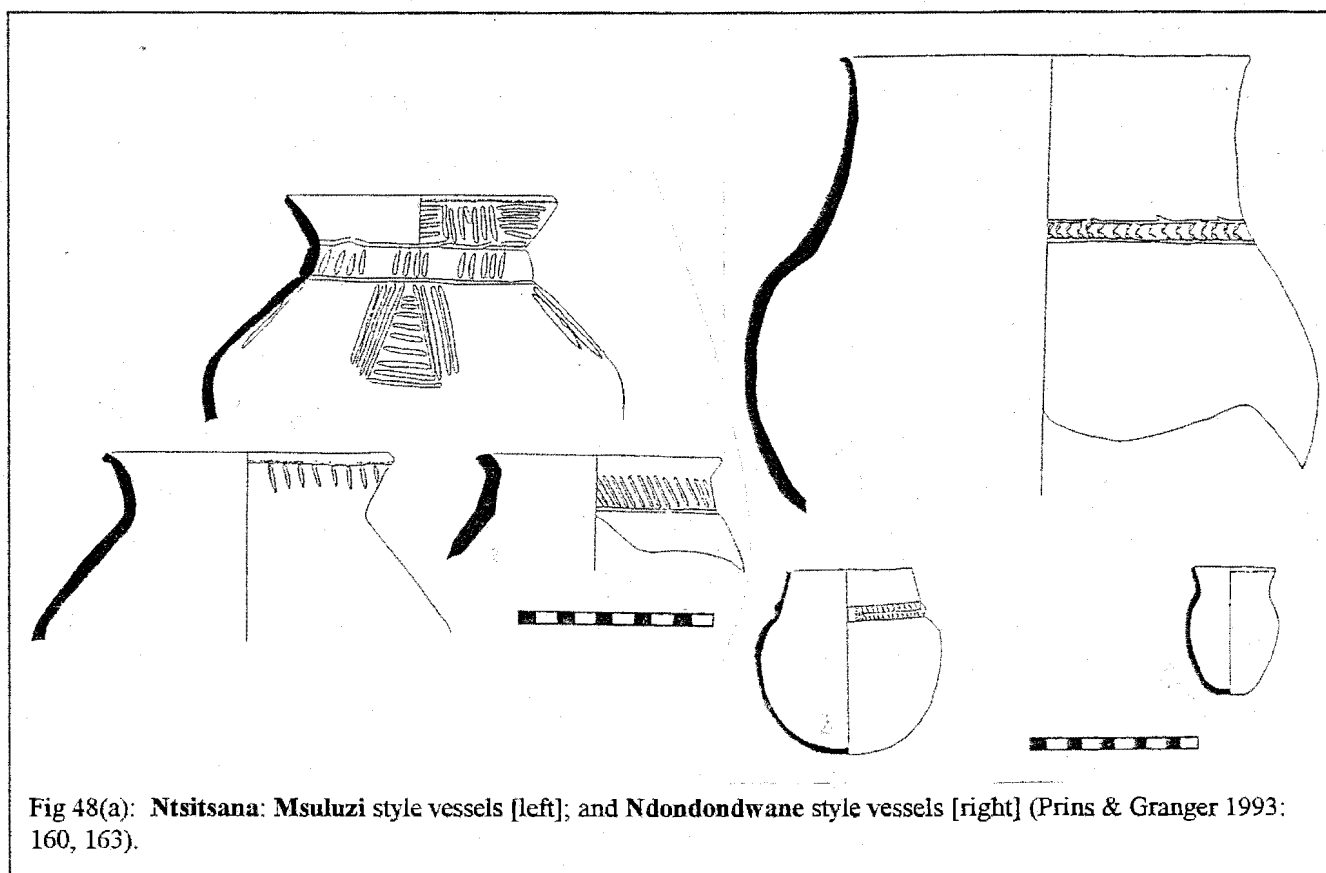
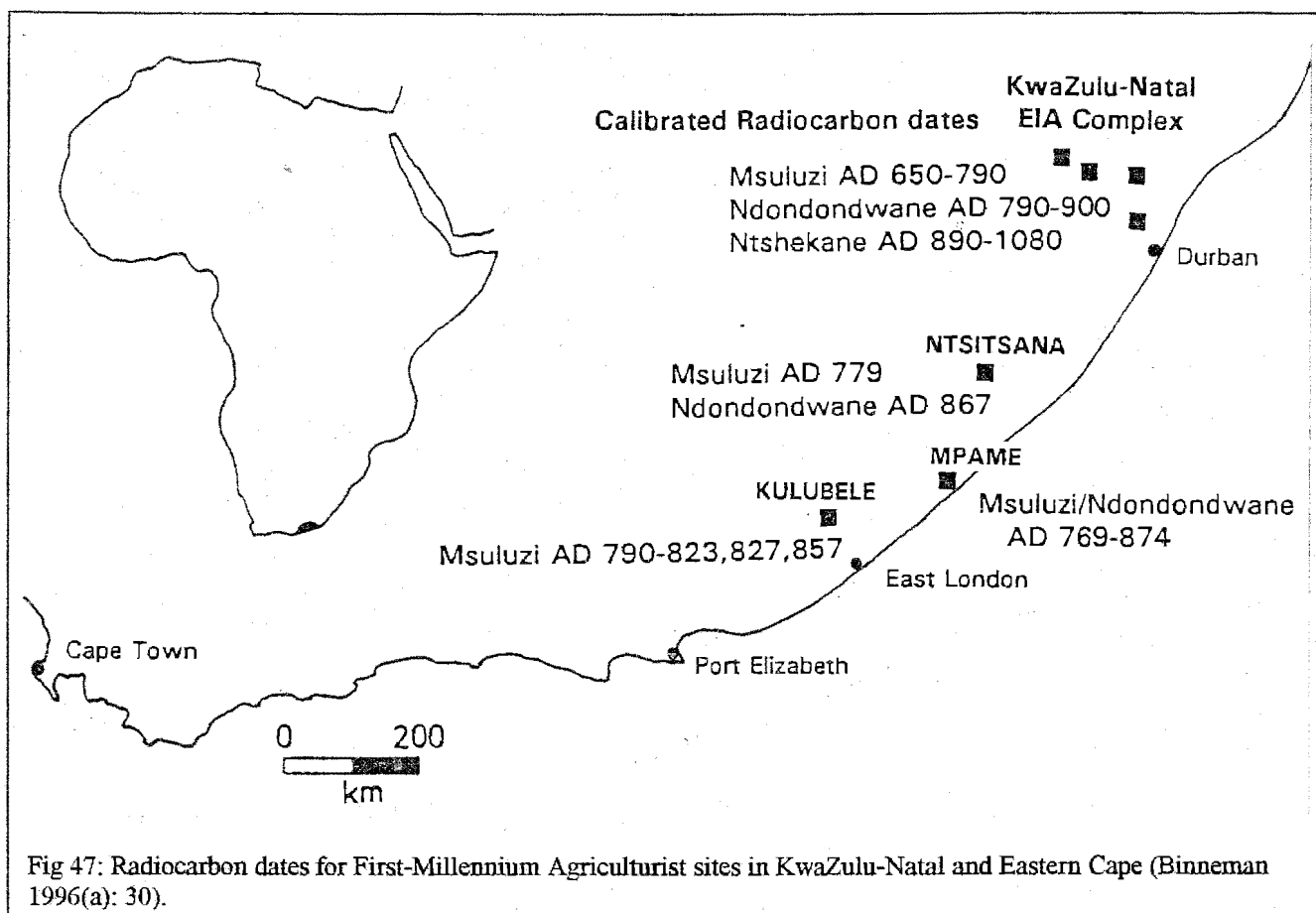
⁵⁸ The **Kalundu** site is in Zambia (Huffman 1989(a): 2).

⁵⁹ This western stream ceramic tradition is also known as the **Benfica Tradition**, after the type-site in Angola dated at 150 BC (Huffman 1989(a); Van Schalkwyk 1991: 20). I have, however, chosen to stick with **Kalundu**, as per Huffman 1989(a): 76; and Whitelaw 1997: 446).

⁶⁰ Binneman (1996(a): 28) cited Maggs & Michael 1976; Maggs 1980(b), 1984; Van Schalkwyk 1991, 1994(a), 1994(b); Loubser 1993; and Whitelaw 1993, 1994(b) as having established this framework.

⁶¹ See Appendix 3 for the **Mzonjani** (29.44.0S; 31.03.15E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Maggs 1980(c): 76-86).

⁶² See Appendix 4 for the **Msuluzi Confluence** (28.45.20S; 30.08.45E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Maggs 1980(b): 122-131).



placed within western stream **Msuluzi/Ndondondwane** First-Millennium Agriculturist phases (Binneman 1996(a): 30, 35).

Ndondondwane⁶³ (AD 790 to AD 900) and **Ntshekane**⁶⁴ (AD 890 to AD 1080), in KwaZulu-Natal, are also said to fall within this western stream of ceramic style (Whitelaw 1996: 76). Closer to **Kulubele**, two sites in the Transkei, **Ntsitsana**⁶⁵ [figs 48(a); and (b) overleaf] and **Mpame River Mouth**⁶⁶, have also been identified as being of First-Millennium Agriculturist origin (Binneman 1996(a): 28).

Commenting on the stylistic positioning of **Kulubele** ceramics within the **Msuluzi/Ndondondwane** framework, and on evidence of regional individuality, Binneman (1996(a): 31, 35) has said that

although fragmentary, the assemblage provided sufficient information to be identified and classified with the **Msuluzi** phase ... The absence of elaborate decorative motives on the shoulder and lower body of vessels suggests that the **Kulubele** assemblage may represent a transition between the **Msuluzi/Ndondondwane** phases ... An interesting aspect of the **Kulubele** pots is the decoration inside the neck of several vessels. No decoration on the inside of pots has been reported from KwaZulu-Natal or northern Transkei.

A slightly later appearance of the **Msuluzi** style at **Kulubele** indicated to Binneman "a relatively rapid spread of Early Iron Age [F-MA] communities ... along the east coast of southern Africa" (1996(a): 35). Furthermore, his observation that the

⁶³ See [Appendix 5](#) for the **Ndondondwane** (28.53S; 31.01E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Loubser 1993: 124-135).

⁶⁴ See [Appendix 6](#) for the **Ntshekane** (28.57.35S; 30.24.30E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Maggs & Michael 1976: 712-725).

⁶⁵ See [Appendix 8](#) for the **Ntsitsana** (31.04S; 29.12E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Prins & Granger 1993: 158-165).

⁶⁶ Dates reported for **Mpame River Mouth** in Cronin (1982: 38).



Fig 48(b): **Kulubele** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Kulubele assemblage manifests **Ndondondwane** stylistic elements may indicate the community was not completely isolated from other mixed-farming communities in KwaZulu-Natal and elsewhere.

Some ceramic stylistic continuity seems to thus be indicated for the duration of this move by women, men and children from present KwaZulu-Natal into the Eastern Cape, and during a probable move from further north by earlier generations before that. Throughout this trip, if the migration hypothesis is accurate, "the first Early Iron Age [F-MA] farmers did ... not move into an empty landscape" (Binneman 1996(b): 73). During this era, inter cultural interactions would probably have impacted on lifeways, yet identity was retained, and certain forms of visible material culture remained relatively consistent. Thus the **Kalundu** Tradition **Msuluzi** ceramic style is thought to have been, broadly speaking, conserved by the communities that eventually settled at **Kulubele** and **Canasta Place**.

This stylistic connection between some ceramics of **Kalundu** in Zambia, **Msuluzi** in KwaZulu-Natal, and **Kulubele** in the Eastern Cape, is of direct relevance for glimpses at ceramics praxis, aesthetic criteria, use values/symbolic contents, and interpretations of First-Millennium Agriculturist lifeways. Thus, my search for peoples and interpretations of their thinkings within the only partially excavated archaeological context of **Kulubele** is facilitated to a large extent by judicial use of perceived links with First-Millennium Agriculturist societies elsewhere that have been studied in greater depth. In this way inferences of social similarities and differences between settlements and peoples can be used as indicators of the "continuities and dialectics of life, the interpersonal and intimate

aspects of social settings that bind prehistoric lives into social patterns" (Gero & Conkey 1991:18).

The macroscale 'grand narrative' presented thus far provides a point of departure towards a more intimate focus on possible First-Millennium Agriculturist daily lifeways. Next, however, a look at some of the ways in which First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples and items of material culture have been conceptualised in the historical era will serve to bring the goal of investigating daily lifeways and ceramics praxis a little closer.

Chapter 2

WAYS OF SEEING: CONTEXTUALISING KULUBELE AND OTHER SPECIFIC FIRST- MILLENNIUM AGRICULTURIST SITES

Ways of thinking shape ways of seeing, and explanations of what is seen. Because conceptual frameworks are inseparable from explanations that result, it is fundamental to consider theories, as well as their applications, in the search for meanings in material culture studies. In this chapter the **Kulubele** ceramics assemblage will be contextualised within a wider theoretical framework focussed mainly on **Kalundu** Tradition material culture. The development of key concepts applied in the search for meaning in this arena will be concurrently explored in a gradual trend towards more intimate lookings at domestic detail.

To date, an overview of early writings, with my specific focus on ceramics, seems not yet to have been undertaken. Furthermore, the published writers and researchers of southern African prehistoric studies have been mainly of European descent, predetermining the kinds of questions asked of the ceramic assemblages investigated. Ways of theorising the past are directly influenced by mindset and possible cultural prejudices of writers. Bearing in mind that although I was born in South Africa I am originally of Western European descent, this chapter seeks to gain at least some understanding of impacts that different ways of theorising the past has had on southern African prehistoric ceramics studies.

Early historic era travellers, and other researchers, created a disturbing picture built upon preconceived ideas of 'the primitive' that were then imposed upon indigenous African populations. This mindset can be seen, for example, in writings by Stow 1905⁶⁷, Theal 1907⁶⁸, and Impey 1926⁶⁹. Their seemingly authoritative opinions often revealed "more about the consciousness and world-view [of the author] than about the subjects (human, animal or geographic) that were being discussed" (Dietrich 1993: 2).

Early European discourse on Africa was predicated on Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian concepts such as good/bad, civilisation/savagery. This foundation in turn informed Enlightenment-based ideas regarding origins, dispersion, and diversification of humans⁷⁰. Furthermore, "African societies were simultaneously viewed as mirroring a 'paradisical prelapsarian' state of 'natural man', and representing an instance of extreme degeneration from the ideal of the Adamic prototype created in the likeness of God" (Dietrich 1993: iii).

⁶⁷ Stow (1905: 233) wrote, for example, of central African peoples as "a seething mass of equatorial life", thereby presenting an image of people undifferentiated from animal and plant life.

⁶⁸ Theal (1907: 2-3), writing of the "heaps of refuse [prehistoric middens] along the South African coast", maintained that "arrowheads, spearheads, scrapers ... were the products of the skill of man in the lowest stage of existence".

⁶⁹ Impey (1926: 88) explained his opinion regarding the origin of southern African rock art by asserting that "I have always been unable to believe that people of such a low degraded type of humanity could have painted the pictures attributed to them".

⁷⁰ See Appendix 2 for an example of an ostensibly Biblically based interpretation of dispersion ideas as evident in Rev J Henderson Soga's 1930 answer to the self posed question: Who are the Bantu? Soga's version can be contrasted with that of Theal, who proposed a non-Biblically based version of human origins in southern Africa. Theal (1907: 4-5) wrote: "Where the race of savages who occupied this country so long ... had its origin cannot be stated, but it is highly probable that its early home was in some part of Central Asia ... one section ... found its way into Africa". Both Soga and Theal's versions are based on misconceptions prevalent at the time.



Fig 49: Nineteenth-century evolutionists and ethnographers were preoccupied with classification, whether the subjects were bees, butterflies or mankind. This print illustrates the work of Thomas Huxley, a contemporary of Charles Darwin (Hall, M. 1990: 6).

Writers such as Theal and Stow were strongly influenced by a Linnaean trend towards classification of all things⁷¹ as a way of knowing. A benchmark in the trend towards classification of all things came with the classification of people according to race. Such a classification, from a Western point of view, can be traced back to 1735 when Linnaeus drew distinctions between *Homo europaeus*, *Homo asiaticus* and *Homo africanus*, the last being the black-skinned people of Africa (Hall, M. 1996: 127). People other than those of Western Europe were regarded as specimens, to be described and classified as part of cataloguing exercises [fig 49]. This empiricist classificatory trend allowed for a dehumanisation process wherein difference and type became so important that people became homogenised into standardised groups, their individuality was ignored, and some were denied any commonalities with the researcher.

Early writers were also influenced by Charles Darwin's ideas on evolutionary processes, an idea which led to a classification of people on an evolutionary scale in much the same way as was done for animal and plant life, exacerbating a Eurocentric trend towards denial of humanity to foreign peoples. The concept 'survival of the fittest' was used to justify the colonial enterprise of conquest and economic exploitation of human and other resources that was in full swing by the middle of the 19th century. Furthermore, Martin Hall (1990: 5) has commented that "when the population of an occupied country was seen as stuck

⁷¹ Dietrich (1993: 424) has noted that Francis Bacon's appeal to the logical systematisation of empirical scientific methods for understanding the true nature of matter was influential in establishing the trend towards classification. "In his *The advancement of learning*, Bacon (1561-1626) argued that 'knowledge is power', and that it was only through the scientific method that humans could grasp and exert command over the potencies of nature. Bacon's appeal to the advancement of learning attained actualisation at the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment in Isaac Newton's assertion that the essential properties of matter are only those that are empirically given".

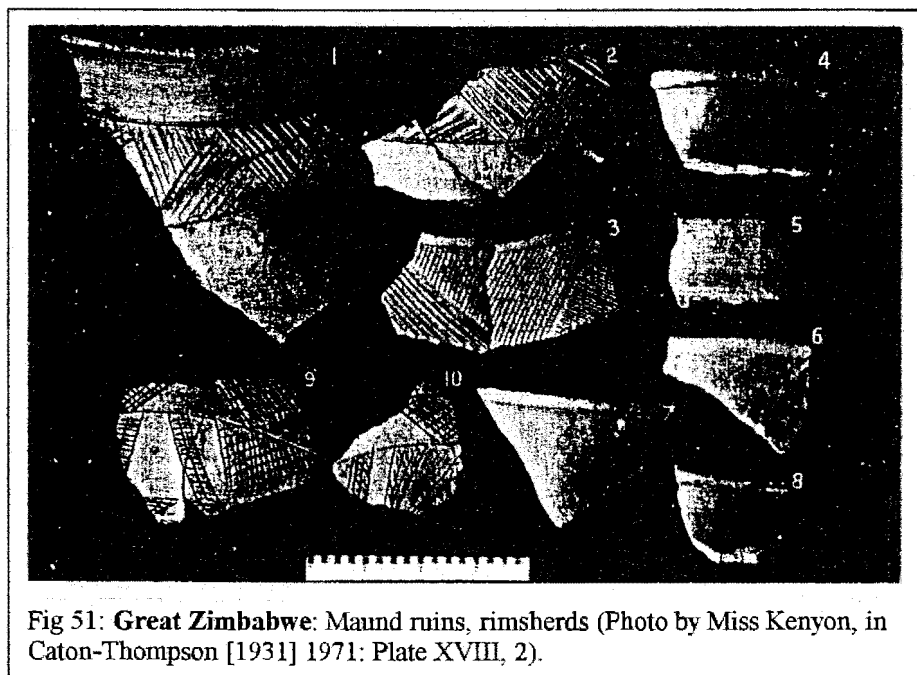
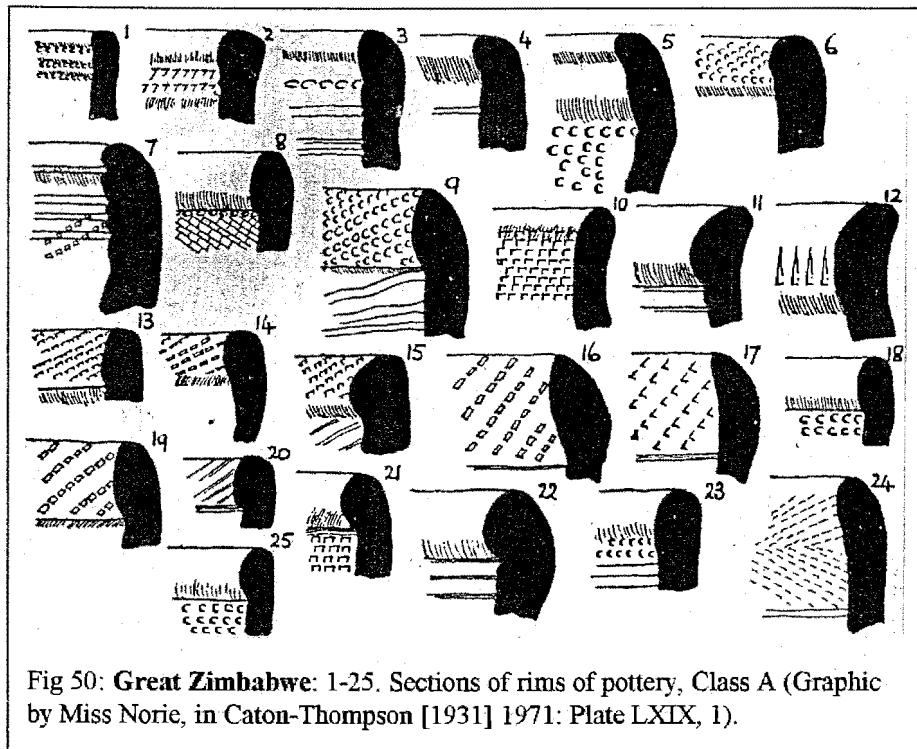
on a lower branch of the evolutionary tree, then it could be argued that it was a duty of those higher up to bring the benefits of civilisation to the less fortunate".

The conception that people everywhere represented variously advanced and primitive stages of civilisation also allowed for a rationalisation of colonial atrocities under the guise of development. In addition, it was believed that primitive societies were "uncreative, violent, incapable of change, and that any stimulus for development must come from outside" (Hall, M. 1984(a): 456)⁷². With regard to economic exploitation of human and other resources, an emergence and development of a capitalist system of production⁷³ would also directly have influenced ways in which early historic writers conceptualised southern Africa. Early 'successes' of colonial imperialism served to further legitimate a sense of Western European superiority.

Such a self-serving scenario was also played out in gender issues, wherein patriarchy asserted itself in Europe by (amongst other strategies) aligning concepts of male with reason, and female with nature. By then claiming a superiority of reason over nature, masculinist tendencies towards dominance were thus, self-servingly, legitimated. Likewise, capitalism, when dovetailed with ideas of social evolution, superiority, and a bringing of 'benefits' of civilisation to vanquished indigenous peoples, formed a potent conceptual cocktail out of which early archaeological efforts in southern Africa emerged in the 20th century.

⁷² Martin Hall cited Harris 1969, and Trigger 1980, for consultation on this topic.

⁷³ "It was in western Europe that the capitalist system had its origins, in the expansionary trading activity of merchant capital based mainly in Holland, Spain, and Britain from the fifteenth century onwards" (Marx 1972: 323-337, cited by Dietrich 1993: 4).



Significantly, given the prevailing intellectual climate, "the first systematic archaeological research into a farming-based society in southern Africa" (Hall, M. 1990: 7) was undertaken in 1929 at **Great Zimbabwe**, in Zimbabwe, by Gertrude Caton-Thompson⁷⁴. She, and two assistants identified respectively as Miss Norie, responsible for the line drawings [fig 50], and Miss Kenyon, responsible for the photography [fig 51] and vehicle maintenance, conducted excavations from April to September of that year (Caton-Thompson [1931] 1971: v-viii)⁷⁵.

Through controlled and systematic fieldwork procedures, and careful documentation, Caton-Thompson and her team demonstrated that the ruins were of African origin (Hall, M. 1984(b): 264). She classified the ceramics by colour, texture and finish (already a standard archaeological procedure elsewhere in the world) saying "pottery, that loyal friend, alone tells a

⁷⁴ Before Caton-Thompson, archaeologists in southern Africa had concentrated on Stone Age studies, "consigning evidence for more recent settlement to the 'Bantu Period', and leaving its interpretation ... to ethnographers" (Hall, M. 1984(b): 263). Martin Hall (1984(b): 263) cited two such examples of ethnographic enquiry, both of which contributed substantially to the misinformed worldview previously under discussion. He observed that "Soga (1930) argued the value of racially superior 'blood' for the advancement of a barbaric race, and CT Binns (1974) suggested an association between the Zulu and the lost tribe of Israel because both practised circumcision".

⁷⁵ Prior to their arrival the area had been searched for signs of an immensely wealthy mythical Christian king, called Prester John, as well as for the lost wealth of the biblical characters King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. In 1892 Theodore Bent dismissed the above characters, proposing instead a Sabaeen Arab and Phoenician origin for the ruins. Ten years later RN Hall and WG Neal largely concurred with Bent's assessment, adding a final 'decadent period' when descendants of the first builders mixed with the local population (Hall, M. 1996(a): 23-27, citing Bent [1892] 1969, and Hall, RN & Neal 1902).

Such preconceptions advanced colonial expansionist imperatives by assuming a history of colonisation, and thereby denying the local population their own history. The abilities of the then present and/or previous local people were trivialised by such assertions that persons from elsewhere had built **Great Zimbabwe**. Furthermore, Martin Hall (1984(a): 457) has recounted that RN Hall and WG Neal's disregard for careful procedure resulted in "depredations that destroyed much of the archaeological evidence of **Great Zimbabwe**".

straightforward tale ..."⁷⁶ ([1931] 1971: 190]. Martin Hall (1984(a): 458; 1990: 7) has commented that Caton-Thompson created the first ceramic sequence for southern Africa, and was the first to use aerial photographs of the site, a technique that was to become frequently used in subsequent southern African archaeological studies.

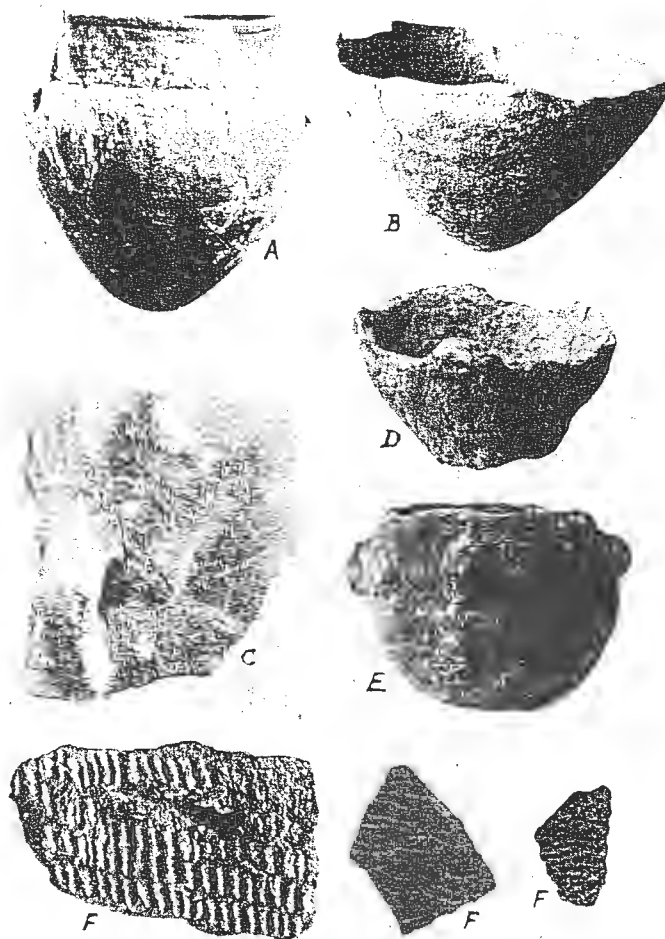
Despite such achievements it can, in retrospect, be seen that Caton-Thompson brought an early 20th century colonial consciousness to bear on her conceptualisation of the site. For example, although she attributed **Great Zimbabwe** to African origins, she stated that the architecture struck her as "essentially the product of an infantile mind, a pre-logical mind". She also, like RN Hall and WG Neal before who identified a decadent period, saw a "retrogressive continuity of custom down the ages" (Caton-Thompson [1931] 1971:103).

The mindset that she, and others, brought to their researches determined interpretation of the **Great Zimbabwe** site. Garlake (1982) has called this particular way of seeing the 'settler paradigm'⁷⁷ (cited by Hall, M. 1984(b): 263), wherein southern African ceramics and culture was cast within a framework of preconceptions. These preconceptions included perceptions of Africa as having had:

a shallow history of invasions by bloodthirsty marauders and the unchanging customs of intensely conservative tribes ... Accordingly [researchers] emphasised curious and supposedly primitive aspects [of rural life], argued about the relative superiority of different groups, and attempted to recreate, from scraps of tradition and by speculation, the sequence and directionality of

⁷⁶ It will be seen, however, that the 'tale' told by the **Kulubele** ceramics assemblage and related context seems anything but straightforward.

⁷⁷ I use this phrase quite loosely to indicate both the mindset that the immigrant as researcher brought to bear on the subject matter, and to indicate a preoccupation with origins of indigenous people.



- A. Type II pot. Sloping neck, doubtfully of neck-body technique.
Rufane's River.
- B. Type III pot. Hand raised from lump.
- C. Type III. Externally applied handle lug.
- D. Type IV. Bushman pot. Flattened bottom, prolonged lip pierced.
- E. Type IV. Bushman pot. Semi-discoid externally applied lugs.
- F. Type IVa. Stormberg-Cala type. Three varieties of 'finger-nail' marking.

Fig 52: Some of the ceramics described by Laidler as "Hottentot and Bushman pottery", and accompanying explanation (Photo by Laidler's unnamed son, 1929: 786).

the migrations and wars that had led to the contemporary distribution and disposition of black society (Hall, M. 1984(b): 263).

Aspects of this settler paradigm were to continue in researches into material culture and lifeways of early farming communities for some time to come, especially with regard to issues of sequence and migrations.

Another important early writer on ceramics was amateur archaeologist PW Laidler, stationed at East London as Medical Officer of Health⁷⁸. Writing in 1929, shortly before Caton-Thompson's publication of her findings, Laidler attempted to classify mainly surface coastal ceramic remains from East London on the east coast, to Port Nolloth on the west coast. His macro approach, though confusing in its plenitude of sites and descriptions of sherds and vessels, presented important documentation.

Laidler's (1929: 758) characterisation of much of these coastal ceramics as "Hottentot and Bushman pottery of South Africa" [fig 52] remains basically accurate⁷⁹ from a stylistic point of view⁸⁰, but the analysis represents an arbitrary lumping together of race and ceramic style. Laidler's use of terminology is instructive regarding his mindset, as is his utilisation of a range of ideas already explored as shaping the settler paradigm.

⁷⁸ He had become interested in archaeology while a medical student in Edinburgh.

⁷⁹ A rephrasing, taking into account changes in terminology since 1929, could read: 'Ceramics created by peoples whose economy was predominantly pastoralist and/or hunter-gatherer'.

⁸⁰ Some of the works described by Laidler as "late degenerate" could, however (if it was possible and worth the trouble to track down the specific sherds referred to), probably be shown to be of a style associated with Early Agriculturist ceramics (see 1929: 778 as an example).

This way of thinking and seeing is evident, for instance, in his (Laidler 1929: 758) attribution of ceramic remains to men⁸¹, in his stated concern with race, and in his focus on which peoples migrated where and miscegenated with whom to form his designated racial categories⁸². Furthermore, he wrote frequently of "traditions", made sweeping statements about origins, and was judgmental in his reference to "late degenerate pots" (Laidler 1929: 759) in such a way as to ascribe a degenerate character to the peoples responsible for the making of those pots⁸³.

Laidler, like Caton-Thompson, denied both time depth to ceramic assemblages and associated peoples, and denied that origins of vessel making could have been a local enterprise⁸⁴. Furthermore, his denial of time depth to the indigenous farming peoples of the East London area was extreme. In line with the then current thinking regarding simultaneous arrival in the Eastern Cape region of Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturists and European settlers, Laidler (1929: 758) proclaimed that he had not "seen native-made pottery *in use* among the natives of the East London area" (my emphasis)⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Lack of gender awareness goes much deeper than the colonial mindset, as do most of the characteristics crystallised as the settler paradigm. With regard to "the implicit sexism of words such as *mankind* and *human*, both of which shorten to *man* ..." Dudley Young (1991: xiii) makes the observation that "Adam's rib is embedded in this linguistic structure".

⁸² For example: "The race of men responsible for their deposit [the ceramics] is usually termed 'Strandlooper' ... bastardisation appears to have taken place steadily, and the Hottentot was probably more and more Bush in blood the further south and east that he migrated" (Laidler 1929: 758).

⁸³ For example: "Shape was dictated to a considerable extent by the development or degeneration of technique. As the Hottentot trekked along the African coast his technique ... degenerated as he became bastardised, and there was a consequent loss of standard" (Laidler 1929: 759).

⁸⁴ For example: "Pottery did not develop in South African cultures, but was an industry of comparatively recent introduction" (Laidler 1929: 761).

⁸⁵ He thus implied that all indigenous ceramic remains were those left by previous pastoralist and or hunter-gatherer peoples. Laidler later revised this assessment, as in (1936: 138-141).

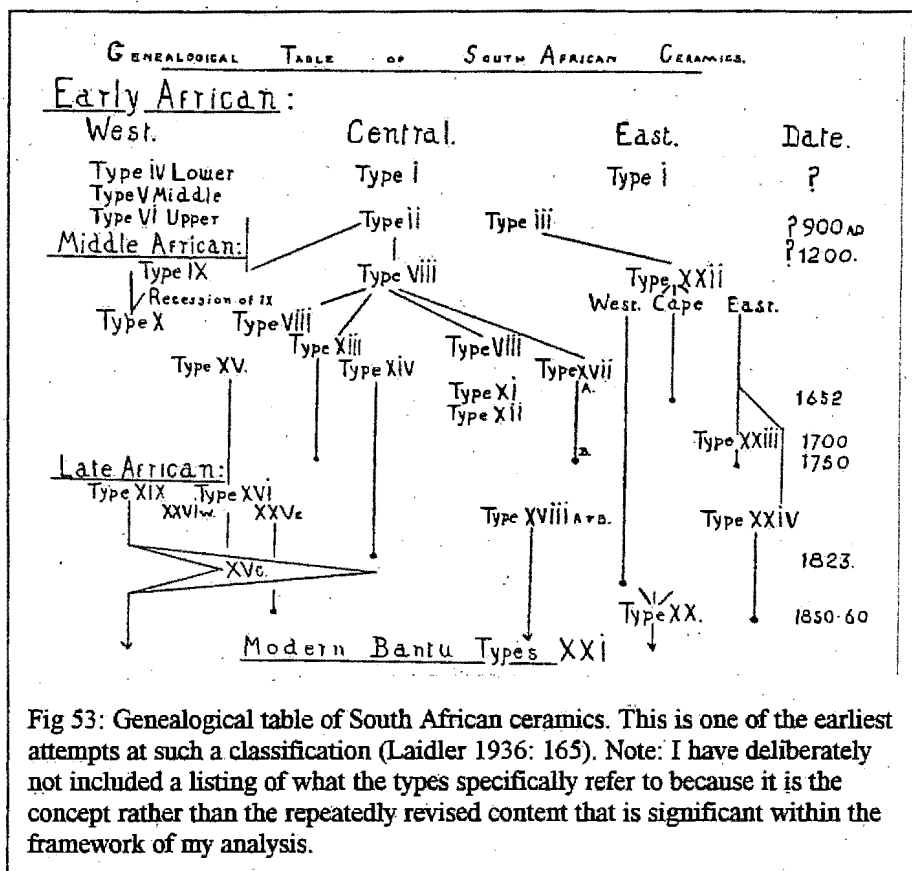


Fig 53: Genealogical table of South African ceramics. This is one of the earliest attempts at such a classification (Laidler 1936: 165). Note: I have deliberately not included a listing of what the types specifically refer to because it is the concept rather than the repeatedly revised content that is significant within the framework of my analysis.

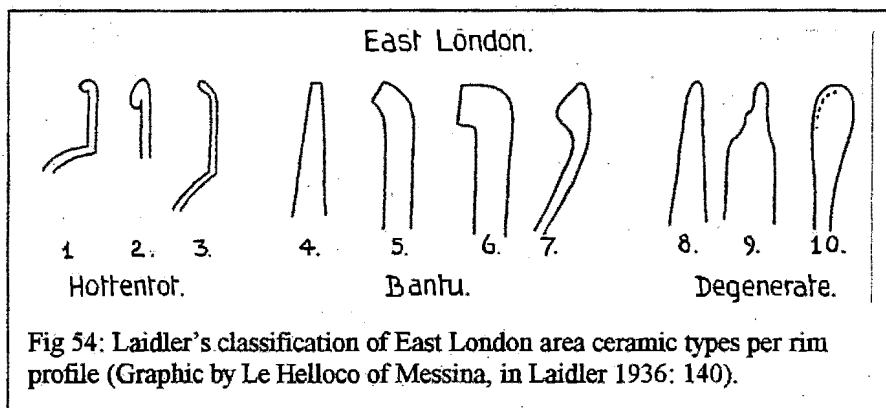


Fig 54: Laidler's classification of East London area ceramic types per rim profile (Graphic by Le Helloco of Messina, in Laidler 1936: 140).

Thus, according to him, not only was arrival of agriculturist peoples in the Eastern Cape so recent that their ceramics could not conceivably be part of archaeological deposits, but these peoples did not even have the capacity to create ceramic vessels! Laidler's epic-macro settler paradigm approach to material culture analysis remained unshaken despite the necessity of revision occasioned by new discoveries. Such new discoveries merely found their way into another macro account without analysis or revision of conceptual premises.

In 1932 (p.778), in assessing what he termed "the Bantu potting industry and its impacts on other native potting industries in South Africa", Laidler's opening assertion harked back to the context established in 1929. He stated "the introduction of pottery into South Africa was through the medium of the Hottentot, who inhabited a narrow coastal strip". And, then again maintained that "those prone to the strandloping habit of life include all the known races that have inhabited South Africa" (Laidler 1935: 560). Furthermore, according to him, all "those prone ... may be classified as follows: Modern Bantu; Bantu of mid 19th century; Degenerate Pottery; Hottentot ... " (Laidler 1935: 568).

Laidler's underlying objective in classifying the ceramics [fig 53] was a classification of peoples. This is demonstrated by his seamless use of the term "degenerate" for pottery as well as people, thus derogatorily equating people with things. The term "degenerate" was retained for his 1936 classification of East London ceramics [fig 54]. Martin Hall (1984(a): 459) assessed this 1936 publication as follows: "Using the language of Stow and Theal, Laidler equated his types with tribes, which he moved across the map in dramatic invasions and migrations. Borders were ill defined, Laidler wrote, but there was still enough

evidence to show that 'from two early and characteristic types have evolved strongly developed smaller tribal areas, which in their turn have been affected by later migrations' (1938[sic]: 163)".

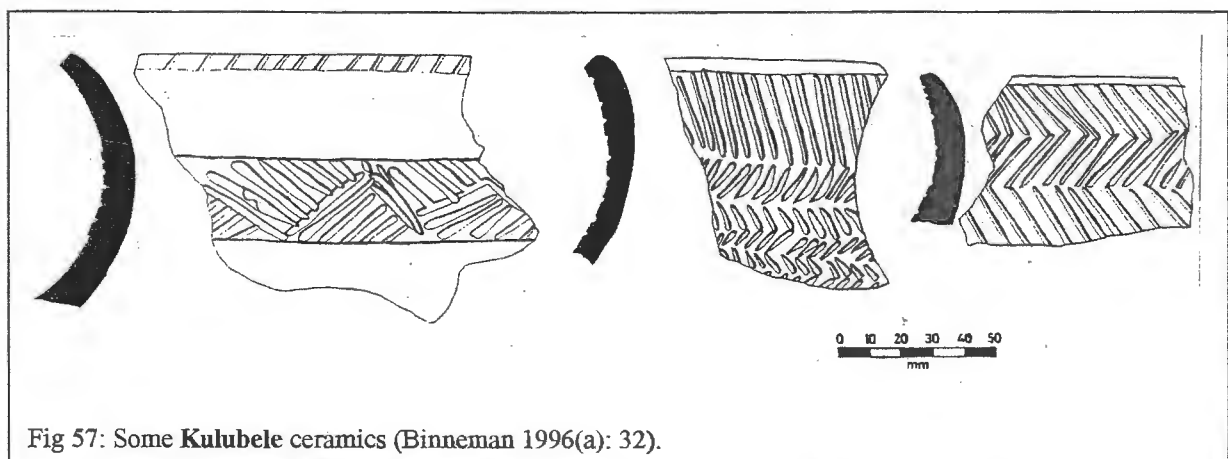
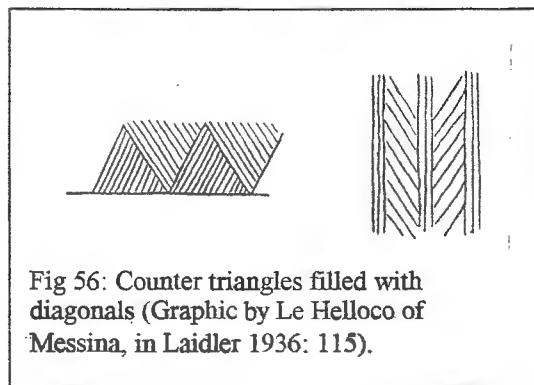
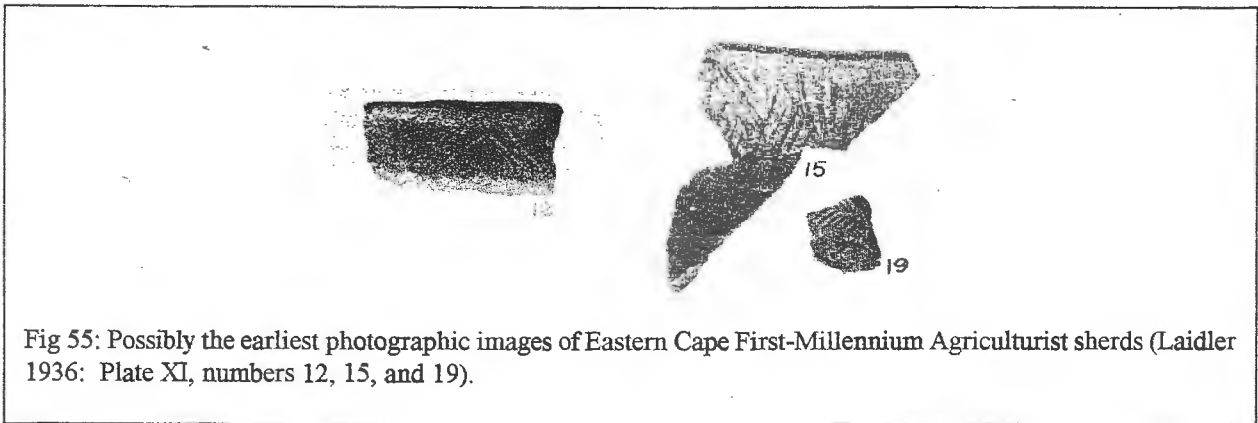
Thus, as a researcher of his era unaided by radiocarbon dating techniques, Laidler's conceptual framework seems to epitomise colonial arrogance, emphasising such dualities as superior/inferior; good/bad; and civilised/primitive in his so-called empirical approach towards the classification of prehistoric southern African peoples. On these grounds it is tempting to dismiss his work as that of a bigoted antiquarian⁸⁶ collector, but I have also found much of value amongst his ramblings.

He did, for instance, make an effort to record some early historic accounts of ceramics and ceramic production processes⁸⁷. He also mentioned literally hundreds of sites⁸⁸ where prehistoric ceramics deposits exist, many of which have probably not been subsequently investigated. Furthermore, it just may be that stuck in amongst a plethora of sherds are three [fig 55, overleaf] that

⁸⁶ Antiquarian is used here because he accumulated artefacts in a seemingly haphazard way. In my various readings I have yet to come across a comprehensive review of the ceramics featured in his researches. He amassed vast collections of ceramics, mainly from surface deposits, some of which are in collections at the Huntarian Museum, Glasgow; Witwatersrand University Museum; Albany Museum; Bulawayo Museum; what was the Salisbury Museum; Kimberley Museum; South African Museum in Cape Town; and the Durban Museum (Laidler 1936: 93).

⁸⁷ See, for example, Laidler (1929: 759-761); (1932: 779-785); (1936: 94-118).

⁸⁸ In the immediate East London area, for example, he refers to **Buffalo Mouth, West Bank, Buffalo River, East Bank, Blind River, Shelly Beach, and Nahoon** (1936: 140, 141) as well as several others further along the coast. His original records, mostly lodged with the Huntarian Museum, Glasgow, may reveal more precise locations of these and other sites.



may represent the earliest photographic images of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics from the East London area.

Laidler's (1936: 140, 141, 154) written descriptions of **Kayser's Beach** potsherds affirm similarities with those of **Kulubele** and **Canasta Place**. He described

fragments of thick, well made, *deeply patterned pottery with broad scraped diagonals* ... [and a vessel featuring a] flared sloping neck, counter triangles filled with alternating right and left diagonals [fig 56] and true herring-bone, *deeply incised* ... This ware is not colour-burnished, is dun or yellow, with well flared neck, globular body, and the neck-shoulder area is sometimes ornamented in chevron patterns *boldly performed* with a broad scraping motion". (My emphasis, and fig inclusion).

This description corresponds remarkably with how some vessels illustrated by Johan Binneman [fig 57] from **Kulubele** could be described verbally.

Laidler's sherds from **Kayser's Beach** are also particularly interesting because they may represent the presence of a more southerly distribution of First-Millennium Agriculturist settlements than currently recognised. In summarising an ongoing discussion with regard to the extent of the southerly distribution of such settlements Binneman, Webley & Biggs (1992: 108) acknowledged "speculation" that they may be found "up to the Great Fish River"⁸⁹. However, Webley & Binneman (1993:112) asserted, "isolated fragments of EIA [F-MA] pottery, some found as far west as Alexandria, [fig 58, overleaf] do not necessarily represent Early Iron Age [F-MA] settlement". At this stage, until systematic archaeological survey and perhaps excavations are

⁸⁹ The train of thought can be traced through Binneman 1996(a), 1996(b); Binneman, Webley & Biggs 1992; Derricourt 1977; Maggs 1973, 1980(a), 1980(b), 1993(b); and Rudner 1968; and in Webley & Binneman 1993.

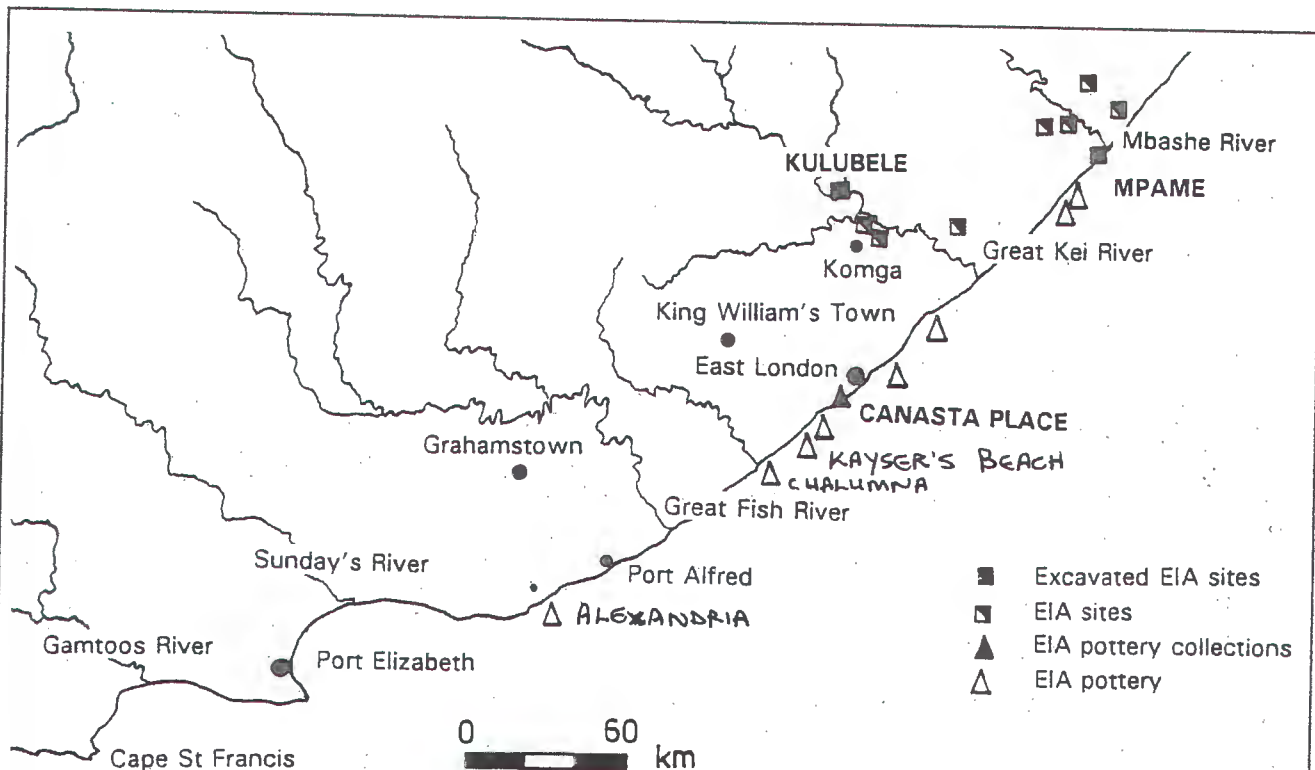


Fig 58: Location of Kayser's Beach, Chalumna, and Alexandria in relation to Canasta Place (Adapted from Binneman 1996(a): 30). [Note: EIA = F-MA].



59: Kayser's Beach group of potsherds exposed on the side of a sand dune (Photo: John Steele, 2000).

undertaken⁹⁰, the assessment that occasional potsherds do not necessarily represent a settlement is appropriate.

A full day spent by a companion and myself enquiring of some local people and looking for any sign of engraved ceramics along the **Kayser's Beach** coastline proved fruitless. Our (amateur) conclusion was that such ceramics were more likely to be found some distance inland alongside the river. We did, however, corroborate Laidler's observation of prehistoric ceramics bearing shell middens in the area, and also came across a group of sherds that seemed to be the remains of an unengraved single vessel exposed on a sand dune south of **Kayser's Beach** [fig 59]. Despite our lack of success in finding diagnostic sherds that could reasonably be linked to a First-Millennium Agriculturist presence, I suspect a viable arena for further investigation in this region⁹¹.

Before moving on from this brief look at the researches of PW Laidler as they have relevance to First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics studies, it is pertinent to refer to an observation that he made in 1929 (p. 759). Here he significantly commented on creative originality, noting that "pot-making was in the beginning an individual matter, and the individual's characteristics were to some extent reflected" by those pots.

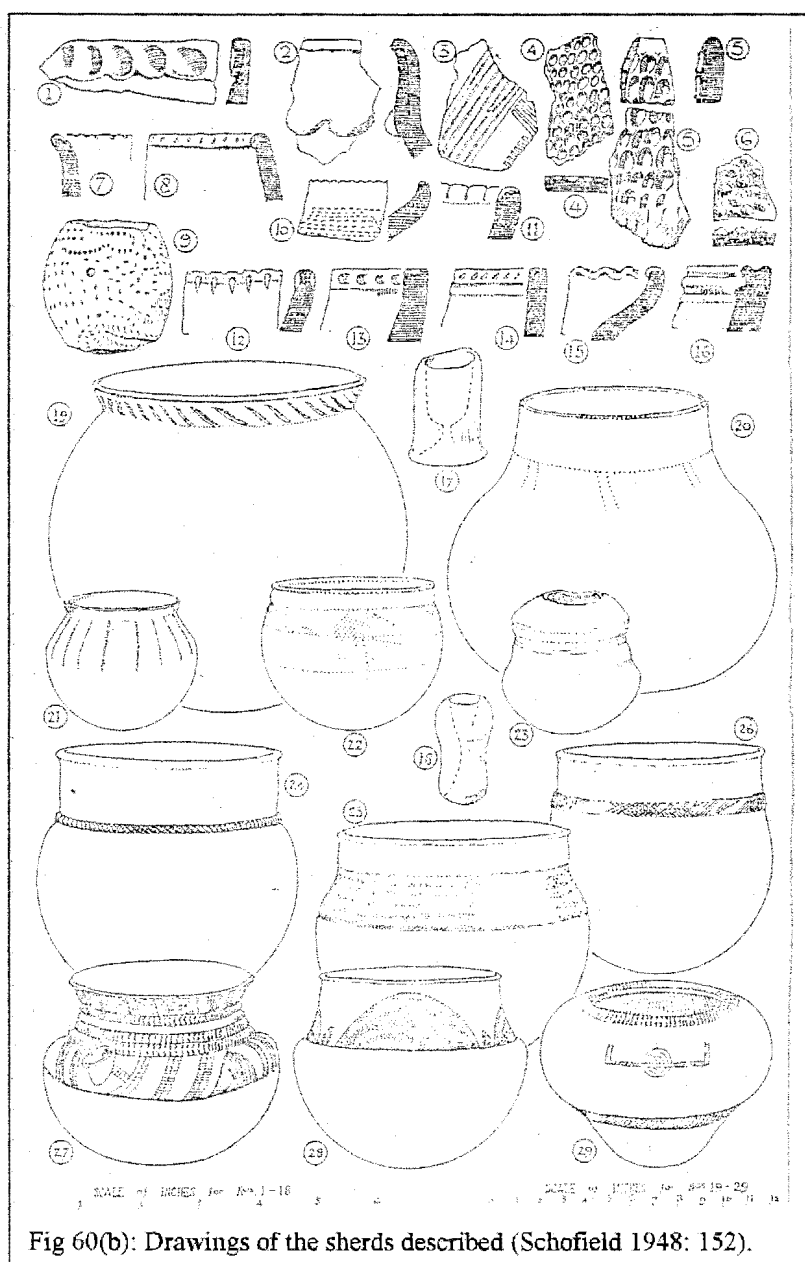
⁹⁰ Controlled surveying and excavation at **Kayser's Beach** in the near future seems highly unlikely given the current paucity of archaeologists and funding in the region. The East London Museum, for example, does not even have an archaeologist, and funding is in any event so problematic they are currently operating despite the freezing (without much prospect of replacement) of eight personnel posts (Kevin Cole, acting director East London Museum, personal communication 21/9/2000). Johan Binneman, of the Albany Museum, as the only archaeologist in this region, is already overstretched way beyond capacity.

⁹¹ In making this observation I have taken into account excavations undertaken by Derricourt (1977: 95-107) at **Chalumna River Mouth** (32.13,30S, 27.34.50E) nearby, and observations made on the results of this undertaking by Webley & Binneman (1993: 111-113).

1. A fragment of the rim of a vertically-sided vessel 13½ inches over the rim, in a rough ware with a brownish grey sandy surface. From Umgazana Cave, Pondoland. Class NC₁. DM.
2. A fragment of the rim of a large vessel, in a yellow ware with a red surface. From Fairwell Avenue, Durban. Class NC₁.
3. A fragment with surface lining, in a dark grey clay with a brindled surface. From Fairwell Avenue, Durban. Class NC₁.
4. A fragment with a honey-comb surface, in a dark grey clay with a brick-red surface. From the Beacon Site, Montclare, Durban. Class NC₁.
5. A fragment with nail-marks, in a dark grey clay with a buff surface. As last.
6. A fragment with a cuspidated surface. As last.
7. A fragment of a vertically-sided vessel, 20 inches over the rim, in a coarse dark grey ware. The rim was notched on its interior aspect. From Zig-zag Cave, Pondoland. Class NC₁. DM.
8. A fragment of a vertically-sided vessel, 12½ inches over the rim. The rim was notched on its exterior aspect. As last.
9. A pipe bowl decorated with point marks. In a brindled ware. The section is similar to that of No. 18. From Karridene. Class NC₁. DM.
10. A fragment of a shouldered pot, about 11 inches over the rim, in a light grey clay with an Indian-red matt surface. From the Beacon Site, Montclare. Class NC₁.
11. A fragment of a vertically sided vessel, about 13 inches over the rim, in a grey clay with a red surface. From a depth of 18 inches, near Mapumulo. Class NC₁.
12. A fragment of a rim with alternating notches, in a grey clay with a black burnish. From Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁. WUMS.
13. A rim fragment with crescentic impressions. See No. 20.
14. A rim fragment with short diagonal incisions on the edge, in a grey clay with a buff surface. From the University Site, Durban. Class NC₁. WUMS.
15. A fragment of the rim of a shouldered pot, 10½ inches over the rim, in a coarse blackish ware. From Zig-zag Cave. Class NC₁. DM.
16. A fragment with a groove along the edge of the rim and another just below it externally, in a grey clay with a red surface. Class NC₁. WUMS. From Umhloti Dunes.
17. A pipe bowl in a reddish ware. From Tinley Manor. WUMS.
18. A pipe bowl in a grey ware with a buff surface. Numbers of similar pipe bowls have been found associated with NC₁ pottery. WUMS.
19. A globular pot with a short flared neck, 11½ inches over the rim, in a grey clay with a buff surface. Restored from fragments from Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁D. - WUMS.
20. A shouldered pot in a grey clay with a brown burnished surface. The edge of the rim had large crescentic impressions, the shoulder was decorated with a line of smaller gouge marks with double pendant lines at intervals. Reconstructed from fragments from Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁. DM.
21. A globular pot with a short flared neck, 5 inches over the rim, in a light brown ware. Restored from fragments from Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁D.
22. A globular pot with a short vertical neck, in a fine grey clay with a black burnish. The lip has short vertical grooves alternately on the interior and the exterior. The body was decorated with two zones formed with impressions made by a "comb" with small circular teeth. Restored from fragments from Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁. WUMS.
23. An unusual pot, in a black clay with a brown burnish. From a depth of 7 feet, at No. 127, Sydenham Road, Durban. Class NC₁D. DM.
24. A globular pot with a vertical neck, in a black clay with a brown burnish. Reconstructed from fragments, from the Monastery Site, Tongaat. Class NC₁. DM.
25. A shouldered pot, in a grey ware with a purple brown finish. Restored from fragments from Umhloti Dunes. Class NC₁. WUMS.
26. A wide-mouthed pot or beaker bowl, in a grey clay with a brown burnish. Reconstructed from fragments from Umgababa. Class NC₁. DM.
27. A decorated pot with a spout, in a black clay with a buff finish. Restored from fragments from Weenen Communionage. Class NC₁.
28. A pot with a conical neck, in a black clay with a brown surface polished with graphite. Reconstructed from fragments from the Monastery Site, Tongaat. Class NC₁. DM.
29. An inverted gourd-shaped pot, in a brindled ware with a graphite burnished surface. As last.

Fig 60(a): Schofield's (1948: 153) classification of KwaZulu-Natal coastal ceramics.

Of Laidler's approximate contemporaries, architect and amateur archaeologist John Schofield created a relatively consistent and systematic classification of First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic styles, leading to an attempt at a general synthesis of this type in 1948 [figs 60 (a), and (b)]. His 1935 and 1936 reviews of KwaZulu-Natal coastal ceramics feature the earliest records of some **Kalundu** Tradition ceramics in the region.



Being a researcher of his era, Schofield was also prey to settler thought paradigms⁹². Unlike attention paid to Laidler however, his investigations have been reviewed quite extensively⁹³, so here it is pertinent to mention only a short series of his observations before moving on to more current researches. Schofield (1948: 25) admonished:

Not only must we learn to distinguish between different pottery types and classes, but also to recognise the fact that differing potteries may all belong to the same cultural context ... We must always regard primitive people as being just as much human beings as ourselves, and, even at their furthest removes from us, far more like us than unlike us.

These observations are mostly self-explanatory. However, the paternal settler paradigm tone of these words almost hides the import of human commonality expressed. This statement represents a partial shift in mindset from the Impey (1926: 88) approach⁹⁴.

Tim Maggs (1993(a): 70) was of the opinion that the general synthesis of ceramic types Schofield attempted in *Primitive Pottery* "was to remain the basic reference work until the 1970's ... [but] was, however, of limited [archaeological] value because it was based on small, often surface, collections and it was written before the discovery of radiocarbon dating". Concurring with this view, Len van Schalkwyk (1991: 11) observed that "Schofield's classification remained the archaeological standard

⁹² He asserted, for instance, that "primitive pottery making (as might be expected from its association with primitive agriculture) is carried on by women, and is always shaped by the hand; while that of more advanced peoples is made by men with the aid of the potter's wheel" (Schofield 1948: 15).

⁹³ See, for example, Hall, M. 1984(a); Van Schalkwyk 1991; Maggs 1993(a); and Maggs & Michael 1976 for discussions pertaining to the 'settler paradigm', and Schofield's assessment of types and seriation.

⁹⁴ "... people of ... a low degraded type of humanity ..." (Impey 1926: 88).

in the region until its re-appraisal by Maggs" with the publication of his 1976 and 1980(a), (b) and (c) papers.

Van Schalkwyk (1991: 11)⁹⁵ noted that during the intervening decades

a relative dearth of systematic Iron Age [First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist] research was carried out within the Republic. This has partly been ascribed to the prevailing political milieu, in which the ruling minority strove to maintain the colonial myths of a limited and static indigenous cultural past and stressed recent internecine strife to bolster ideologies of ethnic separateness and tribal affiliation.

Nonetheless, systematic, careful excavation practised by professional archaeologists⁹⁶, combined with meticulous site records supported by radiocarbon dating from the late sixties onwards⁹⁷, facilitated the gradual emergence of a more coherent picture of First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics distributed throughout much of southern Africa⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ Van Schalkwyk cited Hall, M. 1984(a) and (b).

⁹⁶ Building on to procedures established in southern Africa by Caton-Thompson in 1929.

⁹⁷ The CSIR dating laboratory, under John Vogel, was established in 1968. "Only then could numbers of reliable dates be brought to bear on the accumulated chronological confusion in the Iron Age [First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist eras]" (Maggs 1993(a): 71).

⁹⁸ My focus is primarily on presenting **Kulubele** ceramics in context with collections in KwaZulu-Natal, and associated discourse. Elucidation of a southern African picture, and that of Africa as a whole remains, however, the appropriate context. Such a wide view is fitting, especially considering that ideas of nation states such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, for instance, impose artificial boundaries only relatively recently established. Briefly, during the roughly two decades following the publication of Schofield's *Primitive Pottery*, several researches geared toward elucidating the extent and composition of First and Precolonial Second Millennium Agriculturist ceramics were undertaken. These include those by Gardner 1955, 1963; Mason 1951, 1962, 1968; Robinson 1963, 1966; Summers 1950, 1967; and Van der Merwe & Scully 1971. These researches revealed an extensive network of sites north of the Limpopo River, and linkages southwards too. Ceramic expressions in the areas now known as Northern Province, Mpumalanga and Gauteng were investigated in the early 1970's by Evers 1973, 1975; Huffman 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974(a), 1974(b); Inskeep 1971; Inskeep & Maggs 1975; Inskeep & von Bezings 1966; Klapwijk 1973, 1974; and Mason 1973. These and other publications (Footnote continued overleaf)

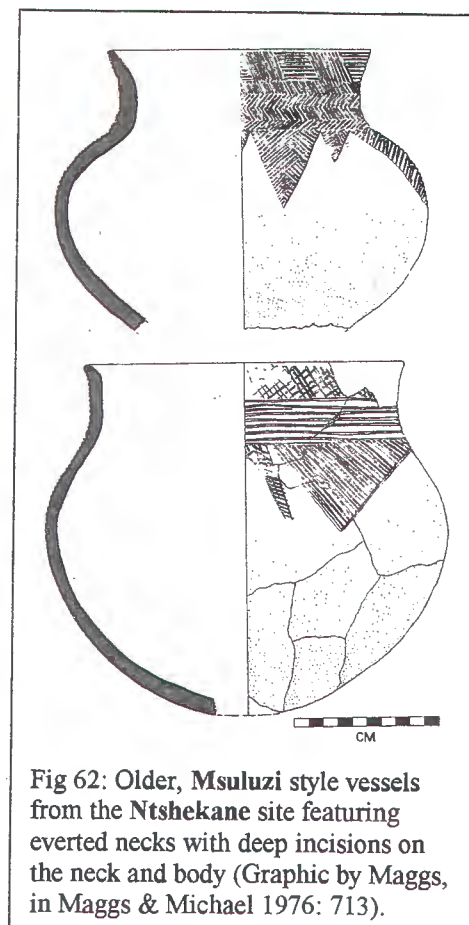
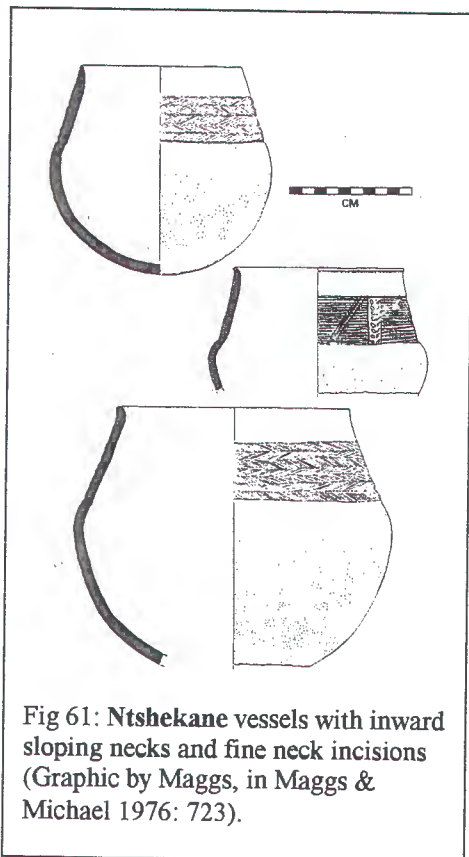


Fig 63: **Ntshekane** style vessels on display at Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

A 1976 assessment of these ceramics along the eastern plateau slopes and coastal plain of KwaZulu-Natal by Tim Maggs and Mary Michael, and the subsequent Maggs 1980 publications, brought a different mindset to prehistoric studies in southern Africa. **Ntshekane** (see fig 47 for site location) was the first KwaZulu-Natal settlement of the First-Millennium Agriculturist era⁹⁹ to be excavated under controlled conditions. It became the style-site for identifying other ceramic assemblages in the region that featured predominantly inward sloping long necked vessels with deep (yet sometimes quite fine) geometric incisions on the neck [figs 61, 63, and 65 overleaf].

This particular inward sloping incised neck vessel style, dated to AD 890-1080¹⁰⁰, is stylistically dramatically different from other, earlier First-Millennium Agriculturist vessels found at **Ntshekane**. These older vessels [fig 62] feature an everted neck with deeply grooved geometric incisions on the neck and body, a style that has become known as **Msuluzi** (AD 650-790)¹⁰¹. Not all vessels from this, and other roughly equivalent sites, feature body and/or neck incisions, possibly indicating that potters reserved engravings mainly for particular types of vessel. Bowls and flattish platters [fig 64, overleaf], for example, seem to have been less frequently engraved.

enabled Maggs to make widespread connections with aspects of the KwaZulu-Natal ceramics phases.

⁹⁹ The site was originally published by Farnden (1968), but this was in connection with Middle Stone Age artefacts.

¹⁰⁰ Binneman (1996(a): 30).

¹⁰¹ As a reminder: In Chapter 1: 39-40 it was found that researchers placed **Kulubele** ceramics as part of a broad western-stream **Kalundu** style. Within this broad style three ceramic eras in KwaZulu-Natal were established as, from oldest to more recent, **Msuluzi** AD 650-790, **Ndondondwane** AD 790-900, and **Ntshekane** AD 890-1080. Of these three ceramic styles, Binneman has particularly observed the presence of **Msuluzi** and **Ndondondwane** traits in the **Kulubele** assemblage (Binneman 1996(a): 35).

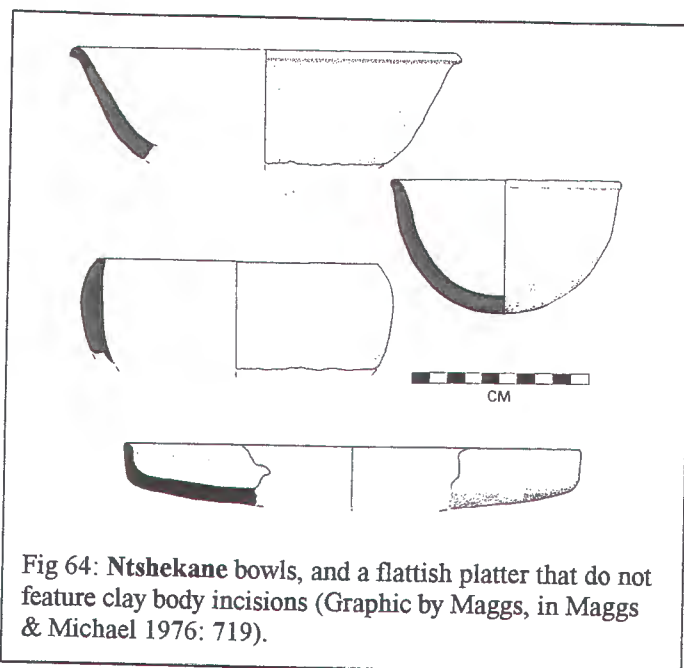


Fig 64: **Ntshokane** bowls, and a flattish platter that do not feature clay body incisions (Graphic by Maggs, in Maggs & Michael 1976: 719).



Fig 65: **Ntshokane** style vessel on display at Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

In their analysis of the 156 vessels excavated, Maggs and Michael (1976: 715) identified a list of 38 characteristics, the interrelationships of which were then tabulated to reveal a "matrix of pottery characteristics" upon which an extensive stylistic analysis could be based. The first thing to note regarding their Ntshokane vessel assemblage analysis is that it is virtually entirely descriptive of physical characteristics.

Secondly, observations that went beyond being purely descriptive are particularly interesting. For instance, the authors wrote that certain ceramics characteristics indicated that "the potters regarded the neck as being rather distinct from the body and it seems likely that the neck was sometimes added after the body had been made" (Maggs & Michael 1976: 716). Of further relevance here is the attribution "potter", whereby human agency is acknowledged without any disparaging commentary. These authors also gave insight into production procedure, conjuring an image of potters actively making choices about construction technique.

Thirdly, in noting that "necks are fairly tall and they are an important aesthetic element of the vessels" (Maggs & Michael 1976: 718) these authors again attributed choice, not only in regard to the relation of shape to function, but also in terms of how the vessel looks. The visual impact of an elongated neck stretching upwards from the belly, such extension enhancing a display of clay body incisions, is one of elegant assurance. Further, it is possible that such an elongated neck may well correspond with utilitarian considerations such as containment of liquid while the vessel was in motion.

Maggs and Michael (1976: 718) commented further: "the finer vessels ... suggest a greater degree of specialisation among

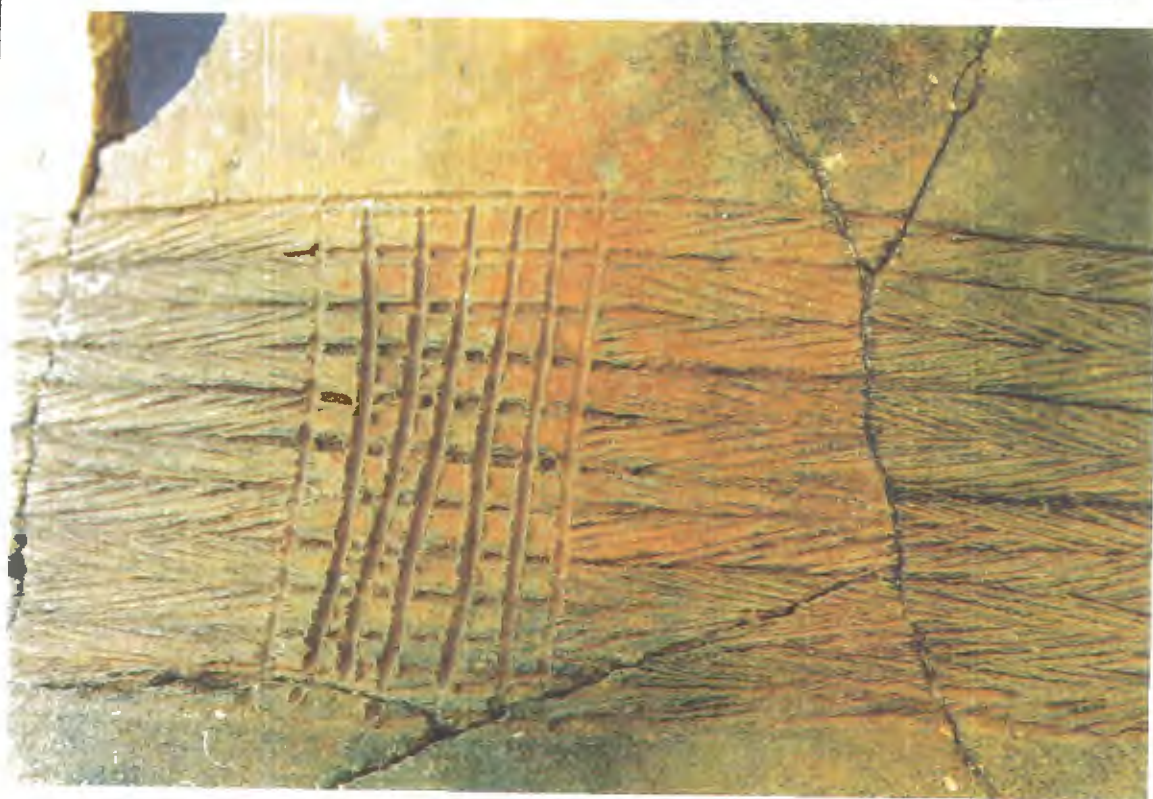


Fig 66: **Ntshékane** style vessel, and closeup of engravings: Height of vessel 300mm; diameter at belly 350mm; thickness at lip 6mm; thickness at belly 12mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

potters than is usual among Iron Age [FPS-MA] societies in southern Africa" [figs 66 and 67, 68 overleaf, and 70 opposite page 63]. Here they hazarded a rare value judgement that



Fig 67: Ntshokane style vessel, and closeup of engravings: Height of vessel 60mm; diameter at lip 72mm; diameter at belly 304mm; thickness at lip 7mm; thickness at shoulder 12mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).



Fig 68: Ndondondwane style vessel from KwaGandaganda, and closeup of engraving. This transitional ceramics style is thought to be a precursor of the Ntshekane style, partly by virtue of the very slightly everted neck. Height of vessel 120mm; diameter at lip 185mm; diameter at belly 240mm; thickness at lip 5mm; thickness at shoulder 6mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

valorised aesthetic qualities of these vessels over others from the same site and from elsewhere, and also suggested an idea of personal individuality. A word picture is drawn of many potters separated by space and time, amongst whom some are more proficient at manipulating the medium than others, a likely scenario for any millennium.

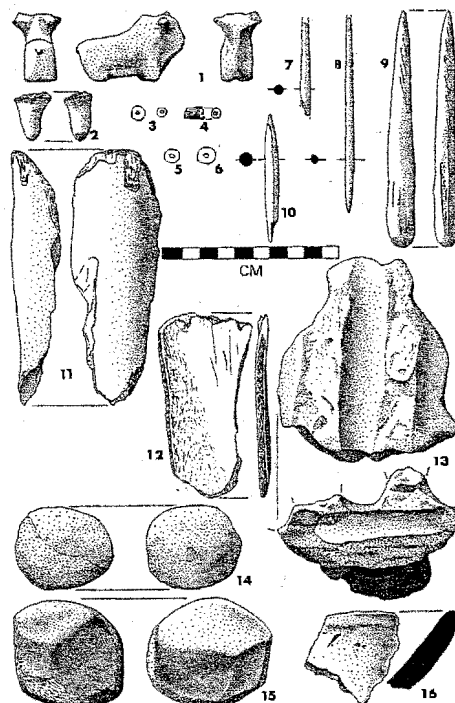
In order to situate potters and their pots within the landscape a little more clearly, both the physical environment and faunal and other remains are of fundamental importance.

The **Ntshekane** village was located

close to a stream and on deep soil which would presumably have been suitable for the cultivation of the relatively drought resistant, staple Iron Age [First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Farmer] crops ... Cattle, sheep and probably domestic dogs were kept and a range of wild animals were hunted or collected. Iron was smelted on a small scale ... The detailed stratigraphy of several pits ... suggests that the bottom part of the fill accumulated relatively slowly as the sweepings from domestic hearths and huts. This was succeeded by an apparently single episode when a large quantity of cultural debris was dumped, including almost complete pots and deliberately broken lower grindstones. The main dumping episode is strongly indicative of an abandonment of the village, the breaking of grindstones being a symbol that survived into historic times in Natal. Alternatively, a hut and its contents may have been destroyed after the death of its owner (Maggs & Michael 1976: 736).

This passage is also instructive in that it indicates that Maggs and Michael were prepared to draw on historic ethnographic detail and find continuities of practise in order to elucidate their thinkings about, for example, the broken lower grindstones.

Methodology that incorporates drawing on historic ethnographic detail in attempts to elucidate on doings and thinkings of the deep past can justifiably be criticised if such extrapolations are



1. Small ceramic cattle figurine with hump. Surface find.
2. Probably a horn or leg from a ceramic figurine. From I.
3. Two shell beads, made from *Metachatina*. From W.
4. Cylindrical bead much corroded but apparently made of glass. From W.
5. & 6. Larger shell beads, of *Metachatina*. From B and V.
7. Part of bone point broken at both ends. From O.
8. Bone arrow-head of Late Stone Age type, tip missing. From O.
9. Heavy bone point, function unknown. From V, below 1.70 m.
10. Cylindrical bone object pointed at both ends, perhaps a link shaft. From B1.
11. Bone fragment showing extensive chipping at upper end as if it has been used as a gouge. From V, below 1.70 m.
12. Flat fragment of bone with pronounced rounding and polishing at upper end from use as a scraper.
13. Piece of burnt daga preserving impressions of poles running in two directions, presumably from the wall of a pole and daga hut. From hut floor, U.
14. Natural spherical dolerite pebble with traces of polish from grinding. From V.
15. Faceted and polished upper grindstone. From B.
16. Fragment of carved metamorphic rock from a stone bowl. From G.

Fig 69: Ntshokane small finds, and explanation (Graphic by Maggs, in Maggs & Michael 1976: 734, 740).

applied without due caution and recognition of cultural change through time. I think there are occasions when reference to historic instances are valuable as in, for instance, when items of material culture which may have been used in a ritual context are under investigation. Mythologies, spiritual practices, and worldviews provide insights into possibilities for interpretation that would otherwise not feature in an analysis of material culture. My methodology will thus incorporate some historic detail as a way of throwing light on the deep past, without being dogmatic about meaning.

With regard to other items of material culture [fig 69] excavated at **Ntshekane**, Maggs and Michael (1976: 725, 734, 740) mentioned some figurine fragments; bone tools, some of which show considerable signs of wear; and disc shaped beads made from large shells of the land snail *Metachatina kraussi*. Other finds included unworked ostrich eggshell; burnt clay daga with pole impressions, and some with thatch impressions; and stone implements of both Middle and Late Stone Age typology. Johan Binneman has recorded quite a similar range of odds and ends from **Kulubele** (1996(a): 31, 35). The emphasis with regard to the above small finds is primarily descriptive, as are most contemporary site reports¹⁰².

Broadly speaking, a widely adopted format for such reports seems to be encapsulation of previous relevant researches, supplemented by a detailed description of the ecology/physical setting of the site in question. Thereafter excavation techniques and procedures are described, finds are enumerated, and those finds deemed most representative or unusual are illustrated,

¹⁰² See, for example, Mazel 1999.



Fig 70: **Ndondondwane** style vessel from **Nanda**, and closeup of engraving showing fine clay body incisions characteristic of **Ntsitsana** style. Interestingly, the unusual pendant triangle harks back to an even earlier **Msuluzi** style. Height of vessel 155mm; diameter at shoulder 210mm; body thickness 7mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

usually by means of drawings¹⁰³. The voice of the researcher is present most strongly in a final discussion/conclusion wherein personal insights about the excavation results are articulated.

Such a format gives an impression of an empirical, scientific approach wherein physicalities of the site and remains are dealt with objectively, and personal interpretations of excavation results are sequestered towards the end of such a report. The voice of the researcher is, however, inevitably evident throughout the report in choices made. This can be seen, for instance, in which aspects and procedures are given most importance, and which are accorded further analysis in the discussion/conclusion¹⁰⁴. Each researcher displays an investigative fingerprint according to her or his personal priorities and issues identified during that research era.

Some such analytical fingerprints evident in Maggs and Michael's 1976 *Ntshokane* report may be identified in their concern with attributing the site to the presence of First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples, and with rectifying Schofield's typological sequence. These goals were accomplished by means of an in-depth analysis of the ceramic assemblage typology, an analysis that takes up by far the most space in their site report.

Maggs and Michael (1976: 736) also pointed out the *Ntshokane* ceramics typology as "relatively similar to the pottery from several Early Iron Age [F-MA] sites in the [then] Transvaal of around the fifth century AD (Mason et al 1973; Inskeep & Maggs 1975)". Furthermore, some continuity of cultural practise was

¹⁰³ These drawings are themselves a potentially fruitful area for future art historical study.

¹⁰⁴ Tom Huffman (2000: 3, 4) has observed that "all classifications ... are arbitrary in that only certain variables are used, otherwise every artefact, tree and bird, would be a unique type".



Fig 71: **Msuluzi** style vessel from **KwaGandaganda**. Note the pendant motif on the body of the vessel, deep engravings, everted neck, and globular shape. Height 240mm; diameter at lip 180mm; diameter at belly 270mm; thickness at lip 8mm; thickness at belly 11mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).



Fig 72(a): Joined rimsherds, **Msuluzi** style, from **Nanda**: height 160mm; diameter at belly 220mm; thickness at lip and shoulder 10mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

proposed between First-Millennium Agriculturist and present-day (then 1976) Nguni-speakers of the region. Analytical choices made by Maggs and Michael indicates both personal and broad-based concerns of the discipline of archaeology in the mid-1970s, concerns that were largely geared towards the construction of “a culture historical [who came from where] framework for the region” (Greenfield: 1998: 115).

My own subjectivity is evident in my focus on ceramic artefacts of a particular era, and then only on those of a certain style, and wherein a certain amount of speculation is/will be engaged in so as to possibly glimpse cameos of deep past ceramics practise and lifeways of that time. In order to further contextualise **Kulubele** ceramics within a wider past and present cultural context I think it useful to consider ceramic style and some research results from a few other sites in KwaZulu-Natal. A broadly descriptive view of pertinent ceramics and research concerns will then have been laid in preparation for a further look at aspects of the **Kulubele** assemblage, and at other theoretical foundations that informed developments in the field of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics assemblage researches during the 1980s and 1990s respectively.

Like **Ntshekane**, **Ndondondwane** and **Msuluzi Confluence** (see fig 47 for site locations) are regarded as ceramic era style-sites representative in time and material culture of particular lifeways in prehistoric KwaZulu-Natal. Maggs (1980(b): 113, 134) has suggested that the setting of **Msuluzi Confluence** “may be the furthest inland EIA [F-MA] site on the Tugela”, and that “within its eight or more hectares several hundred people might have lived”. A highlight of the **Msuluzi Confluence** assemblage analysis includes clarification of ceramics style [figs 71, 72 (a), and 72 (b) and 74 overleaf]. Maggs (1980(b): 122-131) noted that

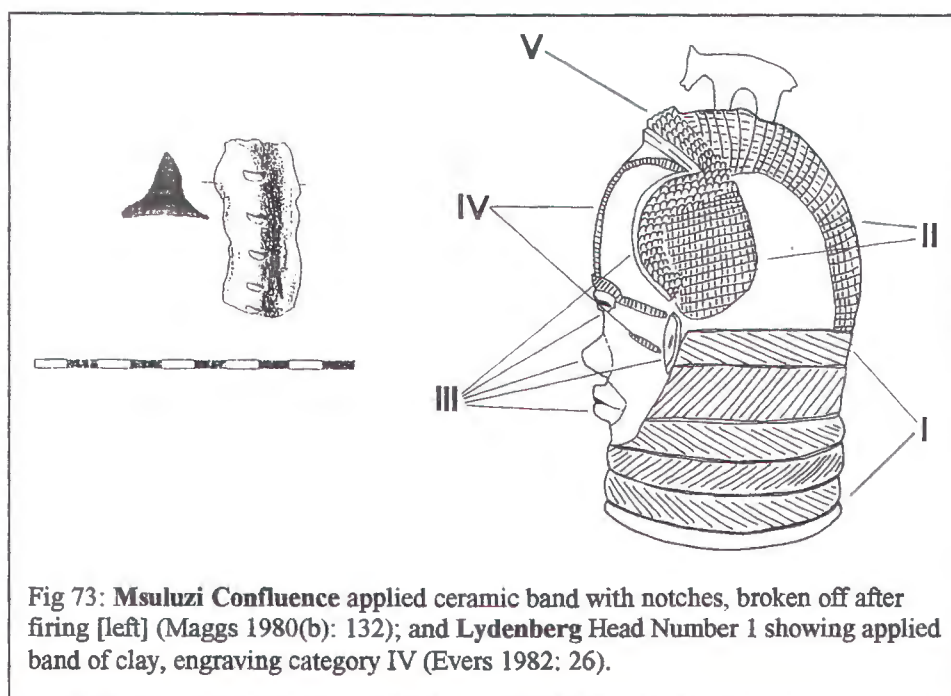


Fig 73: **Msuluzi Confluence** applied ceramic band with notches, broken off after firing [left] (Maggs 1980(b): 132); and **Lydenberg Head Number 1** showing applied band of clay, engraving category IV (Evers 1982: 26).



Fig 74: Two views of same **Msuluzi** style vessel from **Nanda**. The rectangular pendant motif is unusual. Height 200mm; diameter at lip 215mm; diameter at belly 245mm; thickness at lip and at belly 11mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

the usual vessel shape was curved, with an everted neck on a spherical or subspherical body.

Virtually all pots displayed “bold U or V shaped grooving in the form of parallel horizontal lines, oblique hatching and cross-hatching on the neck”, and belly incisions “usually take the form of triangles or rectangles pendant from the body/neck junction”. Bowls less frequently display clay body incisions, but two bowls are of particular interest by virtue of “a constricted and decorated band near their bases as well as one or two decorated bands plus panels or ‘medallions’ above the subcarination. They are the only coloured and burnished vessels in the assemblage, with the exception of one other bowl” (Maggs (1980(b): 122-131).

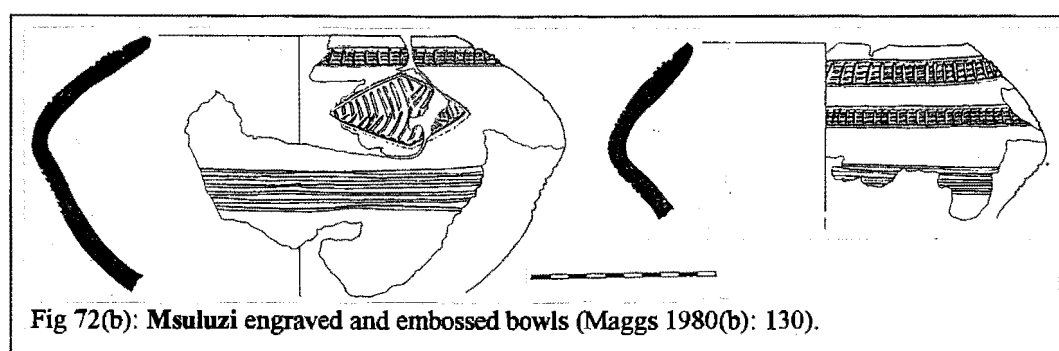


Fig 72(b): Msuluzi engraved and embossed bowls (Maggs 1980(b): 130).

Another highlight of the **Msuluzi Confluence** assemblage analysis was the presence of buried fragments that “may be from ceramic sculpture ... [two of which] resemble the applied bands on the heads from the nearly contemporary **Lydenberg Heads**¹⁰⁵ site in the [then] eastern Transvaal” (Maggs 1980(b): 132) [fig 73]. This statement represents an early recognition of the possibility of widespread ceramic sculptural practise extending northwards, relative to present day KwaZulu-Natal, which was to be developed more extensively in later publications.

¹⁰⁵ The **Lydenberg Heads** site is located at 26.06.20S; 30.29.40E.



Fig 75: Msuluzi style vessel from Nanda, and close up of engravings. Note the deeply engraved lip. Height 200mm; diameter at lip 83mm; thickness at lip 9mm; thickness at belly 13mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

Amongst other finds he also mentioned "a mass of furnace fragments, broken tuyères, slag and some pottery" (Maggs 1980(b): 121) in feature 41 near the edge of the site. Thus, consanguinity of metal working residue and ceramic style, as characteristics associated with First-Millennium Agriculturist sites, was also indicated.

Without speculating regarding technique, Maggs (1980(b): 131) commented on the results of the ceramic firing process saying "firing was generally in a sufficiently oxidising atmosphere and of sufficient temperature and duration to burn out all visible carbon, leaving the ware a buff to orange colour throughout". Without conducting proper replicatory experiments one can only guess at the firing temperature, and my guess is that (because of porosity of the ware which I have examined), the ceramics were generally fired to a temperature of about 1000° Centigrade. With regard to the clay body itself, he observed "a dense clay matrix with a large addition of filler – mainly angular quartz grains of various sizes. The result is a relatively hard ware" suitable for robust daily usage, much like that of **Kulubele**.

Thus, some description of the ceramics [fig 75], as well as of usual site setting, and observation that a site like **Msuluzi Confluence** constituted a substantial inland settlement, facilitated the beginnings of a broader picture of various largely self-sufficient communities of peoples, interacting with other communities close by and further afield. That this picture as yet lacked clarity was acknowledged by Maggs (1980(a): 5), who suggested that the time had come for more thought to be "given to the economy and ecology of these communities". Responses to this suggestion are the point of departure for the next chapter.

Chapter 3

SPACES IN THE LANDSCAPE: GENDERED HOMESTEAD AND TECHNOLOGY?

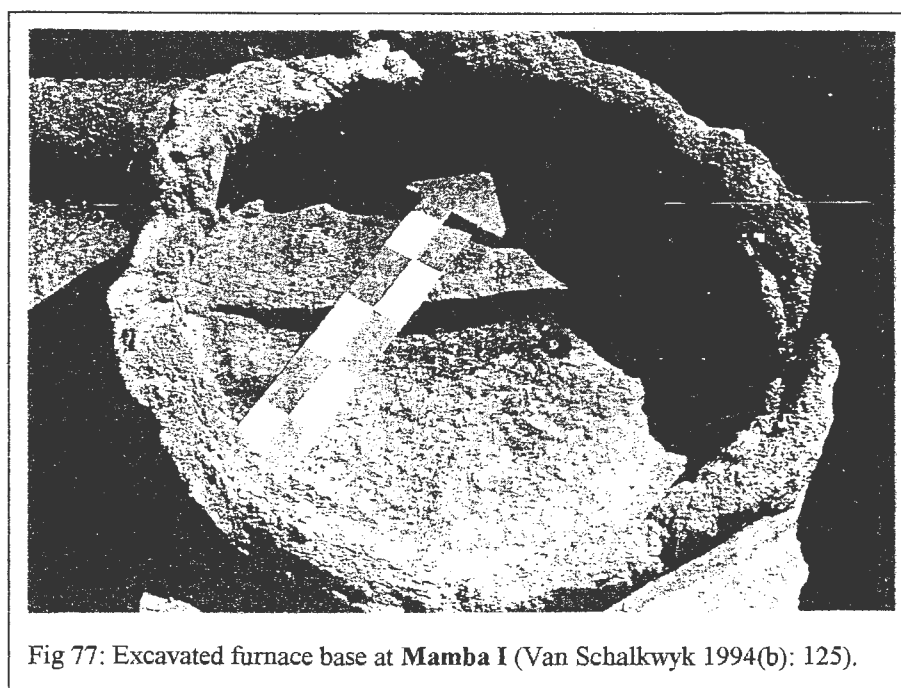
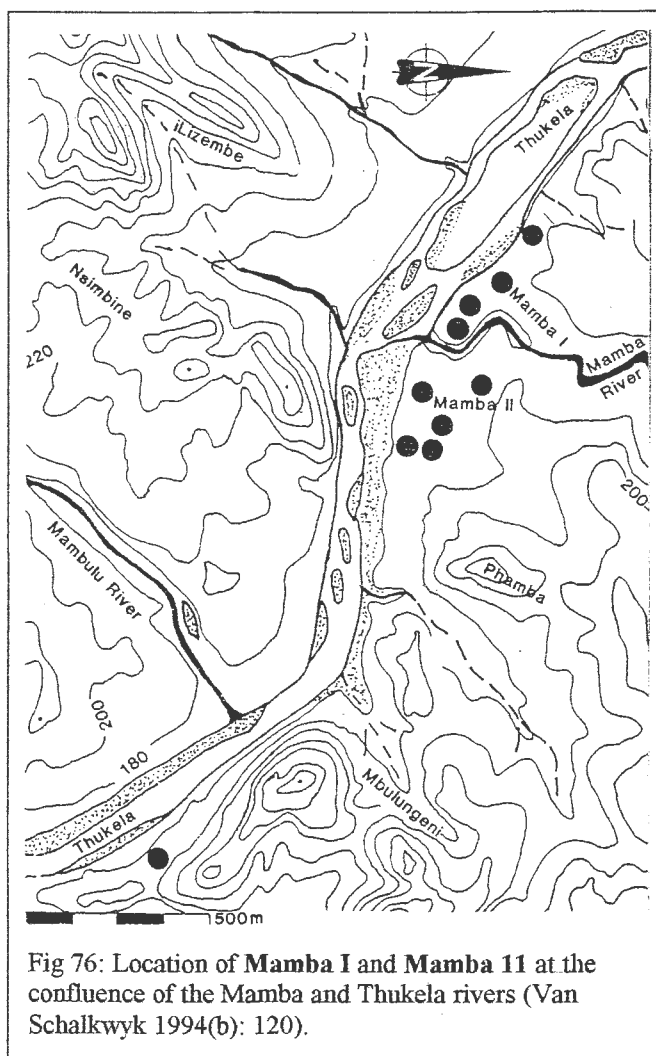
By the 1990s a site location model had emerged wherein First-Millennium Agriculturist settlements had been noticed to be "consistently located in valley bottoms at nodes of productive colluvial soil, reflecting the need to produce adequate supplies of cereal staples and a variety of pulses for domestic consumption" (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 195)¹⁰⁶. Generally, cereal remains indicate that *Eleusine corocana*; *Pennisetum typhoides* and *Sorghum*¹⁰⁷ were cultivated with pulses and cucurbits growing under the grains in the same plot. It was also suggested that cultivation took place around and probably even within the settlement (Maggs: 1994-1995: 172).

A picture had also begun to emerge as to average settlement size in the lower Tugela Basin area. In summary, some large sites (8-10 hectares in extent) situated near a watercourse on rich soil¹⁰⁸, below an altitude of 1000m, may have eventually reached saturation point of cultivation and settlement. It has been suggested that smaller (5-6 and 3-5 hectares), less intensively settled sites within the same general area, were the consequence of a process of community fission in response to such saturation.

¹⁰⁶ The author cited, for instance, Maggs 1984(b); and Maggs 1989.

¹⁰⁷ *Eleusine corocana*: finger millet; *Pennisetum typhoides*: bulrush millet; *Sorghum* is also a variety of millet.

¹⁰⁸ Other requirements include, for example, sufficient summer rainfall for crops, year round grazing, and timber for building and fuel (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 187). Other factors would probably have included reasonable proximity to raw materials for metalworking and clayworking, and a plentiful supply of game for hunting and edible plants for gathering.



Some larger sites were even abandoned¹⁰⁹, left fallow for a while, and then reoccupied (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 194-195). Other sites, like **KwaGandaganda**¹¹⁰, were occupied continually over a period of at least three centuries, as is evidenced by a continuity of village layout throughout the **Msuluzi**, **Ndondondwane** and **Ntshekane** ceramic era phases (Whitelaw 1994(b): 1).

Thus population growth, declining soil productivity, and limitations that may have been placed on grain cultivation by a warmer and drier Medieval Warm Epoch (AD 900-1200) may help explain the archaeological evidence for an increasing rate of community fission (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 195)¹¹¹. Binneman's identification of **Msuluzi** elements in the **Kulubele** ceramics assemblage supports a reading of community fission, one or more such groups having probably made their way to the Great Kei River basin area of the Eastern Cape.

Several responses to the 1980(a) call by Maggs for research into the economy of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic era lifeways have resulted in a recognition that economies of those times were not invariably statically oriented towards self-sufficiency based on a combination of cultivation, animal husbandry and hunting-gathering practices. For example, iron-working residues from sites such as **Mamba II** and **Ntsitsana**¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ The site **Wosi**, for example, "indicates two periods of occupation, one about the mid-seventh century, and a second a century or so later. A span of this sort is consistent with and supported by the pottery, a shift in stylistic expression being apparent between the two periods" (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 192).

¹¹⁰ See Appendix 7 for the full **KwaGandaganda** (29.40.43S; 30.50.10E) ceramic vessel assemblage analysis (Whitelaw 1994(b): 8-18).

¹¹¹ Van Schalkwyk cited Huffman 1993, and Prins 1993 for more information on this Medieval Warm Epoch.

¹¹² At **Ntsitsana**, in the Transkei section of the Eastern Cape, Prins & Granger (1993: 167) observed that "the quantity of slag is negligible considering the scale of occupation of **Ntsitsana** [the site covers an area of 25 hectares], and it is suggested that only small scale smithing occurred (Footnote continued overleaf)

show that all First-Millennium Agriculturist communities were not self-sufficient in iron-working capacities.

According to Len van Schalkwyk (1994-1995: 194, 196), iron production at **Mamba II** [fig 76] was "limited to little more than the domestic requirements of the community". This is contrasted with a "profusion of smelting debris encountered at [nearby] **Mamba I**" [fig 77], that was thought to indicate "a surplus of iron being produced during the later occupations. This may have been in response to widening trade networks both within and without the lower Tugela basin". Furthermore, "craft specialisation, such as ivory working [citing Loubser 1993: 139], and the processing of scarce commodities such as talc powder [for cosmetic use], would be a logical adjunct as such trade expanded".

Agriculturist communities may well have been drawn into increasingly wider social networks, both by gift exchange of the *hxaro* risk management type whereby gifts given ensured reciprocation in times of need, and by means of trade, both with other agriculturally based settlements, and with hunter-gatherer communities (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 195, 196). Thus, there is an indication of a shift in economy away from what had been thought to be one based primarily on "non-accumulative social formations" (Hall M. 1987: 4) wherein *hxaro* gift exchange between households and communities was a significant factor.

Such a shift in economy towards the end of the first millennium, in combination with an emergence of specialist settlements and

there. By contrast, large quantities of slag, tuyère fragments, furnace-wall pieces and ferricrete nodules (iron ore) are visible on [a contemporaneous] site 4048 about 10km downstream ... on the Mzimvubu River, suggesting that 4048 was the centre for iron-working.

evidence of increased numbers of cattle at the larger sites, may be read as indicators that the larger sites would have been centres of political power. Consequently it was suggested that earlier roughly equal, independent settlements gave way to centres of political power based on a capacity to accumulate wealth. Furthermore, it was proposed that wealth signified by the accumulation of domestic livestock could be regarded as "the principal mode" by which political power may have been signified towards the end of the first millennium (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 197).

In the absence of extensive excavation at **Kulubele** and other sites close by¹¹³, and thus evidence to the contrary, it is tempting to suggest that **Kulubele** is an unlikely centre of political power or craft specialisation geared towards trade. An indicator suggesting such a conclusion is the preponderance, so far, of domestic sheep and/or goat, and "small bovid remains"¹¹⁴, (Binneman 1996(a): 35). A significance of mainly ovicaprine remains lies in the absence of evidence pointing to increasing numbers of cattle that have been hypothesised (Van Schalkwyk 1994-1995: 197) as being a factor contributing to escalating centralisation and concentration of patriarchal political power in the form of, for instance, male hereditary leadership.

Nonetheless, agriculturist lifeways do allow for accumulation of surplus for use in times of need, or exercise of power, and it is thus likely that some hierarchies within the community did exist. Other hierarchies associated with gender, or with spiritual

¹¹³ Victor Biggs (personal communication, 1999) has indicated knowledge of another site on the Great Kei River closer to the sea, but resources (both human and financial) are such that excavation in the near future is unlikely.

¹¹⁴ Remains of small antelope indicate "that despite keeping domesticated animals, hunting played an important role in the subsistence ..." activities of **Kulubele** peoples (Binneman 1996(b): 72).

leadership qualities, or with specific technological skills, may also have been in place.

Thus, by the early 1990s a slightly clearer picture had been formulated about factors such as preferred site location, of a changing economy, as well as of possible changes in loci of power during the later part of the first millennium. Yet, an overall impression remains of First-Millennium Agriculturists not yet recognised as societies of individual people, but seen rather as group representatives of particular foodways and economy, as keepers of domesticated livestock, and of clay and iron utilisation sequences.

My next step towards finding traces of individual people within the **Kulubele** landscape is to look at suggested internal settlement layout [as evidenced by, amongst other things, clay floors of dwellings] and community inter-spatial dynamics. An enquiry into community space utilisation is seen as being complementary to intra-settlement analyses. Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 3) has suggested that settlement patterns reflect particular worldviews:

People organise space in a culturally specific way, using it to control human action ... settlement patterns for example, reflect and are used to make statements about the roles of men and women, differential control of resources, kinship relations, social hierarchies, the relationship with the spirit world and the relative importance of ... livestock and grain.

Despite the fact that **Kulubele** is only partially excavated¹¹⁵ and

¹¹⁵ Thus far only two pits, 10 square metres of midden, and two square metres of daga floor have been published [Binneman 1996(a) and (b)] as having been excavated from a site that "appears, from a preliminary survey, to have covered a large area" (Binneman et al 1992: 108).



Fig 78: Soil erosion at **Kulubele** is destroying important parts of the site. Unexcavated pits, one with an ash lens [indicated top] and projecting potsherds, are in the process of being washed away (Photos: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).

soil erosion has destroyed sections of the settlement [fig 78], Binneman (1996(b): 72) has ventured a preliminary assessment of probable settlement layout:

Some storage pits were situated in a thick layer of dung, most probably a cattle kraal ... Communal storage of cereals in the cattle kraal was a common practice among historic Bantu-speaking people. Our discovery suggests a long history of this particular tradition. We also know that the villages of Sotho/Tswana and Nguni-speaking people were spatially organised in a way referred to as the Central Cattle Pattern. The main features of this pattern are that the cattle kraal, or series of kraals, was at the centre of the settlement, surrounded by a circular arrangement of huts. The Central Cattle Pattern is clearly visible in Late Iron Age [Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist] sites and was well established by AD 1500.

It is also known that the site is on relatively flat land in a valley bottom, near a river. Binneman identified special elements in the Kulubele landscape as being storage pits, layers of dung, cattle kraal at the settlement centre, and a circular arrangement of dwellings surrounding the cattle kraal. Roughly speaking the configuration proposed is of an inner circle with special pits, surrounded by an outer homestead circle.

Enumeration of these elements serves to create visual pictures of people intentionally choosing particular localities in the landscape as optimal for positioning of structures so as to make specific lifeway statements. Binneman probably also specifically chose these particular elements for mention because of broader associations they carry when compared with other First-Millennium Agriculturist sites, facilitating comparison. Furthermore, he identified the presence of elements such as

storage pits as enabling comparison with practices in the historic past¹¹⁶, thus suggesting certain continuities in cultural practise.

This conceptualisation of a **Kulubele** First-Millennium Agriculturist past is thus based on settlement layouts associated with cereal-growing, cattle-keeping peoples of both present and deep past time. A carefully proposed connection between first millennium and early historic farmers is strengthened by the specificity with which Binneman refers to "Sotho/Tswana and Nguni-speaking people".

Fekri Hassan (1998: 263, 277) has warned that "because we so loathe the ambiguity and murkiness of the unknown ... we often proceed most willingly from the known to the unknown". Consequently it is suggested by Hassan that "ethnographic analogy and historical approaches [should be utilised] cautiously, critically, and with discrimination". The use of ethnographic analogy is problematised by a possibility of portraying culture as static, and by historic observations upon which analogies are based having been misunderstood when observed by an immigrant outsider. Furthermore, Len van Schalkwyk (1991: 24) has cautioned quite explicitly that "we currently know almost nothing of the physical identity of the people associated with the 'Iron Age' [F-MA] way of life".

Nonetheless, ethnoarchaeology recognises a degree of continuity and rootedness of some peoples to particular types of spaces and lifeways. The actual degree of continuity between First and early historic Agriculturist culture is, however, likely to be an abiding mystery.

¹¹⁶ See lines one to four: "... a long history of this particular tradition".

Binneman's suggestion that **Kulubele** peoples may have used physical space to map out their social position in the landscape according to Central Cattle Pattern organisational principles is not without controversy¹¹⁷. His assessment of probable settlement layout¹¹⁸, of lifeway focal points, was made on the strength of material culture remains¹¹⁹ combined with signs of cattle-keeping: "a thick layer of dung¹²⁰... [yet] no cattle remains have been found" (1996(b): 76). Only further intensive excavation may reveal whether a Central Cattle Pattern is clearly evident, and an extent to which cattle can be said to have been present at the time.

The Central Cattle Pattern cluster of concepts, as a way of thinking about why First-Millennium Agriculturists may have divided "a spatial environment into distinct localities" so as to reflect a particular "worldview", was proposed by Tom Huffman

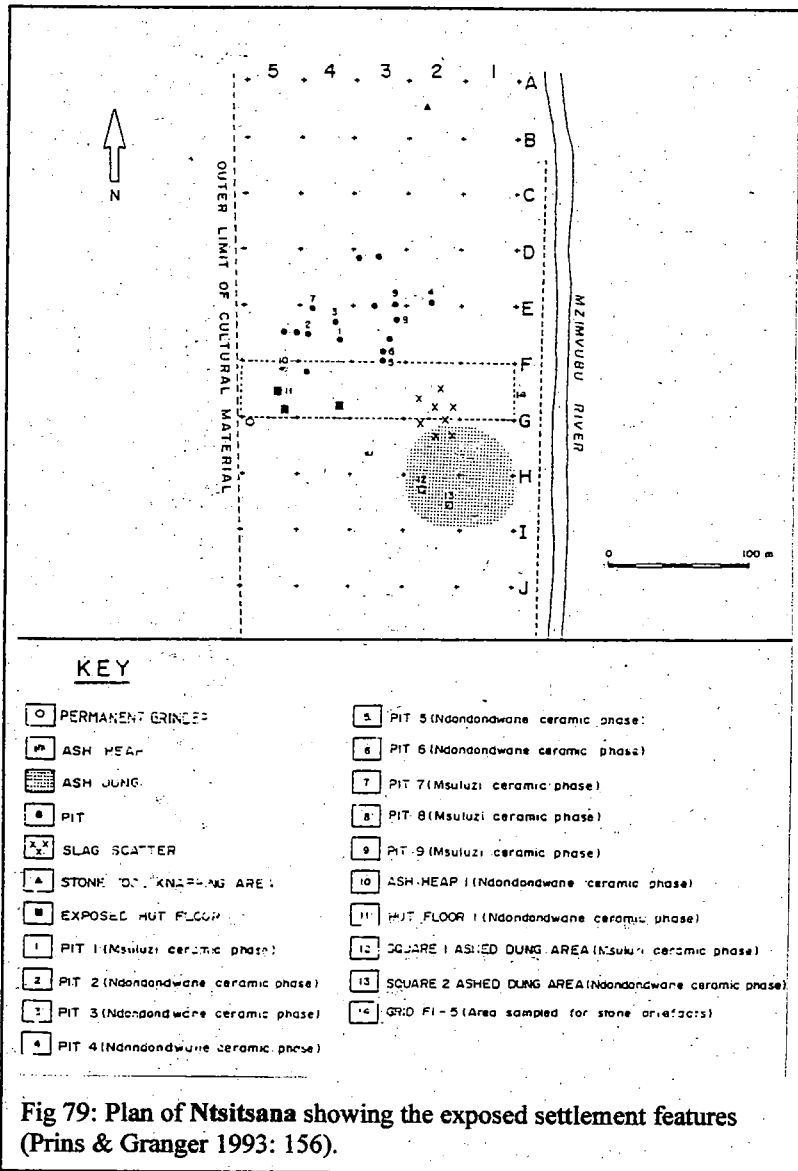
¹¹⁷ Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 4) pointed out that the concept of the Central Cattle Pattern has been criticised by "... Hall, M. 1986; and Van Schalkwyk 1991 ... as ahistorical".

¹¹⁸ Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 6) maintains that "archaeologists now recognise that a broad cultural uniformity, signified by the CCP [Central Cattle Pattern], existed among many of the precolonial agriculturist entities in southern Africa during the second millennium AD". Recent research has focused on achieving a better understanding of variation within this cultural system, for example: Davison 1988; Dreyer 1992; Loubser 1989; Mack et al 1991; Maggs 1988. Other research has focused on its antiquity, for example: Denbow 1982, 1983, 1984, 1986; Evers & Hammond-Tooke 1986; Hall, M. 1986, 1987, 1988, 1990; Huffman 1982, 1990, 1993, and more recently Huffman 1998.

¹¹⁹ Such as, for instance, the ceramics and metalworking remains.

¹²⁰ Binneman does not cite phytolith analysis to support this claim. This conclusion was reached in consultation with Tom Huffman as a result of a visual inspection on the occasion of their visit to the site (Binneman: personal communication 2000).

Phytolith analysis involves microscopic analysis of soil samples for the silica residue of grasses, sedges and herbs. The type and relative quantity of silica residues (phytoliths) make it possible to identify dung deposits, and even to distinguish between small (sheep and goats) and large (cattle) stock through this method of analysis (Huffman 1990: 6).



(1986: 295). Explaining this ethnographically derived¹²¹ hypothesis Huffman (1998: 57) stated:

The model represents a cultural package: it is restricted to Eastern Bantu speakers who share a patrilineal ideology about procreation, male hereditary leadership, beliefs about the role of ancestors in daily life, and a preference for bridewealth in cattle.

Thus, according to Huffman, spatial organisation in turn reflected ways in which gender and status, as well as metaphysical understandings, were conceptualised. He also suggested that Central Cattle Pattern spatial organisation reflected a particular economy because the way a society goes about "procuring, distributing and consuming resources ... must, at least in part, be related to its wider social organisation".

Extensive excavations at **KwaGandaganda**¹²² have revealed settlement characteristics associated with Central Cattle Pattern spatial arrangements. These characteristics included "a residential zone containing the remains of houses, raised granaries and pits, which surrounded a central zone with cattle byres [and] iron production residues" (Whitelaw 1994(b): 1).

From **Ntsitsana**, however, Prins & Granger (1993: 170) reported a different picture of settlement layout:

Rather than being centrally situated, the kraal area was located directly adjacent to the Mzimvubu River on the edge of the settlement [fig 79]. Clusters of filled in grain pits were situated at a distance from, and were not directly related to the stock byre. The location of pits outside the kraal area contrasts with the traditional Nguni pattern which corresponds to the Central

¹²¹ The 1980 and 1982 ethnographic studies conducted by Kuper are, for example, specifically cited.

¹²² Extensive excavation was made possible because the site was due to be flooded by a new dam, and so bulldozers were used to expose the area (Whitelaw 1994(b): 4).

Cattle Pattern ... where grain pits are situated within the livestock enclosure (citing Shaw & Van Warmelo 1974). (My fig insertion).

It can be seen that there is no single way in which a First-Millennium Agriculturist settlement is likely to manifest a worldview in layout pattern, even though eras, economy, and ways of thinking may be relatively similar. It is also likely that many village layouts featuring Central Cattle Pattern characteristics differ in idiosyncratic ways that may reflect responses to such factors as power, personal choice, family or settlement size, and topography of the settlement area.

For instance, at both **KwaGandaganda** and **Ntsitsana** the pits are located outside the byre area. Such positioning, according to Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 54, 55), may be an indication that the settlements were respectively of considerable regional political power. Thus it follows that Binneman's (1996(a): 35) assessment of pits as being associated with "a dung lens"¹²³ indicates a possibility that the **Kulubele** settlement may be characterised as a "small village" (Whitelaw: 1994(b): 55) type rather than as a node of regional political power.

In the absence of extensive excavation it may be suggested that **Kulubele** peoples could have decided to engage with their social concerns and environment differently, or that those pits excavated may perhaps have represented only an early phase of occupation that later became superseded as the settlement developed into a regionally powerful centre. Despite such alternatives I tend to favour a small village model as being the most likely for this settlement.

¹²³ "We have ... found evidence that at least some storage pits were situated in a thick layer of dung, most probably a cattle kraal" (Binneman 1996(b): 72).

In First-Millennium Agriculturist village layout “the kraal is also associated with the burial of important males and the communal storage of cereals” (Binneman 1996(b): 72). From **Ndondondwane**, Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 74) have reported on a

spatial distribution of activity areas [which appear] to tentatively support Huffman’s Central Cattle Pattern model (1993) for the Early Iron Age [F-MA] in its broad outlines – with a central area dominated by male activities (cattle keeping, iron production), surrounded by a plethora of domestic (female-focused) compounds. The domestic compounds are distributed in an arc from the central area of the site and are almost equidistant from the central hut.

These authors are careful to use the word “tentatively”, thus taking into account such caution as is recommended by Hassan when deep past analysis is partly reliant on interpretations derived from historic contexts. By referring to ethnographic contexts, and by utilising such phrases as “are considered to be”, Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 74) feel free to suggest gendered activities associated with particular spaces.

Their (1997: 74) notion of gendered space¹²⁴ as a visible expression of cosmology has direct bearing on conceptualisations of ways in which **Kulubele** residents may have used the landscape. At the centre of **Ndondondwane** are to be found “a large men’s hut, a livestock byre, iron furnaces, and iron and ivory working areas ... considered to be male-associated activities in traditional eastern Bantu culture”. Furthermore, “at

¹²⁴ Thus “those elements and practices that were linked conceptually with cattle were located either in or adjacent to the byre, whereas those that were conceptual opposites were located away from the cattle byres. Houses, for instance, being more closely associated with female activities, were typically arranged ... around the cattle byre. The court, being the male domain, on the other hand, was generally situated immediately adjacent to the byre” (Lane: 1998: 183).

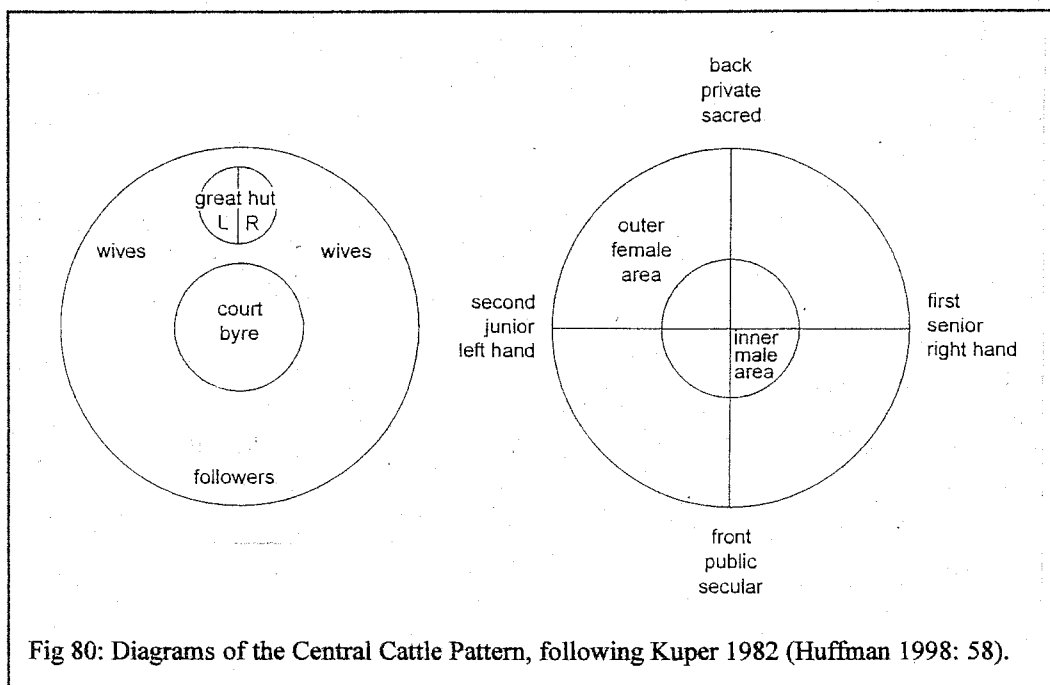


Fig 80: Diagrams of the Central Cattle Pattern, following Kuper 1982 (Huffman 1998: 58).

the north end of the site, still relatively isolated from the domestic complexes, lay a charcoal preparation (pre-smelting) area. It was also probably associated with male activities, given its isolation and the ethnographic association of males with iron production".

Domestic household complexes, on the other hand, are described as activity areas associated with "food processing and storage, sleeping, tool repair, ceramic production *etc* ... the traditional domain of women in eastern Bantu ethnographic contexts" (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 74). Tom Huffman (1998: 57, 58) has pointed out that "the majority of the space in the Central Cattle Pattern is open and devoid of features", and he utilised diagrams [fig 80] to show how the model "emphasises relationships between settlement features" with particular emphasis on gendered space.

Use of "*etc*" and "*plethora*" in describing female domestic space by Van Schalkwyk et al may well be indicative of a patriarchal gaze that has, to some extent, characterised First-Millennium Agriculturist studies to date. No such appellations are used in describing male associated activity areas. Further implications of *etc/plethora* may be that either domestic activities are too many to mention, or that they are not worth mentioning. The reader remains unenlightened as to which position is adopted by the text as it stands.

Likewise, despite Huffman's (1998: 57) emphasis of the Central Cattle Pattern as "an ethnographically-derived model", loose usage of connotations that this model carries problematises understanding. For example, the caption to the diagrams illustrated previously reads: "Diagrams of the Central Cattle Pattern, following Kuper 1982" (Huffman 1998: 58). For the

initiated¹²⁵, the important mental division between ethnographic present as depicted by Kuper, and First-Millennium Agriculturist past, which is implied, may be made automatically. The sentence in a context of establishing a deep past origin of bridewealth practices does, nonetheless, imply a one to one conflation of eras, an unlikely scenario. Such loose usage of concepts, born of familiarity perhaps, may be misleading.

It is also worrying that so much of the ethnographic information upon which this model is founded is derived from studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, and published in the early 1970s by Shaw & Van Warmelo¹²⁶, and in the early 1980s by Kuper¹²⁷. Time is ripe for insider¹²⁸ researches into indigenous knowledge systems and historic expressions of symbolic foundations upon which settlement patterns were predicated, either as validation of the likes of Kuper's studies, or by way of offering fresh insight.

Simon Hall (1998: 235, 236) has articulated a further criticism of ways in which the Central Cattle Pattern model may obstruct rather than facilitate conceptualisation of First-Millennium Agriculturist settlement space. He has suggested a problem with Kuper's model as being essentially structuralist in its reliance on "several binary oppositions that categorised people in space at several different scales". Some dangers inherent in overt structuralism, he suggests, include a possibility that

these models reify structure and impose an uncritical durability on meaning

¹²⁵ Such as, for instance, archaeologists familiar with the topic.

¹²⁶ Their studies on the Cape Nguni were published in 1972 and 1974.

¹²⁷ The title of Kuper's 1982 publication *Wives for cattle: bridewealth and marriage in southern Africa* can probably be regarded as a classic example of a patriarchal gaze that interprets events in terms that equate women with currency and cattle. Pending several new 'insider' researches it is difficult to tell whether the patriarchy reflected is that of the social system studied, or is a result of the gaze of the viewer.

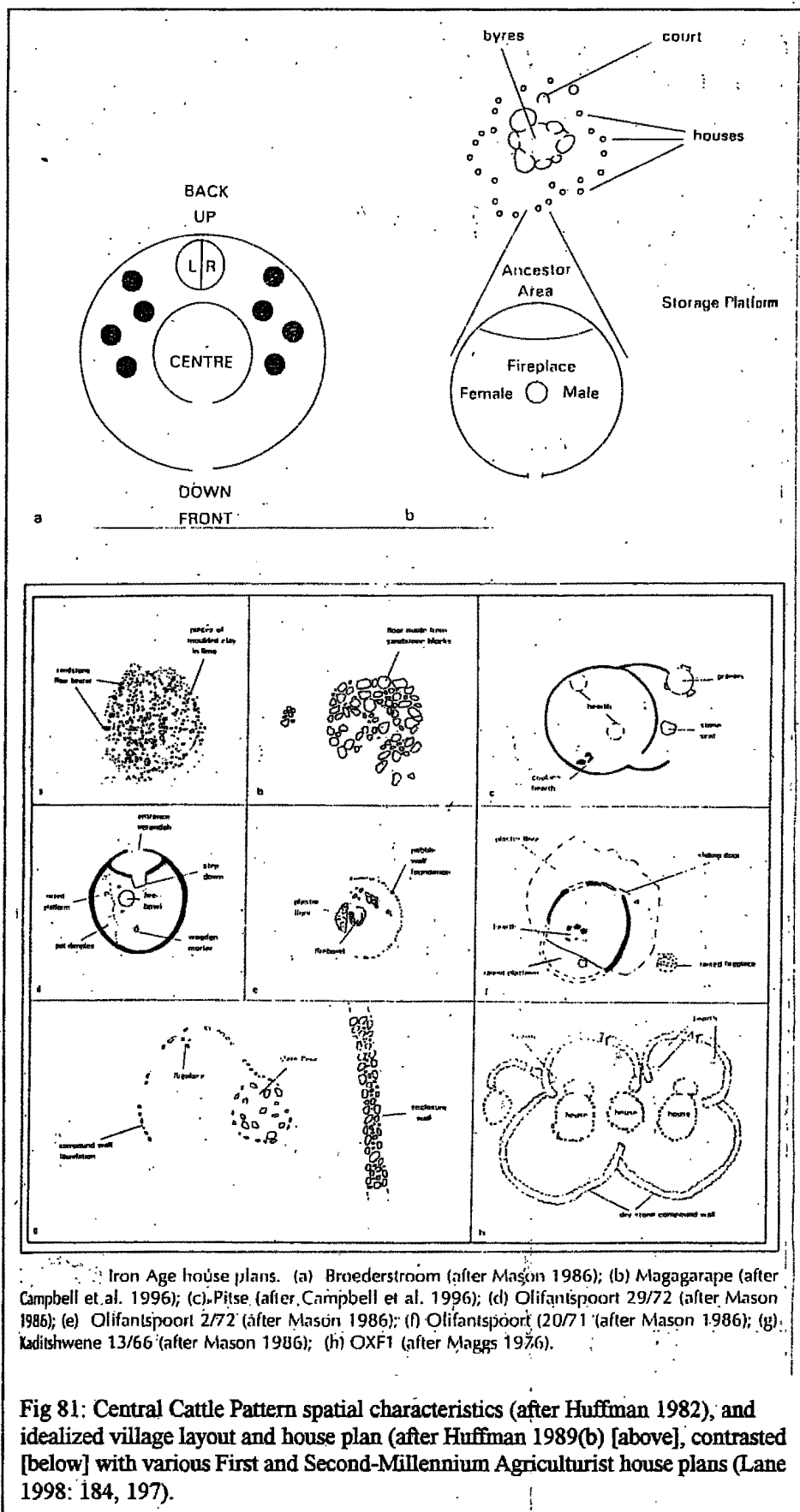
¹²⁸ By 'insider' I mean someone of a similar cultural background.

that compresses time and muffles the contextual detail of social relations ... distance people from social action ... it is as though men and women occupied two separate worlds¹²⁹, where ... people do not interact or contest power through manipulation of their symbolic framework in historically distinctive ways. (My footnote).

Thus it is suggested that looking into prehistory requires cognisance to be taken of an idea of social relations as malleable and regularly renegotiated, rather than as consistently predetermined. Physically erected or dug out structures within a communal space, as a manifestation of a collective symbolic framework and articulation of power systems, are not denied existence, but were likely to have been changeable and contested, as were interpersonal relations.

Towards a goal of conceptualising possible ways of thinking about settlement layout at **Kulubele**, Alinah Segobye (1998: 227) has noted an omission in much First-Millennium Agriculturist literature. She takes issue with the Central Cattle Pattern model, and a focus on cattle and male power, as implying that women were only "significant as daughters and mothers who could reproduce and bear male children as heirs to wealth and authority". She suggested this focus on a role of cattle in gender relations has led to a sidelining of other activities and "activity areas where women could (and probably did) exercise considerable power".

¹²⁹ Kuper's 1982 focus on binary oppositions, for example, "orientates gender in space through a left/right distinction, while a centre/surround opposition underpins prime male political and economic power, bounded by the domestic domain and children. Men accumulate and control cattle and exchange them as bridewealth with other men for wives and their productive and reproductive labour. As the medium through which all social, legal, political, and ritual transactions flow, cattle, their corrals, and the male court are located centrally in the homestead. This explicit power is juxtaposed with the outer residential circle of houses, in which women are more spatially constrained" (Hall, S. 1998: 235).



Iron Age house plans. (a) Broederstroom (after Mason 1986); (b) Magagarape (after Campbell et al. 1996); (c) Pitse (after Campbell et al. 1996); (d) Olifantspoort 29/72 (after Mason 1986); (e) Olifantspoort 2/72 (after Mason 1986); (f) Olifantspoort 20/71 (after Mason 1986); (g) Kaditshwene 13/66 (after Mason 1986); (h) OXF1 (after Maggs 1976).

Fig 81: Central Cattle Pattern spatial characteristics (after Huffman 1982), and idealized village layout and house plan (after Huffman 1989(b) [above], contrasted [below] with various First and Second-Millennium Agriculturist house plans (Lane 1998: 184, 197).

Likewise, focus on cattle and central zones of a settlement have resulted in less attention being paid to surrounding dwellings themselves. An assessment of some available dwelling remains [fig 81] lead Paul Lane (1998: 196-198, 200) to observe that the past two millennia have seen changes¹³⁰ that may have been linked to "changing meanings of the house". Such changes indicate a move from "the kind of concept that invoked notions of mutual co-operation between the sexes to a contested domain. This was a domain in which men and women negotiated for position, such that control over house space may have become a source of practical power and authority within society".

Lane (1998: 198) commented further that

the available evidence *does* indicate considerable variation with respect to the internal organisation of house space through the Iron Age¹³¹ [F-MA to the ethnographic present]. Regardless of whether these features were more closely associated with women than men, or vice versa, we can at least infer that the position of 'bodies' and their relationship to these features was not constant over the course of two millennia, as the Central Cattle Pattern would imply. (My footnote).

Other disjunctions between First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist settlement evidence include, for

¹³⁰ Lane suggested, for instance, that "whereas in the Early Iron Age [F-MA], internal house space appears to have been largely undifferentiated, during the early part of the Later Iron Age [PS-MA] new elements were introduced into houses". Such new elements included 'internal storage platforms and external courtyard walls ... separate houses for different activities ... and the internal position of the storage platforms ...' (1998: 199, 200).

¹³¹ This usage is a good example of the problematic nature of the term **Iron Age**. The issue here is that the context of the quotation includes the 'ethnographic present' (cf. "past two millennia"). Thus an implication of the statement is that people engaged in small scale agriculture living a few kilometres along the road from my home in a 'traditional' homestead, and equipped with all modern amenities, including a TV satellite dish attached to one wall, are associated with the Western European **Iron Age** lifestyle of at least three or more millennia ago. This is clearly an inappropriate conflation of time and continents.

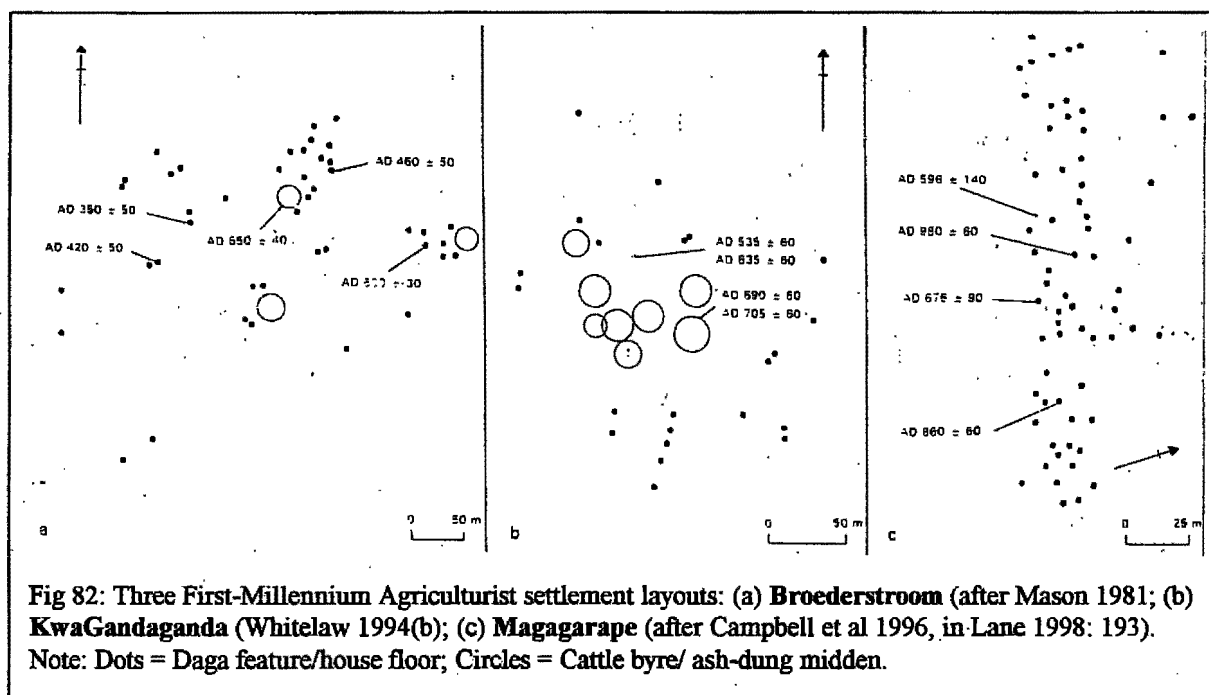


Fig 82: Three First-Millennium Agriculturist settlement layouts: (a) **Broederstroom** (after Mason 1981); (b) **KwaGandaganda** (Whitelaw 1994(b)); (c) **Magagarape** (after Campbell et al 1996, in Lane 1998: 193).
 Note: Dots = Daga feature/house floor; Circles = Cattle byre/ash-dung midden.

instance, that of the stability of settlement shape, and of peripheral permeability.

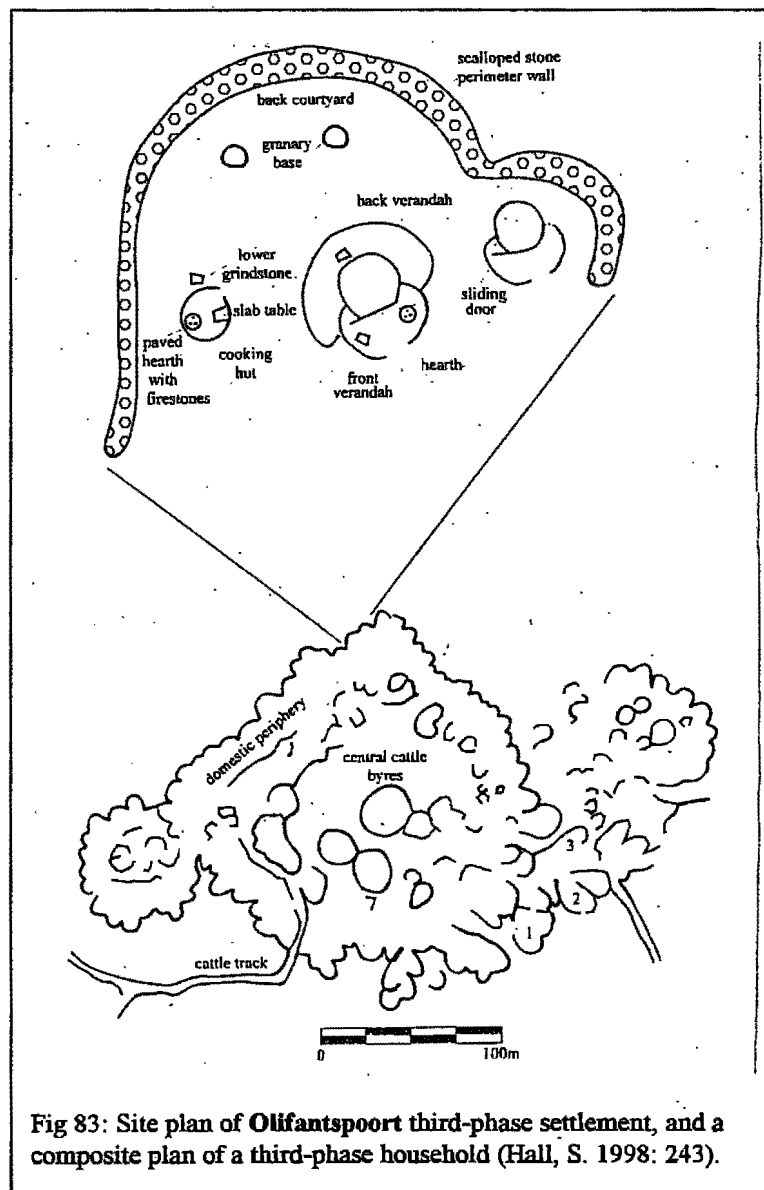
Lane (1998: 192, 193, 199) commented that an overall impression of First-Millennium Agriculturist village site plans reflect “a linear pattern of expansion” [fig 82], giving an impression of “settlement flux ... as new members were incorporated into the community”. He drew a distinct contrast between early settlement flux and peripheral permeability with “terminal Later Iron Age” (early historic) settlements which, by and large, may be bounded by walls [fig 83, overleaf], and “seem to have grown by the *accretion* of new wards around a primary core”.

Thus, some disjunctions between First and Second-Millennium Agriculturist settlement landscape utilisation appear to have been substantial. Lane (1998: 199) has further suggested a Central Cattle Pattern conceptualisation of space usage has tended to focus on the perceived importance of cattle and so-called male spaces, to the detriment of elucidation upon “the form, structure, and potential symbolism of those parts conventionally associated with women”.

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 5) has observed, however, that despite various criticisms, the Central Cattle Pattern model as a conceptual tool for finding continuities and discontinuities in First-Millennium Agriculturist lifeways has remained useful. He suggested that in the Central Cattle Pattern model

homestead layout is distilled, and against it the extent and *meaning of diversity* can be assessed. Changes in settlement patterns can be understood and explained because there is a logic in their departure from an idealised norm”. (My emphasis).

Tom Huffman (1990: 10) called this model a “step in the search for transformations as well as differences and continuities”. Thus



it seems that both Lane and Huffman, for instance, have insights to offer which, when not presented as a unique option, contribute to debates on effective ways of looking at and theorising possible First-Millennium Agriculturist lifeways and thinkings. I think that it is in this spirit of suggesting a "step in the search", and as a point of departure for further research and debate, that Binneman has proposed a Central Cattle Pattern socio-economic organisation for **Kulubele** (1996(a): 35; and (b): 72).

Of fundamental significance is that changes in research methodology and expected explanatory capacity have moved a long way from a Laidler type inventory approach, and created a realm of nuanced difference and complementarity. Such a change in type of questions asked of the deep past are particularly evident in a growing reflection on intermittent renegotiation of social similarities and differences that space usage may have indicated. Thus practices and "structures, rules, and norms which they reproduce" (Preucel & Hodder 1996: 310) have become areas of enquiry.

Ways in which women, men and children established themselves and moved within settlement spaces have come to be regarded as efforts at renegotiation of such aspects of daily life as affection, power and taboos. In this regard it is useful to look a little more intensively at tendencies to essentialise specific First-Millennium activities and technologies in gendered terms.

Metalworking and clayworking are two specifically gendered activities mentioned by Van Schalkwyk et al as being ethnographically associated with males and females respectively. For these authors (1997:74), such gendered technologies are presented as being part of a package that "appears to tentatively

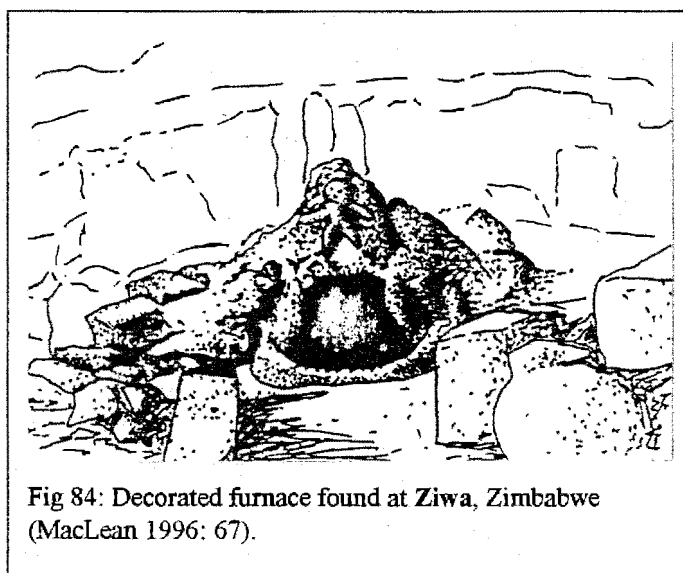


Fig 84: Decorated furnace found at Ziwa, Zimbabwe
(MacLean 1996: 67).

support Huffman's Central Cattle Pattern model (1993) for the Early Iron Age [F-MA].

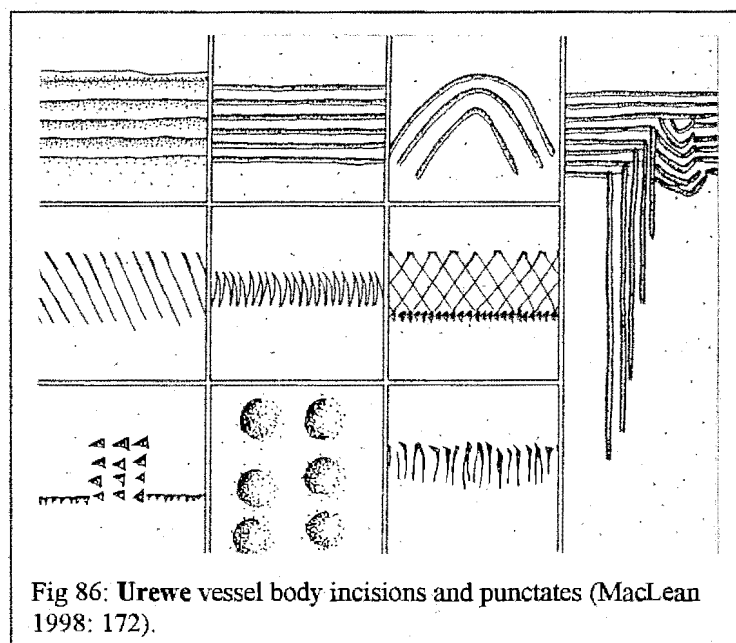
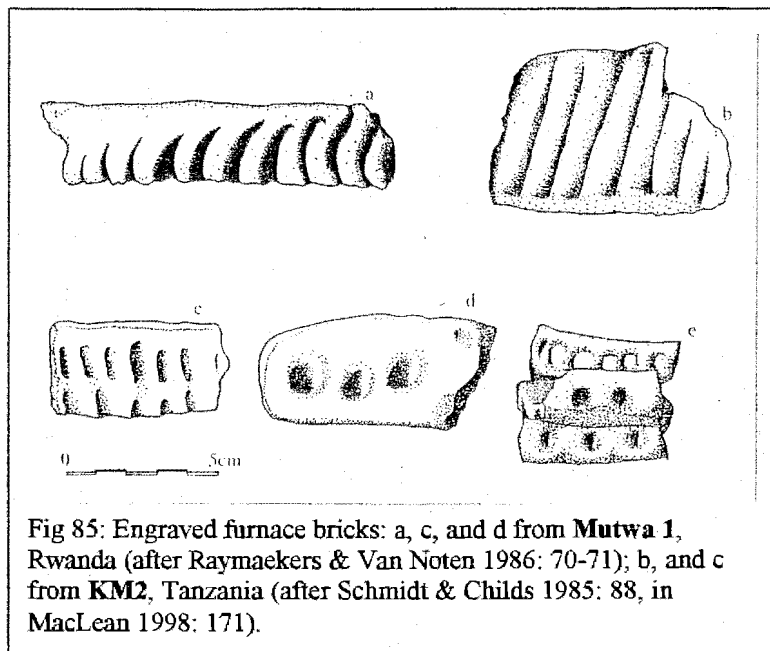
A tendency to gender space and technology is understandable considering "the most basic division in society [along with age, and perhaps some tasks] is that between male and female" (MacLean 1996: 64). Just as with space, however, caution in gendering technology is advised because "the idea that biological and social differences between men and women lead naturally to a sexual division of labour" has been debunked (MacLean 1998: 163).

Disregarding her own advice, however, MacLean (1998: 169, 170) in her researches into First-Millennium Agriculturist technologies of the Interlacustrine Region¹³², boldly gendered iron production technology. She asserted that this technology is "strictly gendered ... throughout Africa: smelters and smiths, without exception are, and in the recorded past, have been male". She suggested (citing Herbert 1993: 27-28) that this phenomenon is "not a result of the technical requirements of the technology; rather it is ... a cultural response to a common conceptualisation of the process".

To account for a gendering of this technology, MacLean (1998: 170) noted a "correspondence of iron smelting to the process of gestation and parturition" [fig 84], and that

ores are embryonic metals ... birthed with unnatural haste through the medium of the furnace/womb. The perception of the smelting process as a

¹³² The Interlacustrine Region is the area around Lake Victoria, the proposed 'source' of Urewe ceramics, of which tradition Matola in Mozambique and Mzonjani in KwaZulu-Natal are said to be part of. Specifically, the Interlacustrine Region is "the area of the east-central African Great Lakes, comprising Uganda, western Kenya, the eastern border of Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, and north-western Tanzania (MacLean 1998: 163).



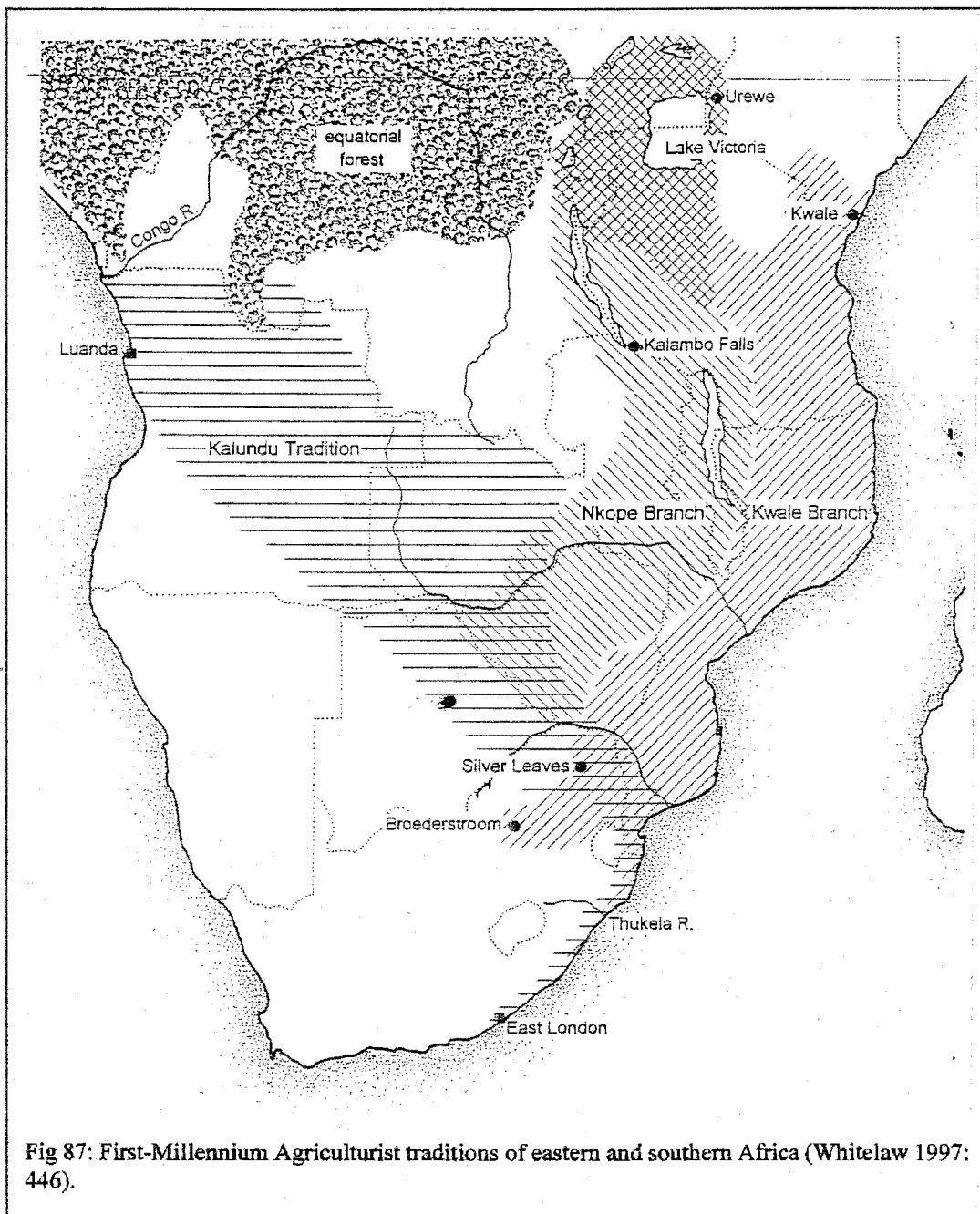
symbolic form of intercourse and procreation is found throughout Africa. ... Within such conceptualisations iron technology itself can be seen to be essentially gendered, for through the function of both the earth and the furnace as womb it closely resembles the role of the mother. Is it not, therefore, so surprising that the role of the father may be played by the ironworker, and that the ironworker is culturally male?

Archaeological evidence extending back over 2000 years was then examined for signs that these conceptualisations may have been present amongst First-Millennium Agriculturists of the Interlacustrine Region.

MacLean (1998: 171, 172) found decorated prehistoric furnaces made of clay with “explicit images” conceptually expressing “iron production as procreation”. Furthermore, symbolic features such as “small pots and holes have been found hidden at the base of furnaces in Rwanda”, and “decorated furnace bricks” [fig 85] were found that she thought showed conceptual links with clay body incisions and punctates on early Urewe ceramics [fig 86]. This evidence led MacLean (1998: 173, 174) to conclude that, like cooking technology, which she regarded as an extension of breast-feeding and as equivalently gendered in the female realm, “earliest iron technology was gendered and the first ironworkers were male”.

Likewise, Barbara Barich (1998: 110), citing Margaret Ehrenberg (1989: 87), has gendered the invention and production of ceramics, largely on the basis of ethnographic analogy, as female. Rachel MacLean (1998: 174), however, observed:

it has often been assumed that in most, if not all, societies the first potters were women ... early ceramic production being perceived as a ‘domestic’, and therefore female, technology ... [and] potters have often been seen as the female equivalent of the male smith. *[BUT] there are no obvious*



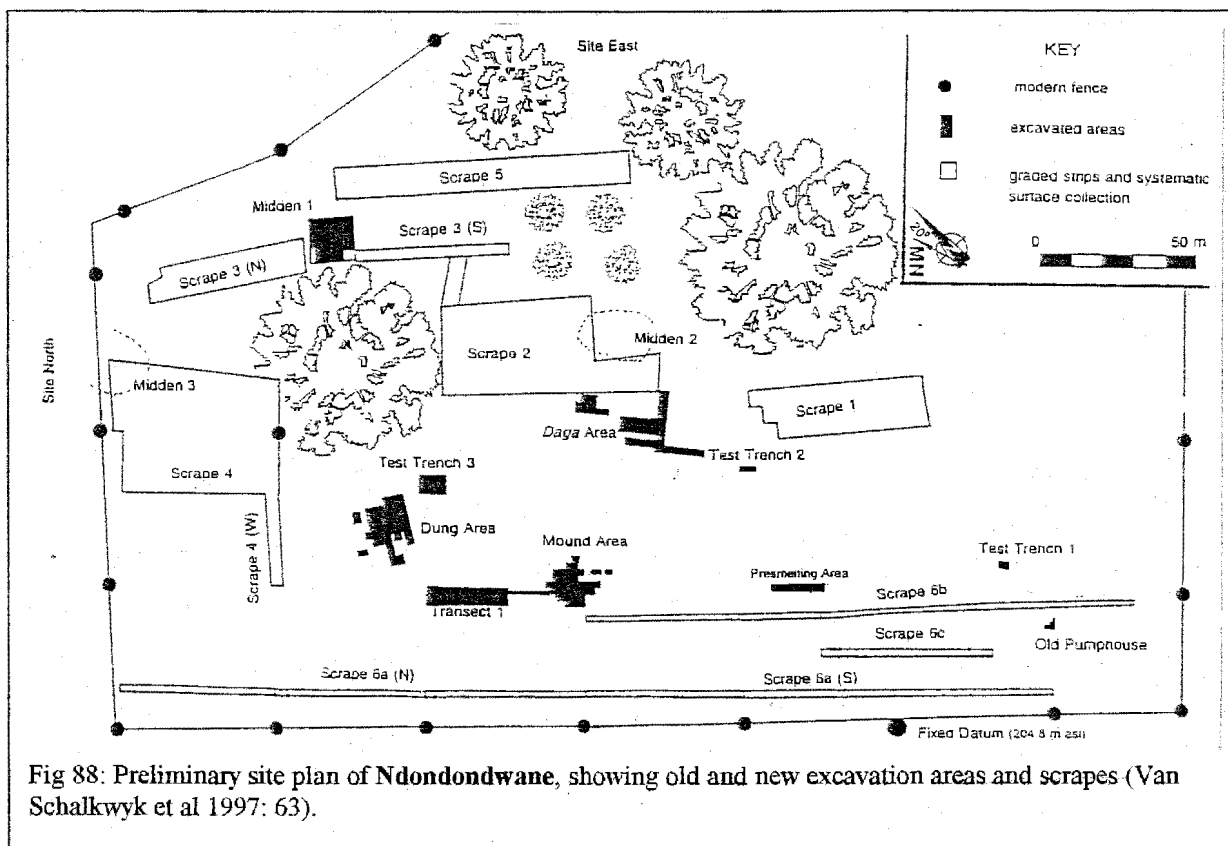
archaeological clues to the identity of the manufacturers of Urewe ware. (My emphasis).

Her negative reaction to the gendering of clayworking is of direct relevance to the somewhat dismissive gendered reference made by Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 74) to ceramics production as a female activity at **Ndondondwane**.

At **Ndondondwane** clayworking was associated by Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 74) with "domestic complexes", as opposed to iron production that was located "within a central area dominated by male activities". Nowhere does the site report mention physical identification of a clayworking area (which, anyway, is a highly unlikely discovery considering the ephemerality of traces left by the medium prior to firing), nor is the presence of a possible clay-firing site identified. Thus it appears that an association of clayworking with so-called domestic sphere at **Ndondondwane** may not have been based on archaeological evidence.

The direct relevance of MacLean's observations is heightened by a generally acknowledged connection between **Urewe** ceramics and what are thought to be stylistic signs of an earliest expression of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics in KwaZulu-Natal [fig 87]. This underlying influence would have been felt even once **Kalundu** stylistic elements began to predominate, as at **Ndondondwane**. Whatever the stylistic connections, the point remains that there are inadequate grounds for ascribing this particular technology to either gender, whether at **Urewe**, **Kalundu**, or **Kulubele**.

A fundamental issue to have emerged here is not so much about which gender was involved with what kind of technology. It is rather about a theory of looking based on dualism, and why that



way of looking emerged at all. Thus, Rachel MacLean's suggestion that iron production was reliably male, and Van Schalkwyk et al's location of this technology within a central area dominated by male activities at **Ndondondwane** bear a closer look.

Such metanarratives of gendered technology may seem at first glance to be consistent with evidence. For instance, the practising of metal-related technology at **Ndondondwane** in a central space¹³³ is an archaeological fact, especially considering that the site has been extensively excavated [fig 88] and mapped¹³⁴. There also appear to be grounds for "ethnographic association of males with iron production" (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 74). At this point, however, it is conceivable that conceptual connections may become unstuck because of both a metanarrative approach to ethnographic fact, and an immense time depth represented by the intervening thousand plus years.

In assessing MacLean's assertion of gendered metalworking practices Sarah Milledge Nelson (1998: 289) finds her conclusions to be based on "unsatisfying and ultimately unconvincing methodology" because

explanations are universalist, positing pan-human symbolism, to which I object because archaeological data do not support the idea that universal or pan-human symbolism exists.

Milledge Nelson's rejection of gendered metalworking practices seems, however, itself a universalist statement. Thus the same

¹³³ Ideas of centrality differ, depending on point of view. Perhaps, from a point of view posed by some other criteria such as the importance of water in daily life, for instance, the 'central position' of the 'central area' may itself be problematised.

¹³⁴ Tim Maggs excavated at the site in 1978, and then Jannie Loubser excavated in 1982 prior to the excavations undertaken by Van Schalkwyk et al. **Ndondondwane** has been listed as having Provincial Heritage Status (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 63-65).

grounds for dismissal of the male metalworker theory are used to substantiate an alternative. Furthermore, both MacLean and Milledge Nelson claim the support of archaeological data.

That such an impasse should develop may be a result of binary ways of looking being applied to spaces, technologies and people, wherein either/or dualities pose parts as antithetical rather than as symbiotic and complementary. Hassan proposed a way forward that has direct bearing on ways of seeing that obviate dualism to an extent, and thus facilitates my current project of looking for approaches towards conceptualising lifeways at **Kulubele**.

Hassan (1998: 266) suggested this fundamental conceptual point of departure as being that

we need to continue to explore the rich and vibrant dimensions of the embodiment of gendered metaphors ... [geared towards rethinking] not only the deeper forces that shape social relations but also those forces that make us who we are – a prelude to an archaeology of self. In such an analysis, instead of examining ecology [for instance] as a domain separate from symbolism, or self as opposed to society, or man as a category antithetical to women, we may choose to operate within a theoretical framework that explores the way the self is interactive with others; the manner by which ideas, actions, and communication are constitutive elements of artefacts and human endeavours; and the means by which the categories of man and woman are interwoven into the fabric of human thinking, behaviour, and the material world.

In looking at elements of daily life, artefacts and researches into settlement structure still act as a frame of reference, but different questions are asked of the excavated material culture remains. Questions of who came from where, and who lived where retain their relevance and remain carefully debated

issues¹³⁵, but other questions such as which individual flesh and blood people did and thought what, and why, represent a dramatic shift in the questions asked of prehistoric material culture. This shift in research focus will be the point of departure for the next chapter.

¹³⁵ See Whitelaw 1996, for example.



Fig 89: **Kulubele valley**, and the site where Victor Biggs discovered the engraved potsherds, on the farm of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg (Photos John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).

Chapter 4

KULUBELE: CERAMICS AND OTHER REMAINS

Ecological studies of the Eastern Cape region have led to the conclusion that the climate and vegetation were "broadly similar to the present" (Prins 1993:1) two millennia ago. **Kulubele** [fig 89] is located close to the "western limits"¹³⁶ for summer rainfall necessary for the growth of tropical cultigens known to have been the staple foods of African farmers" (Feely 1987: 16). This settlement was first occupied by early mixed-farmers¹³⁷ between AD 790 and AD 799 (Binneman 1996(b): 71). Secure dating of this occupation phase has enabled Johan Binneman (1996(b): 71) to address a widely held misapprehension that the Eastern Cape was an empty space prior to the early historical era¹³⁸.

This misapprehension seems to have arisen at least partly as a result of institutionalised racism¹³⁹, and associated propaganda,

¹³⁶ The Great Fish River area is considered to represent the "very outer limit of the summer rainfall region ... it is commonly accepted that an ecological boundary restricted these populations in their southward migration" (Binneman et al 1992: 108). Beyond this western limit summer rainfall decreases, and the climate gradually changes to winter rainfall in the Western Cape.

¹³⁷ **Kulubele** people probably farmed millet and sorghum, and "the majority of bone remains are of sheep and small antelope, the latter indicating that despite keeping domesticated animals, hunting still played an important role in their subsistence" strategies (Binneman 1996(b): 72).

¹³⁸ Other researchers who have presented evidence of early occupation of this region by First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples include Rudner 1968; Derricourt 1977; Maggs 1980(a); Cronin 1982; and Feely 1987.

¹³⁹ Institutionalised is used here in the sense that separation of peoples according to race was formalised by the South African government of 1948-1994 as part of their Apartheid policy. Racism is a "belief that groups of people, sharing common descent and some physical features, have inherent cultural characteristics that make them inevitably inferior or superior to other groups" (Hall, M 1996:129). Impacts of racist ways of thinking on conceptualisations of southern African prehistory are reviewed extensively by, amongst others: Dubow 1996; Gordon 1998; Hall, M. 1984(a) & (b), 1988, 1990, 1996(b); Hamilton 1982; Humphreys 1998; Mazel & Stewart 1987; Yates & Smith 1993.



Fig 90: The original two rimsherds found by Victor Biggs (Binneman 1996(b): 71).



Fig 91: Johan Binneman [left], Lita Webley, and Tom Huffman [right] opening up the **Kulubele** site (Photo: Victor Biggs, 1992).



Fig 92: Scatter of stones, and one of the first rimsherds to be excavated at **Kulubele** (Photos: Victor Biggs, 1992).

which conveniently attributed historical era arrival in the Eastern Cape to Nguni speaking farmers. Binneman (1996(b): 71) has placed **Kulubele** as “the oldest and southernmost *in situ* settlement of an Early Iron Age [F-MA] farming community known on the African continent”. This settlement, possibly ancestral to present day Nguni speaking peoples, is thus dated to roughly a millennium prior to an 1820 arrival in the Eastern Cape region of settlers from Europe.

Indications of prehistoric settlement at **Kulubele** were discovered in the late 1980s by Victor Biggs who, upon finding two engraved potsherds [fig 90], consulted Johan Binneman at the Albany Museum, who in turn set the process of archaeological excavation in motion. The site was then visited in 1992 by a team¹⁴⁰ [fig 91] who unearthed a scatter of stones and ceramics [fig 92] close to where Biggs had previously found the original rimsherds.

These stones, near the edge of a donga, indicated the top of a covered over storage pit [figs 93 and 94, overleaf]. Binneman (1996(b): 72) has explained that such pits are important discoveries. This is because “when no longer used for storing cereals, they served as ‘rubbish bins’ for domestic debris, containing a wide variety of food remains, potsherds and other domestic and everyday use-items which tell archaeologists about the way of life of the people”.

This particular pit was duly excavated:

As a control the remains were removed in 20 centimetre units. The topmost unit consisted of loose soil followed by a thick layer of broken potsherds. The

¹⁴⁰ The ‘team’, accompanied by Victor Biggs, comprised Johan Binneman, Simon Hall, Tom Huffman, and Lita Webley.

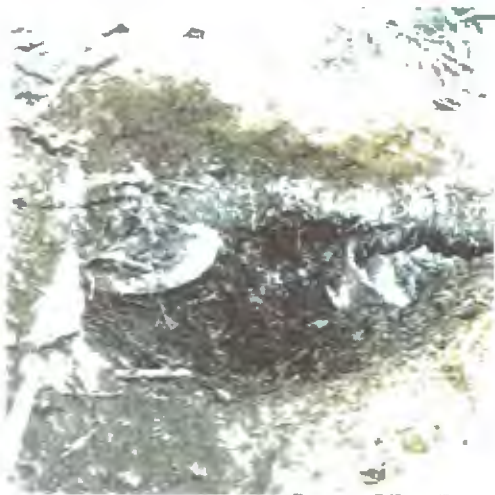


Fig 93: Exposed section of **Kulubele** Pit #1. This is the spot from where Biggs pulled the two sherds in Fig 90 (Photo: Victor Biggs, 1992).



Fig 94: Profile of **Kulubele** Pit #1 showing projecting ceramics (Binneman 1996(b): 71).



Fig 95: Johan Binneman beginning the **Kulubele** midden excavation (Photo: Victor Biggs, 1994).

remainder of the fill contained few sherds ... the pit was 1 metre deep and 84 centimetres in diameter at the top, tapering down to 60 centimetres near the bottom (Binneman 1996(a): 29).

In the meantime another storage pit had been located, but despite promising evidence of projecting potsherds most of the contents of this pit number 2 “in the vertical bank of the Kulubele river ... had been virtually washed out”. In his site report Binneman also documented a ten square metre midden excavation [fig 95], and a preliminary dig that exposed “a daga floor [fig 96] approximately 70 centimetres below the surface” (Binneman 1996(a): 29).



Fig 96: Victor Biggs at the Kulubele dwelling floor excavation site (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 97: **Kulubele** potsherds at the base of a tree near the dwelling floor excavation [left] (Photo: Antoinette du Plessis, 2000); potsherds and baked clay pieces dug up by an aardvark (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 98: Potsherds projecting from a cattletrack at **Kulubele** (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 99: Ostrich eggshell beads, and bone points recovered at **Kulubele** (Binneman 1996(b): 73).

Trips to **Kulubele** with Victor Biggs and Wesley Sternberg revealed immense arrays of exposed potsherds scattered throughout the central area of the valley. Some potsherds were seen, for instance, alongside the dwelling floor excavation site, an aardvark had dug up potsherds a few metres away from the original midden excavation site [fig 97], and other potsherds projected from a cattletrack [fig 98]. Significantly, unengraved thinner sherds of a different finer clay body were seen in an area slightly up a nearby hillside, in conjunction with what may have been a Late Stone Age lithic industry site¹⁴¹.

The possibility of a symbiotic relationship between hunter-gatherer and mixed farming peoples is also evidenced by the presence of ostrich eggshell beads [fig 99], and other Late Stone Age artefacts that were recovered from the **Kulubele** settlement midden. Binneman (1996(b): 73) commented, "the first Early Iron Age [F-MA] farmers did ... not move into an empty landscape. There were other people – hunter-gatherers (the San) and Khoi herders – living in the region at the time. We do not know what interaction took place between these peoples ... it is possible that they lived among the farmers".

Close to the **Kulubele** river is a hardly noticeable *in situ* protuberance of baked clay [fig 100, overleaf] that is also suggestive of lifeways. According to Victor Biggs this artefact may represent the "remains of a granary base, or dwelling floor" (personal comment, 1999). Without undertaking some excavations it is difficult to come to any specific conclusions, but it is of interest that in KwaZulu-Natal a "common form of EIA [FM-A] grain-storage facility ... was a pole-and-daga structure raised

¹⁴¹ There were many small pieces of stone flakes, a discarded partly bored stone, and other artefacts that looked like lithic tool making debris evident within quite a circumscribed area.



Fig 100: **Kulubele**: Protuberance of baked clay on the edge of an erosion donga (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).



Fig 101: **Kulubele**: Piece of fired clay daga with stick impressions (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Wesley and Colleen Sternberg).

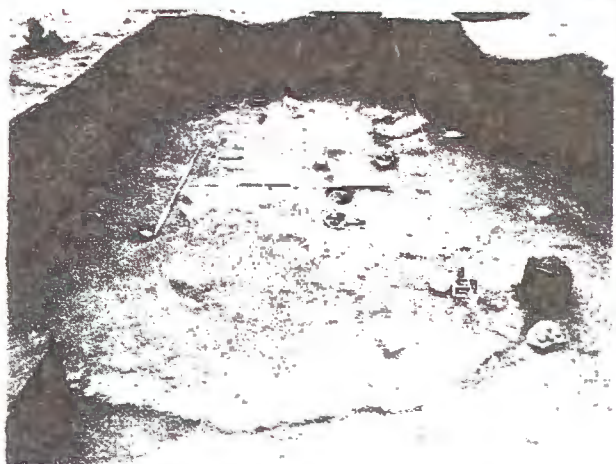


Fig 102: Burnt daga dwelling floor at Ndondondwane (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 68).

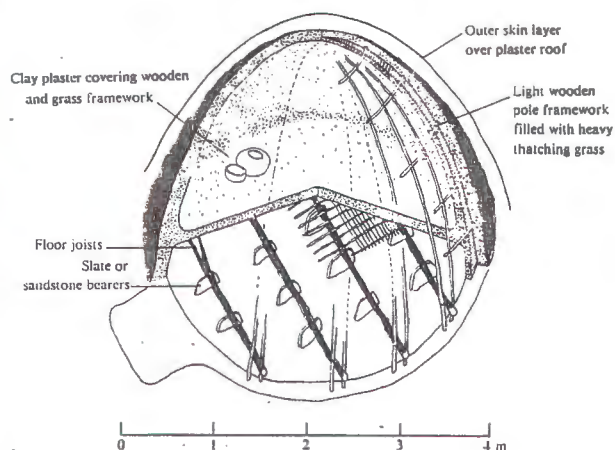


Fig 103: **Broederstroom**: Reconstruction of a First-Millennium Agriculturist dwelling (Graphic by N Rozendal, in Mason 1981: 406).



Fig 104: **Kulubele**: Bone pendant [above], and shell pendant (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

above the ground, probably on poles" (Whitelaw & Moon 1996: 61). This solid lump of clay at **Kulubele** is securely embedded in the earth, and was probably part of a base for some or other structure. Not all granaries of that era were necessarily raised on poles. At **Nanda** a low stone platform less than a metre in diameter was said to "resemble stands for grain-storage" (Whitelaw & Moon 1996: 61), and such structures could be made from clay.

This lump of clay, and other smaller pieces of baked clay fragments¹⁴² with grass/reed/stick impressions [fig 101], leads to considerations of what the dwellings in those days may have looked like, and of ways in which people may have arranged their homes. Jim Feely [citing Shaw & van Warmelo 1972] (1987: 41) has suggested that "the dwelling in former times was hemispherical, wood-framed and thatched to ground level. This was plastered, if at all, only on the interior".

Len Van Schalkwyk et al (1997:68) documented the excavation and exposure of an "entire burnt daga circular floor" [fig 102, overleaf] at **Ndondondwane**. These researchers report that

the superstructure was probably beehive-shaped based upon the dearth of peripheral posthole remains, the presence of a single large posthole in the centre and reed impressions in the burnt daga, and the nature of and the distribution of intensely burnt floor daga. It was most intensely burnt in the centre of the floor, indicating the collapse of a beehive structure. The floor was baked when the house burnt down.

This description seems to roughly correspond with proposals made by Feely. Revil Mason (1981: 406) has, in contrast, recorded slightly different home construction details as having

¹⁴² Such fragments may be remains of interior or exterior 'plastering', or part of a floor.

been evident at **Broederstroom**, a First-Millennium Agriculturist site located on the borders of present-day Gauteng and North West provinces [fig 103]. It would seem that **Broederstroom** style of home building would have left postholes on the periphery, and he does suggest exterior as well as interior plastering of the structure. Exact details are difficult to determine, but consideration of building practices does bring about a greater awareness of real people making active choices in the deep past at **Kulubele**.

Such choices were also made about personal adornment. Favoured items include the ostrich eggshell beads mentioned earlier, and beads made from other, as yet unidentified types of shell, a shell pendant, a bone pendant [fig 104], a broken ivory bangle, and part of an ivory disc [fig 105, overleaf]. These personal ornaments allow intimate views of people wearing jewellery as an indication of status, for instance, or for purely aesthetic reasons. There may be intrinsic parallels between some ceramics and items of personal adornment. Ceramic vessels may be thought of as familiar to and cherished by an individual/family and/or community, just as ornaments are personal special items valued by persons and/or a community.

Other shell artefacts excavated at **Kulubele** that offer further glimpses into lifeways include a

relatively large number of marine shell fragments and a few complete ones ... mainly *Perna perna* and *Patella miniata*. The edges of whole *Patella miniata* shell and most fragments were ground into a round shape. Their use is not known, but they may have been used for cleaning the inside of pots" (Binneman 1996(a): 31).

The fact that the shells mentioned are coastal limpet and mussel shells indicate that either some peoples of the area were very



Fig 105: **Kulubele**: Part of an ivory bracelet [above], and part of an ivory disc (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

mobile¹⁴³, or confirm the existence of extensive trade links. It is probable that either or both scenarios were operative.

Another consideration results from Binneman's phrase "used for cleaning the inside of pots". Here a glimpse is offered of something that is so obvious it is only alluded to twice in the five core publications¹⁴⁴ that discuss **Kulubele** ceramics: many of the vessels excavated had probably been in daily household use, and those needing scraping had possibly been used for cooking purposes. While clearly being beyond the scope of Binneman's 1996(a) preliminary report, I cannot recollect any study of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics that has substantially looked at such ceramics with the question in mind: used for what?

One possible reason for choosing to ignore household use value may be that use and domestic household activities have not been high on the agenda of enquiry priorities. Another reason, related to the first, is hinted at on the other occasion that use is mentioned. Here Binneman (1996(b): 72) observed that

the most abundant cultural items found at **Kulubele** are pottery fragments ...

The distinctively made pots and bowls were decorated with motifs scratched on the pots while the clay was still wet. These motifs provide archaeologists with important information about the identity of the *specific phase the pots represent and can thus be used for relative dating*. (My emphasis).

Thus the focus of study is declared as "phase" and "dating". These aspects of research are indeed fundamental to an understanding of the era, but an element that is partly missing is a concomitant and parallel search for women, men and children interacting as a community within a specific settlement space.

¹⁴³ The nearest coastline is more than 60km away over very rough territory.

¹⁴⁴ Binneman et al 1992; Maggs 1993(b); Webley & Binneman 1993; Binneman 1996(a) and (b).

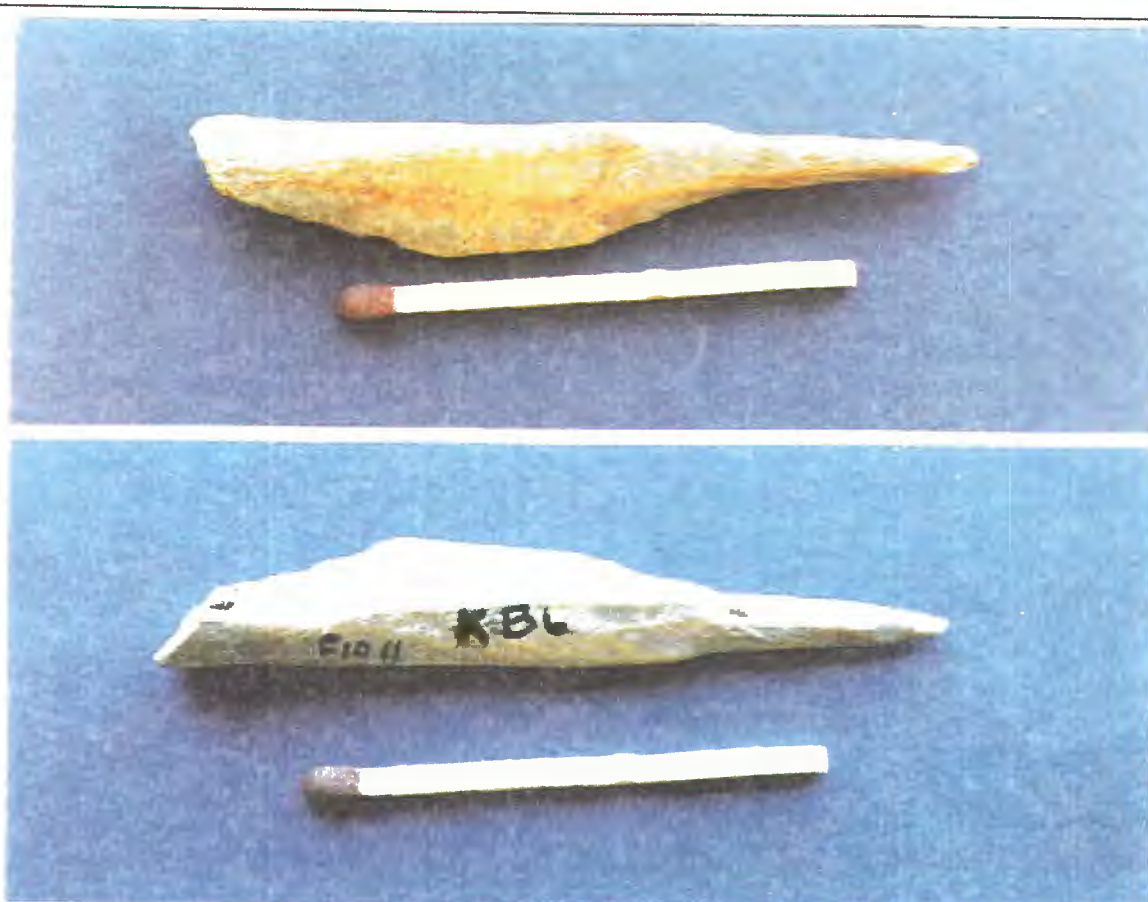


Fig 106: Two views of a Kulubele bone point (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 107: Kulubele bone pipe fragment [with contents on right], featuring crosshatched engraving (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Such interactions and daily doings are hinted at in Binneman's suggestion that the shells may have been used for scraping out pots. This suggestion creates an image of someone somewhere in the **Kulubele** settlement scraping out cooking pots time and time again¹⁴⁵.

In the **Kulubele** site report, Binneman (1996(a): 31) observed that "several bone points, awls, polished bone fragments [fig 106] ... and a decorated smoking pipe fragment [fig 107] were [also] found". He described the pipe fragment as having "a wide cross-hatched motif at the open end and a second one at the broken end". Furthermore, cross-hatching has also been seen to appear on an as yet unpublished find of a bone fragment of what may have been a "musical instrument" (Binneman, personal comment 2000)¹⁴⁶.

That crosshatching should occur on the decorated pipe fragment, on the "musical instrument", and repeatedly on ceramics [fig 108, overleaf] is significant. These engravings can be regarded as a manifestation of "underlying and incorporated phosphenes [which] have a ritual provenience and arise experientially" (Manton Hirst e-mail: 18/7/1999) within a community. Thus cross-hatching on a bone pipe resonates, perhaps ritually and/or subconsciously, with cross-hatching on ceramics and on any other surfaces where the design is either intrinsic to the form (perhaps basketry?) or applied. Items of engraved material culture echo collectively within a community, each as sociocultural components that are part of and construct an often-renegotiated identity established by a greater whole.

¹⁴⁵ Often enough to wear away the sharp edges of an extremely durable shell.

¹⁴⁶ Note [in fig 108], for instance, what appear to be deliberately drilled holes that are carefully spaced. Binneman's guess suggests that this may have once been something like a pennywhistle type of musical instrument.



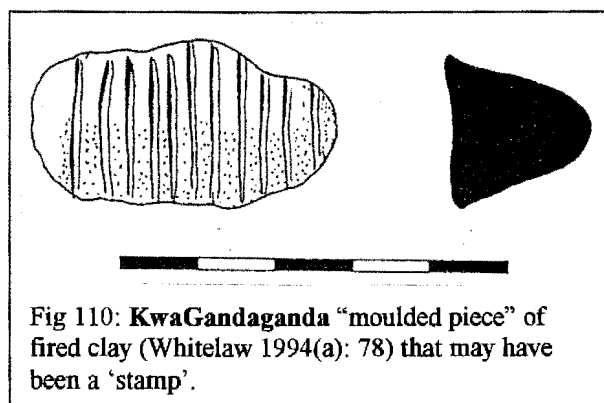
Fig 108: **Kulubele** part of what may have been a bone musical instrument, with crosshatched engraving; and crosshatched vessel rim incisions (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 109: Two views of the **Kulubele** ceramic 'stamp' (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Johan Binneman (1996(a): 31, 34) has described one mysteriously engraved find from **Kulubele** as “a flat, semi-circular ceramic modelled object. One end was pressed backwards to create a thick concave surface. Several wide, parallel, U-shaped lines are modelled along the width of the object, suggesting a ‘stamp’ of some sort” [fig 109].

This comment by Binneman has opened a way of thinking about such artefacts that may allow for interpretation of a peculiarly similar ceramic object discovered by Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 78) at **KwaGandaganda**. This was a “moulded piece, possibly applied to a larger object” [fig 110] that looks like it may also have been a stamp of some sort. That an urge to apply a mark may have led to creation of an object that then facilitated a sort of mass production of that mark seems to have been unusual for



those days. One can only speculate as to the medium that may have been stamped, especially considering that engravings on various ceramics appear to have been freshly incised on each occasion, not stamped.

Another group of mysterious artefacts, coupled with a series of engraved marks, are several enigmatic ceramic clay disc fragments from **Kulubele**. These are described as “ceramic discs with a single round hole in the centre ... the largest disc

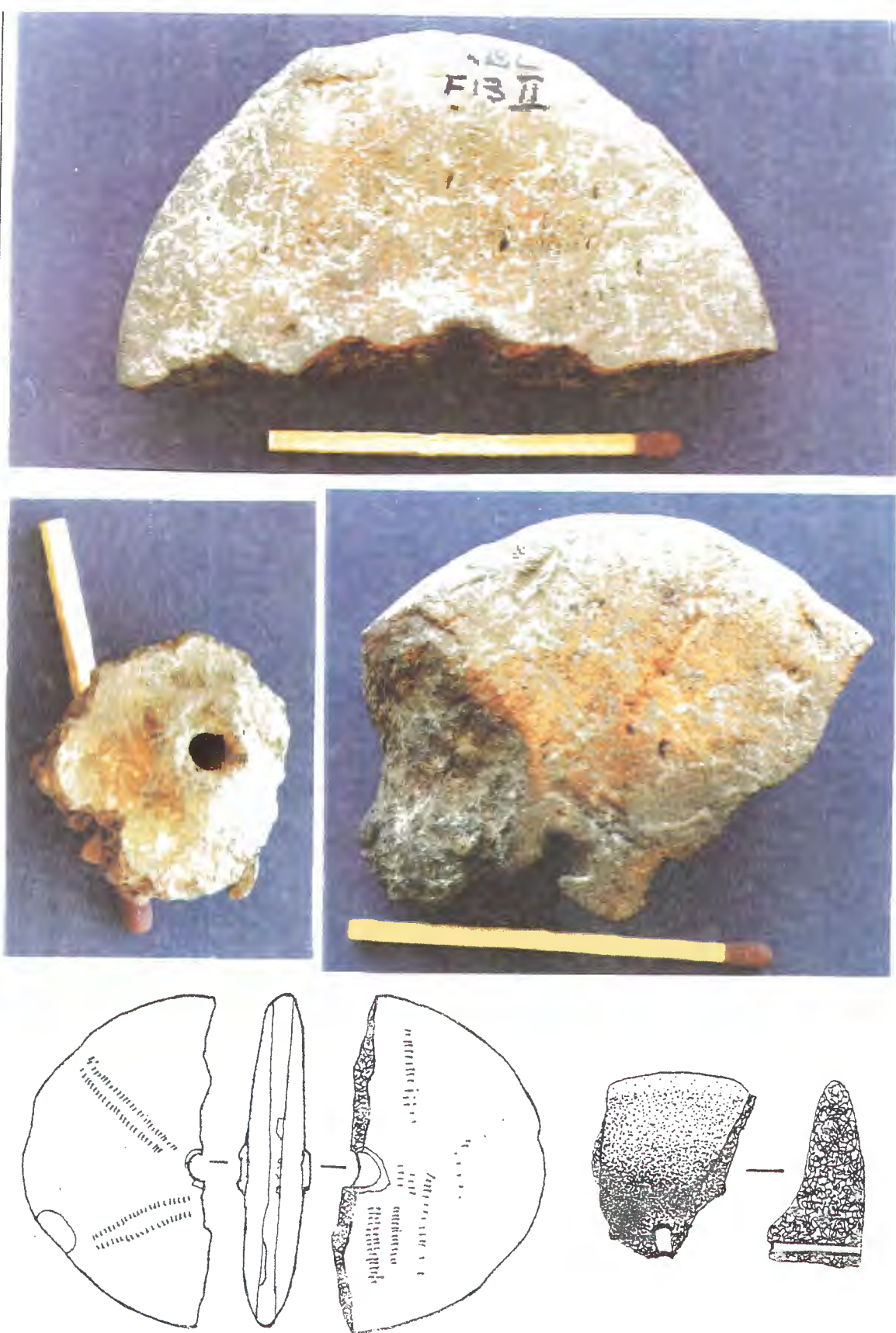


Fig 111: **Kulubele** ceramic discs with a single round hole in the centre. Top disc [KBL F13 II], illustrated bottom left, is the reverse of that depicted in Fig 10; middle left disc fragment measures approximately 25mm across, has a raised section around the centre hole which has a diameter of 3mm; middle right disc fragment measures 37 x 48mm, and is 9mm and 15mm thick at the edge and centre respectively (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum. Graphics by Johan Binneman 1996(a): 34).

fragment was 6,5 cm in diameter with *fine impressed parallel rows of decoration* running from the centre hole (6mm in diameter) to the outer edge” (my emphasis) (Binneman 1996(a): 31). It is notable that no further discussion (or speculation as to use value) is entered into about either the discs [fig 111] or the stamp, except that Binneman (1996(a): 29) has designated them as “cultural remains”.

Unlike ceramic ‘stamps’ which seem to be quite rare, clay discs appear in many assemblages, but there are not many records of centrally placed perforations. Prins and Granger (1993: 165, 166) reported a broken ceramic disc with a hole made through the middle from **Ntsitsana**, which features incisions similar to some of those seen from **Kulubele** [fig 112]. The pierced discs look as if they were created by patting and shaping the clay into a circular shape that was left substantially thicker towards the centre. Thereafter the damp clay may have been smoothed off around the edges, and then centrally pierced prior to firing.

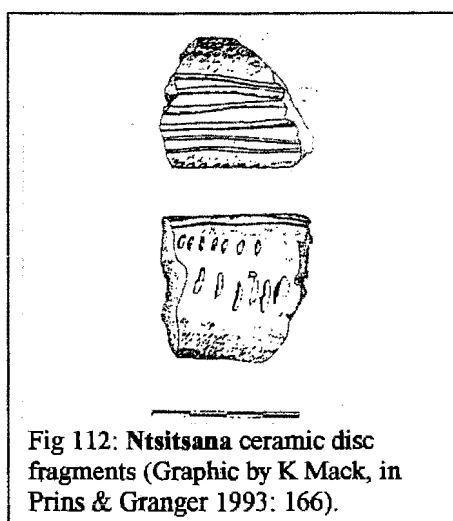
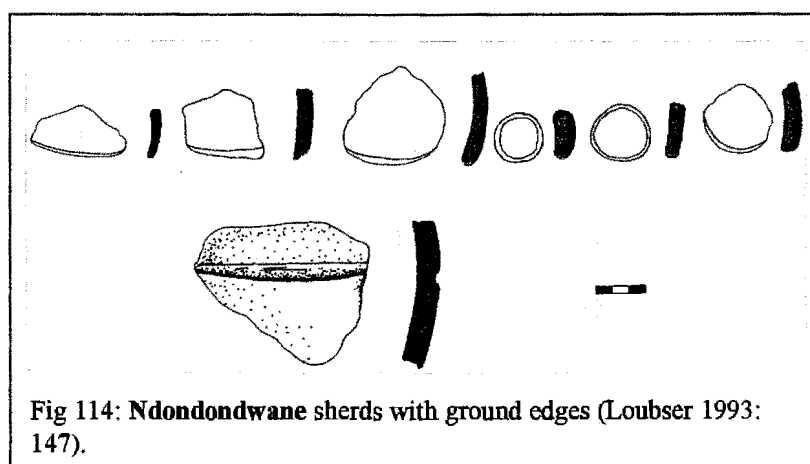
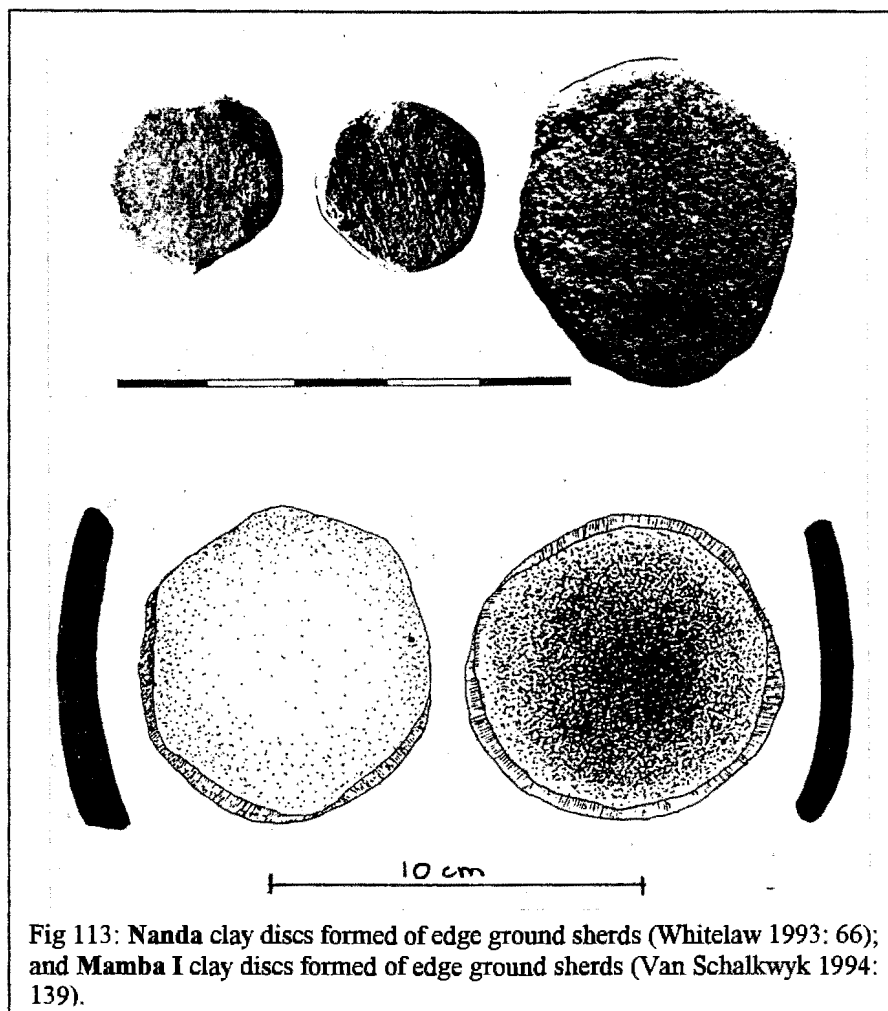


Fig 112: **Ntsitsana** ceramic disc fragments (Graphic by K Mack, in Prins & Granger 1993: 166).

Other, quite different discs have been reported for instance, from **Nanda**, **Mamba I** [fig 113, overleaf] and the **Lydenberg Heads**



site¹⁴⁷. These discs appear to have been made by scraping and filing already fired clay sherds into roughly rounded shapes, another tier of use value having been created from a sherd that was probably part of something else prior to breakage. Gavin Whitelaw (1993: 59, 66) has described the **Nanda** discs as "varying from about 1,5cm - 4cm in diameter, and may have been used as ear-lobe plugs ... or counters in a game".

The discs recovered from **Mamba I**, at roughly 8cm in diameter, are probably too large for use as ear-lobe plugs, and Van Schalkwyk (1994(b): 138, 139) has discounted a suggestion that these larger versions may have been used as "wheels in the coil method of [clay vessel] manufacture"¹⁴⁸. Such discs were possibly made from sherds resulting from breakage (deliberate or not?) of a vessel during firing or thereafter, and are quite different from those at Kulubele which were shaped as discs and centrally pierced at the outset. Interestingly, Jannie Loubser (1993: 136, 147) recorded several sherds with partly ground edges from Ndondondwane [fig 114], one of which features a long groove, and another that has ochre burnish. Use value and/or purpose of these enigmatic bodysherds with ground edges seem to be as mystifying as for those that were made as discs and pierced from the outset¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁷ Evers (1982: 25) reported that "two sherds with ground edges ... [and] eight discs with chamfered edges" were found at the **Lydenberg Heads** site.

¹⁴⁸ Van Schalkwyk cited Morais & Silva 1975 as, in describing contemporary pottery manufacturing techniques from Mozambique, seeing the use of "comparable clay discs as wheels in the coil method of pottery manufacture". He suggested that "it is possible that these discs may have been destined for similar use at **Mamba I**. However, the absence of wear on their rotational bases suggests that even if this was their function, the discs were never put to use".

¹⁴⁹ It can be speculated that it would have been within the capacity of whoever did the reconfiguring of purpose for the ground down discs to make holes in the centre despite the clay having been already fired, if she/he had so wished.



Fig 115: **Kulubele** 'miniature' pots. Left: 60mm high; 64mm diameter; 7mm thick near base. Right: 78mm high; 84mm diameter; 7mm thick near base (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Roundedness at the edge of the bodysherds with ground edges may have occurred in the process of abrading against another object, in which a goal may have been to change the shape or texture of that other object, or the roundedness may have been a deliberately sought after goal in itself. That these sherds have been reworked into another tier of use value subsequent to firing suggests both mutability of meaning associated with objects in the deep past, as well as an inevitable lack of fixity in understandings of that past in present researches.

Also intriguing are two miniature pots recovered from **Kulubele** [fig 115]. Binneman (1996(a): 31, 32, 33) described the vessel on the left as a "plain pot with everted neck", and the other as a "plain inturned bowl". In conversation (2000) he has suggested that perhaps the bowl may have been a vessel used for drinking purposes. This does seem a possibility, especially considering its capacity and shape. The little pot with everted neck, however, is far more difficult to place within a daily use context.

Perhaps it was used to store a special substance? There is something puzzling about this vessel, partly because for its size, this little pot is quite thick (7mm on average), and it is lumpy in construction technique when compared to other larger works. What is fascinating about both of these 'miniature' vessels is evidence of construction technique (by coils of clay being joined one above the other), and signs of movement of a potter's hands over the surface of the clay, perhaps so clearly evident because these surfaces were left rough [fig 116, overleaf].

It could be construed that many such vessels were made quite quickly, or that they were made by less experienced potters, or as with the everted neck vessel, that perhaps it was made by a child experimenting with the medium. Yet, the neck seems to have



Fig 116: Closeups of the **Kulubele** 'miniature' pots (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

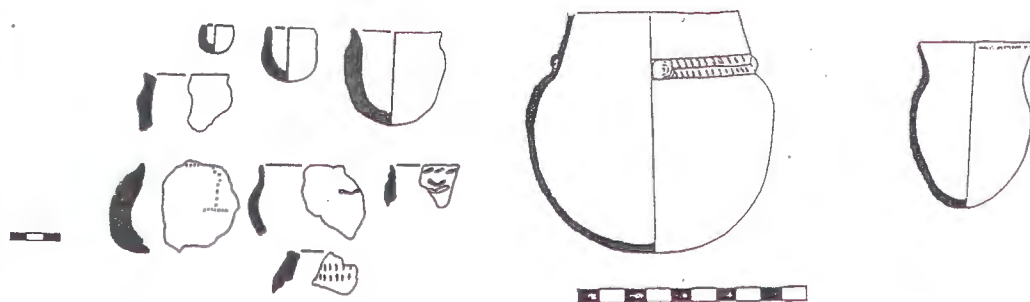


Fig 117: **Ndondondwane** [left] (Loubser 1993:147), and **Ntsitsana** (Prins 1993: 140) miniature vessels.

been everted by a pulling back of the rim using an adult sized thumb as outside support, so my guess is that an adult made this little pot. Very small vessels are, however, not unique to **Kulubele**.

Jannie Loubser (1993: 136, 147), for instance, recorded excavating "eight miniature jars, four of which are decorated" at **Ndondondwane**, and Frans Prins (1993: 140, 151) excavated "very small vessels" at **Ntsitsana**¹⁵⁰ [fig 117]. Prins also commented, "these have been interpreted in functional terms as toy pots [citing Maggs 1984(c): 85], but they may have greater cultural significance". It is noteworthy that even some of these miniature vessels have been engraved, which adds to the likelihood that Prins' suggestion of "greater cultural significance" may be appropriate.

The urge to apply a mark seen in those engravings finds clear expression in a review of the **Kulubele** vessel assemblage as a whole. In analysing the **Kulubele** assemblage according to "vessel profile, decoration motif and decoration placement"¹⁵¹ Binneman (1996(a): 28, 29) has commented:

The assemblage ... was fragmentary and large pot fragments in general were broken at the neck/shoulder junction which made it difficult to establish the extent of shoulder and body decoration. The majority of vessels were decorated only on the rim and occasionally on the lip and the inside of the rim. Only a few decorated body fragments were found which indicate that shoulder and body decoration occurred less frequently. The most common band motifs were hatching, cross hatching (even and unevenly spaced), herringbone and alternating triangles. The incisions range from heavy, deep,

¹⁵⁰ Mason 1981 was cited by Prins (1993: 151) as having also excavated very small vessels at **Broederstroom**.

¹⁵¹ This analysis procedure was crystallised by Tom Huffman (1980: 123-174), and is currently widely used.



Fig 118: **Kulubele** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

rough U- and V- shaped incisions to carefully executed, shallow U- and V-shaped incisions.

This meticulous assessment [figs 118; and 119 (a), (b) and (c) opposite pages 104 to 106] was geared towards finding similarities and differences in order to construct "classes" that serve as building blocks upon which intra-assemblage analysis can be based. This assessment stands on its own, as in a site report, or can serve as part of a foundation for micro investigations geared towards finding out more about potters, ceramics praxis, and associated domestic/community activities.

Before moving on to other site report information, a careful look at terminology used by Binneman in his explanation of characteristics of this assemblage gives an inkling of subtexts underlying what appears to be quite a standard approach to such analysis. The word "assemblage", for instance, is significant because the idea of a composite whole is foregrounded at the expense of in depth analysis of individual works. Yet I was also alerted to an idea that the ceramics are viewed as a whole made up of many assembled parts, just as, for example, a community of people is made up of individuals with specific character traits. A focus on looking at a makeup of many parts within a composite whole potentially opens up avenues for exploring and recognising differences within the assemblage as resulting from individuality that each and every potter could bring to works on hand.

Recurring words like "fragmentary" and "broken" can be read literally, or as alluding in general to fragmentary and momentary views into ceramics praxis potentially offered by the sherds. Words such as fragmentary and broken also indicate a lack of wholeness, pointing towards an idea that value may be placed on wholeness, both in past and present times. Furthermore, the fragmentary nature of this assemblage begs a question of whether



Fig 119 (a): **Kulubele** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2000 [left] and 2001 [right], courtesy of Albany Museum).

these artefacts broke during ordinary daily use, or whether/what other circumstances contributed to such breakage.

Binneman's use of phrases "neck/shoulder junction"; "shoulder and body decoration"; "decorated on the rim and occasionally on the lip and the inside of the rim" (rim and lip are closely associated) also bear further attention. That these phrases are used in conjunction with others such as "decorated body fragments", and "incisions range from heavy deep, rough ... to carefully executed, shallow" allude to familiar parts of, and interactions with, the human body. Likewise, phrases such as "heavy deep, rough ... to carefully executed" suggest power utilised firmly or gently, certainly always controlled because otherwise the artefact would be irrevocably mutilated or destroyed. Furthermore, the word "incisions" can be thought of as alluding to cutting of human flesh, as in a controlled creation of wounds for purposes of personal adornment evidenced by cicatrisation practices.

This leads on to a thought that the word incisions is really far more appropriate than decoration when used to describe these engravings, especially considering that decoration evokes an idea of embellishment upon, or adjunct to. The word incisions seems to evoke a truer image of integration with the form, rather than that these engravings are an addendum to a vessel, especially considering such incisions as "executed" while the clay is still quite damp and thus impressionable. Consequently, I have used the word *engraving* throughout, and also use the phrase *clay body incision/s*, except where *decoration* appears in a direct quotation.

Human body allusions are emphasised by Binneman's use of the word "vessel". This word, apart from generating ideas of container and sustenance, carries associations of the human body

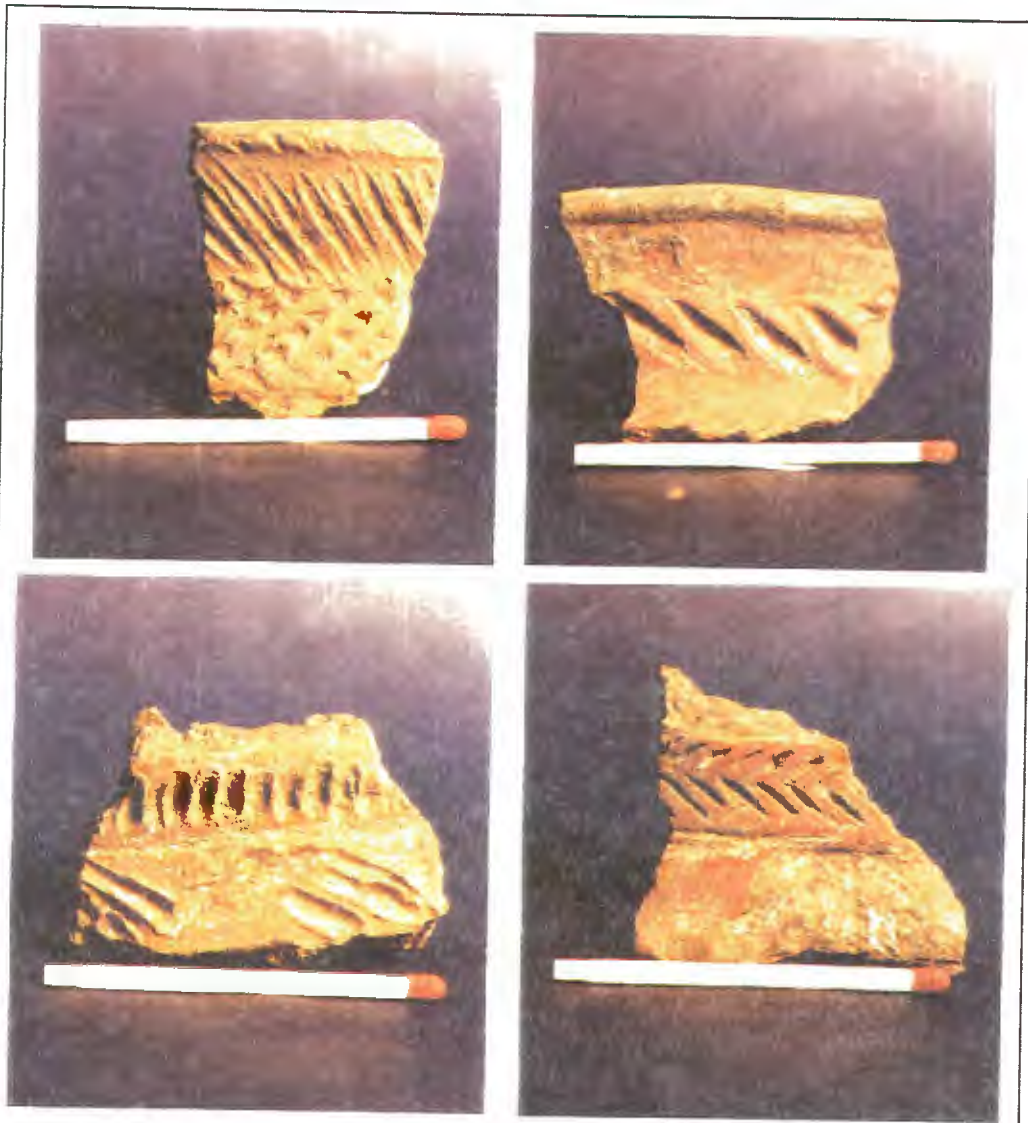


Fig 119 (b): **Kulubele** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

as receptacle¹⁵², not only of blood and other internal goods, but also of such feelings as pleasure and pain, and energy or life force. Ways in which a ceramic form can be conceptualised in terms of a human body are so familiar in common parlance¹⁵³ that it is hardly noticed. Moreover, some researchers have noted that there seems to be evidence that suggests prehistoric potters may well have brought similar perceptions to bear on both the creative act and to subsequent ceramics use values.

David et al (1988: 366), for instance, have observed that

pots share with persons the characteristic of owing their existence to having been irreversibly transformed, by fire and enculturation respectively ... We hypothesise that humans, recognising the fundamental similarity with regard to transformation¹⁵⁴... therefore extend to pottery certain of the concepts regarding and treatment accorded to the person. (My footnote).

Thus, clay surface treatment (including incisions, hole making, colour addition, burnishing, impressing and applied motifs) is viewed as being in some ways homologous to adornment of the human form. The authors, however, caution that they “do not suggest that the only reason that pots are decorated is that [pots] and human bodies are perceived as alike”. Nonetheless, David et al (1998: 366) proposed that a comparison of techniques and motifs used on people and pots is, however, an “effective initial tactic” towards exploring some reasons for differing surface treatments of ceramics.

¹⁵² The saying, for example, ‘empty vessels make the most noise’ refers to people who babble on inconsequentially in conversation, demanding attention in excess of the substance of what is being said.

¹⁵³ As a potter I also often find myself talking of the ‘foot’, or ‘belly’, ‘inside/outside’, or ‘top/bottom’ of a vessel, and refer to different types of raw clay that are used in the studio as the ‘clay body’. Daniel Rhodes (1976), in *Pottery Form* for example, also discussed shape throughout in terms of body parts, complete with occasional photographs.

¹⁵⁴ David et al (1988: 366) theorised that “pots were indeed the first, and in many parts of the world for millennia the only, artefacts to have been produced by transformation rather than mere modification of raw materials”.



Fig 119 (c): **Kulubele** potsherds (Photos: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Furthermore, in an ethnographic study between the **Mafa** and **Bulahay** of northern Cameroon, interconnectedness between clay surface treatment and symbolic frameworks embedded in social intercourse and ways of thinking was thought to be present. David et al (1988: 365) found that

Much [vessel] decoration protects against fate and more generally serves as insulation against the dangers inherent in power, whether the source is exterior to the pot or emanates from a spirit held within it. [The authors also found that] specific decorative motifs represent cosmological and religious concepts, and similar patterns of decoration on different pot types express coherent underlying perceptions.

Communication by means of style is such a distinct possibility that focus of study falls on "the content of the messages" rather than on whether or not a message is there to be read.

Other questions asked of **Mafa** and **Bulahay** ceramic style by David et al (1988: 365) include "how and in what aspects of the material the information is encoded, who is transmitting to whom, whether consciously or unconsciously, and who is reading the messages". These questions offer insight into a variety of intended and subliminal communications that may be embedded and expected to arise as a result of a potter's deft treatment of both form and surface at the time of making and firing of such an object.

So as to explore these ideas David et al (1988: 369, 377) teased out a threefold classification of **Mafa** and **Bulahay** ceramics. These related "primarily to the *utilitarian* [domestic ceramics], *social* [ceramics associated with a specific gendered activity], or *ideological* [ceramics that actually represent or are believed actually to contain spirits] spheres (my emphasis) [figs 120 overleaf, and 121 opposite page 108]. Categories of coeval human and clay body decoration are suggested to include "oiling

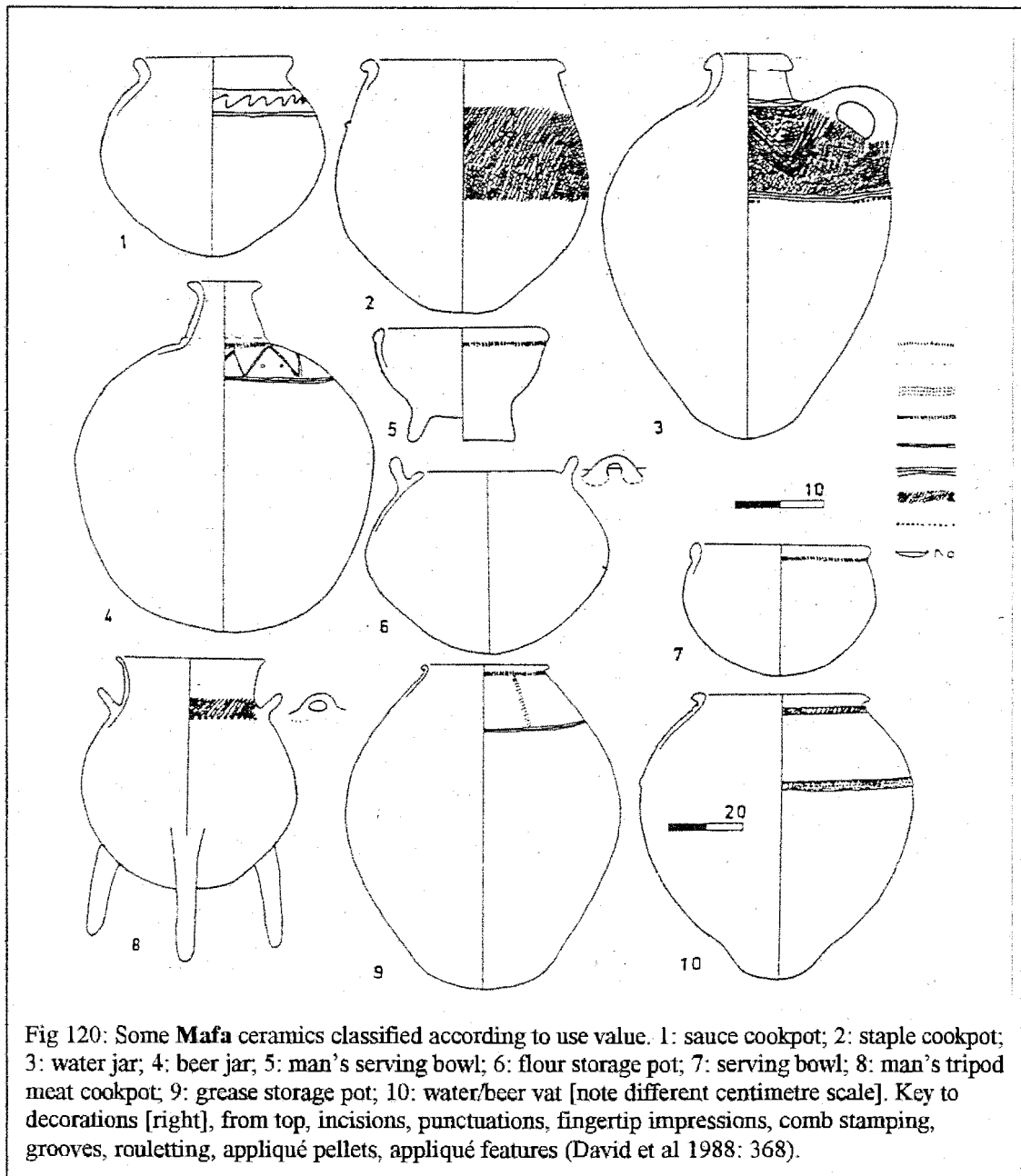


Fig 120: Some **Mafa** ceramics classified according to use value. 1: sauce cookpot; 2: staple cookpot; 3: water jar; 4: beer jar; 5: man's serving bowl; 6: flour storage pot; 7: serving bowl; 8: man's tripod meat cookpot; 9: grease storage pot; 10: water/beer vat [note different centimetre scale]. Key to decorations [right], from top, incisions, punctuations, fingertip impressions, comb stamping, grooves, rouletting, appliqué pellets, appliqué features (David et al 1988: 368).

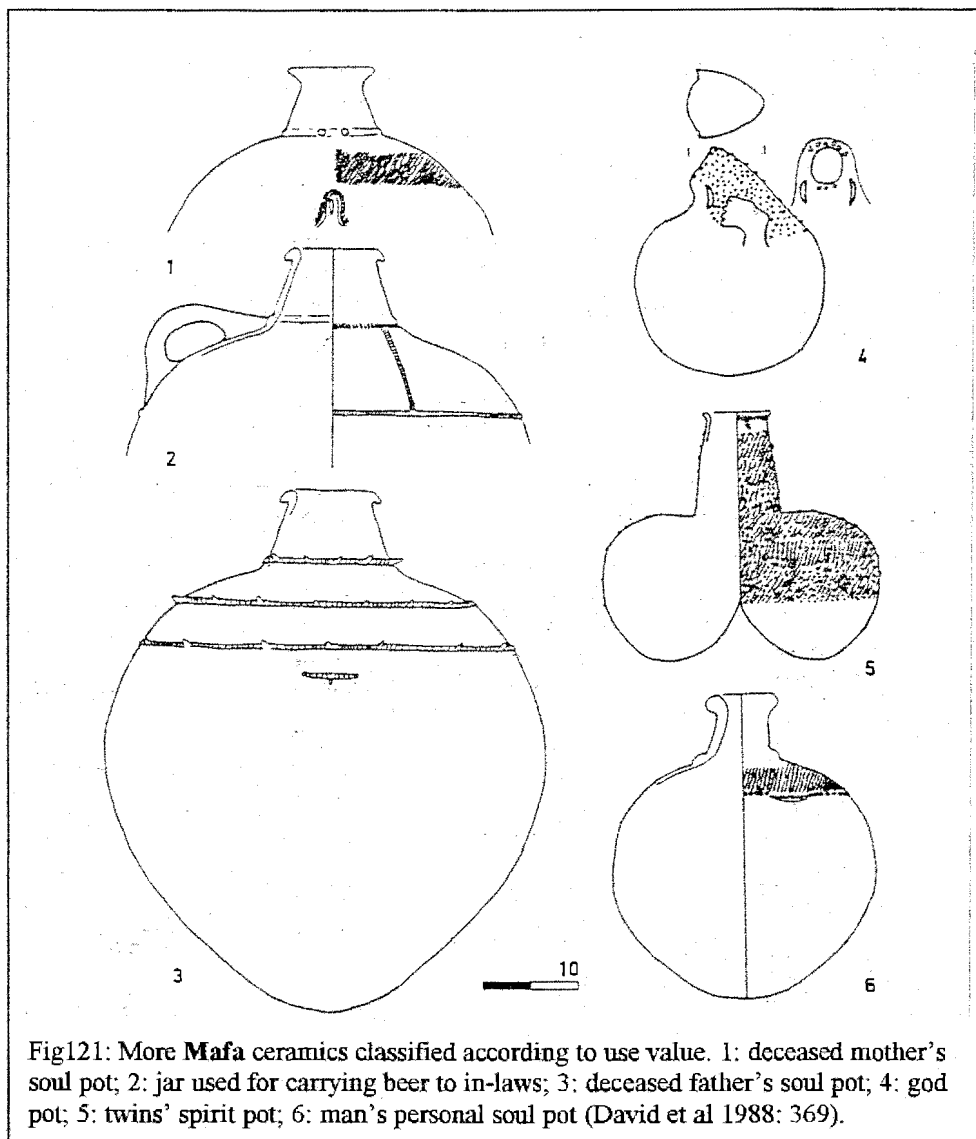
of the body on public occasions", meaningful use of colour, "scarification of the body, piercing of holes to receive various ornaments, [and banding] some part of the body"¹⁵⁵. The authors noted, however, that

decoration has multiple functions [and that] while the metaphor of the body and its adornment is the original and most fertile source of inspiration for pottery decoration, it is not the only one ... some decoration is surely *aesthetic play*. (My emphasis).

Nigel Barley (1988: 379) has added that designs which "link pots and human bodies do not have to 'mean' anything. The mere fact that they are shared can serve as a conceptual binder". Furthermore, R. Bedaux (1988: 379) has suggested that "pottery may have symbolic functions, but these functions depend on the context of use and are generally polysemic". He also offered a fundamental observation that "decoration on pottery need not always have symbolic implications". He added that some forms of surface treatment may well have been "used as potters marks [a symbolic notation], making it possible to distinguish the vessels of different potters when they are baked together in one hole".

The foregoing quite extensive look at ideas about possible ceramic form and surface treatment significances accorded to **Mafa** ceramics has bearing on an analysis of the **Kulubele** assemblage by virtue of some similarities in construction technique, form, and even clay surface treatment method and motifs employed. But, before adopting such a conceptual framework as appropriate for **Kulubele** ceramics, recognition should be given to a possible objection that half the continent of Africa separates the Cameroon and Eastern Cape. There is also a

¹⁵⁵ For the specific ethnographic analysis of ceramic/human body surface treatment correlations and possible symbolism see David et al (1988: 371-377).



not inconsequential matter of an elapse of more than a millennium in time between the consciousness and social culture of the potters of **Kulubele** and those of **Mafa** and **Bulahay**, which also precludes an extended classification of Kulubele ceramics by means of use value.

Furthermore, it is simply just not possible to know about First-Millennium Agriculturist human body skin surface adornment practices. Alan Morris (1998: 180) has reported that in South Africa “nearly 20 skeletons have been excavated from Early Iron Age [F-MA] archaeological contexts”. Upon enquiry as to whether any of these remains showed signs of scarification Morris replied (e-mail: 14/7/2000) “no way could I see these features on bone. We would need to have soft tissue preserved”. Thus, by virtue of the time lapse and lack of intact preservation of human remains the question of whether or not personal cicatrization and piercing was practiced at **Kulubele** on a regular basis is likely to remain a mystery unless a representative series of mummified remains are discovered.

These objections do, however, not necessarily nullify the value of David et al’s demonstration of similarities in the treatment of pots and human bodies in the Cameroon despite that seeming continuities of practice may not necessarily indicate continuities in perceptions of meaning embedded in such practices. Significance is likely to be mutable and renegotiated over time, and thus specific one to one attributions of particular present day meanings to similar design elements from the past, no matter how tempting, should probably be avoided. Value of investigations into specific iconographic meaning in the ethnographic present is, however, not negated. Such ethnoarchaeological studies do provide valuable clues as to possibilities of meaning and ways of thinking that help find “women and men interacting and /or

reacting to one another in prehistory" (Kent 1998: 12), provided that meaning is allowed flexibility through time. Thus, it can be said that there may have been similarities in the way in which **Kulubele** peoples perceived and treated pots and human bodies when compared with **Mafa** practices in the ethnographic present.

In discussing the "use and abuse of ... ethnographic analogy" Paul Lane (1994-95: 51) has noted, "It is now generally acknowledged that the use of analogical reasoning in the discipline [of archaeological interpretation] is inescapable (e.g. Hodder 1982(c), Wylie 1985)"¹⁵⁶. As a means towards clarifying an approach for looking at **Kulubele** ceramics it is useful to be aware of a distinction that Lane (1994-95: 51, 52) makes between formal analogies and relational analogies. "A common criticism of formal analogies is that the observed resemblances between source and subject could be entirely fortuitous". On the other hand "relational analogies attempt to ... establish relevance ... by demonstration of cross-cultural uniformities or structural parallels; the presence of shared operational, ecological or technological constraints; and evidence of historical or cultural continuities between the source and subject sides of the analogy".

Thus, cultural continuities between communities and practices in the ethnographic present and those of the First-Millennium Agriculturist past should not be taken for granted, and if such continuities are suggested a broad spectrum of relational analogies should accompany the proposal. Lane (1994-95: 61)

¹⁵⁶ Briefly looking at a history of recent usage of ethnographic analogy Lane (1994-95: 51) observed that "the use of ethnographic analogy has been a fundamental component of archaeological ... reconstruction since the seventeenth century (Orme 1974)". Such early usage has "undergone a period of critique and revision ... e.g. Binford 1967; Freeman 1968; Gould 1980; Gould and Watson 1982".

articulates a further problem affecting First and Second-Millennium Precolonial Agriculturist studies in Southern Africa as an "assumption that certain social institutions and practices ... are, in some sense, primordial".

These observations having been made, it remains useful to look at suggested correlations of iconography and meaning in the historic era as indicators of possibilities that may have a bearing on First-Millennium Agriculturist thought. Thus, provided that ideas of continuity and primordality are approached critically, at least some possibilities for extrapolation of thought processes as may have been articulated in **Kulubele** ceramic style emerge.

Interestingly, Evers and Huffman (1988: 739) asserted that in the ethnographic present "a conceptual identification between pots and people similar to what David ... [et al] describe ... is found among Bantu speakers in southern Africa". The authors cite various examples wherein pots, amongst Karanga-speakers in Zimbabwe, for instance,

are important symbols of the relationship between husband and wife¹⁵⁷ ... most pots symbolise women and, more specifically, the womb¹⁵⁸ ... stages of pottery manufacture illustrate the nature of [a] relationship [between pots and womanhood]¹⁵⁹. The association between food [and pots] and sex [is exemplified in] a small bowl called *hadyana*. It is used to serve relish, the

¹⁵⁷ "The way a husband handles his wife's pots reflects his attitude towards her ... and she can stop his conjugal rights by placing a pot upside down" (Evers and Huffman 1988: 739).

¹⁵⁸ Evers and Huffman (1988: 739) cited Aschwanden 1982 on this point.

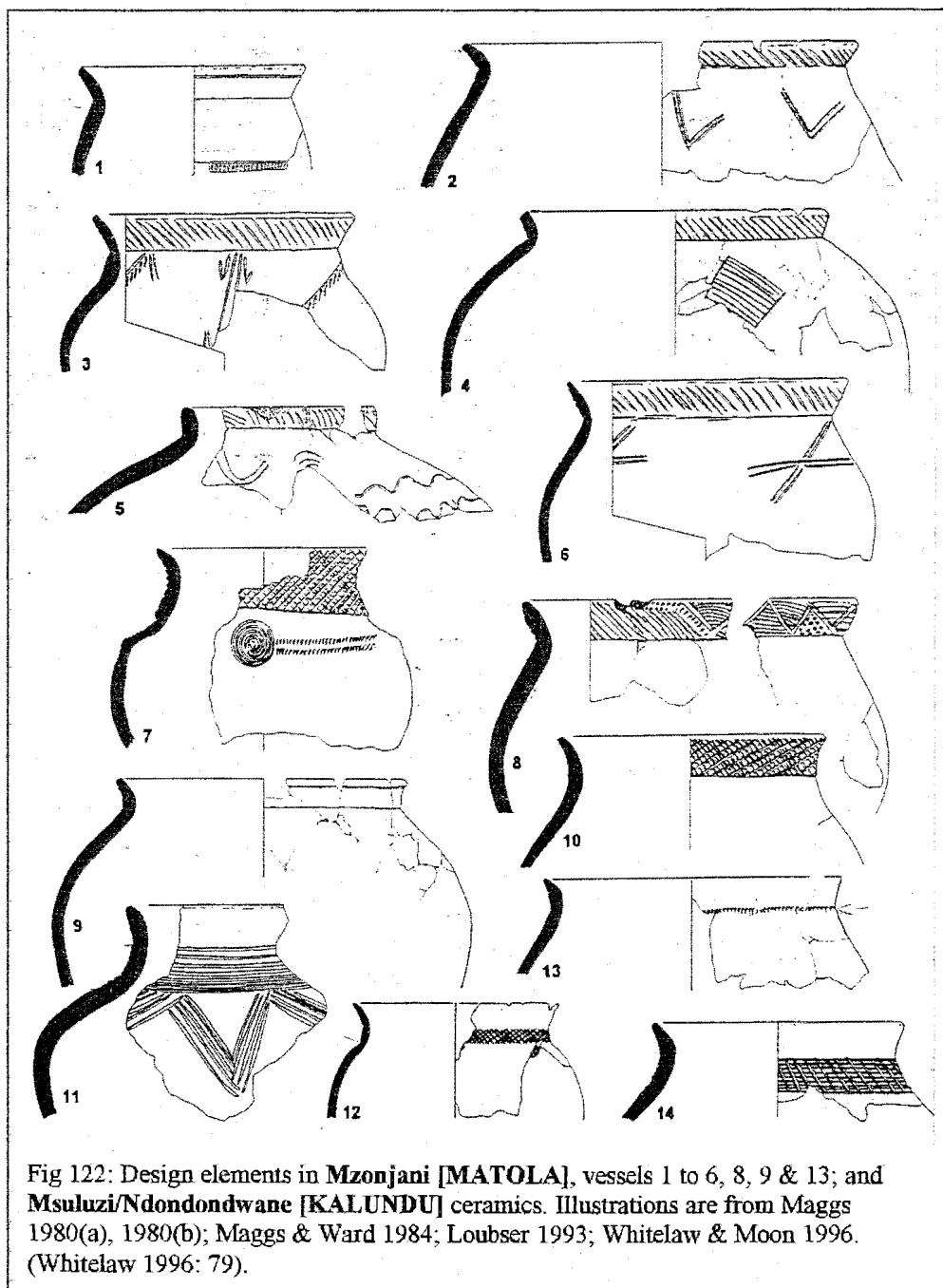
¹⁵⁹ The authors suggested that to Karanga speakers in Zimbabwe a pot, before firing, is compared to a girl before puberty. If a young girl should walk where pot clay is dug up or touch an unfired pot, the force within her that will someday cause her first menstruation ... would cause the pot to crack. For similar reasons a mature woman will not make a pot while menstruating. A pot being fired is like a girl entering puberty, and if a man were to be present the 'heat' of the uterus-jar would be transferred to him and he would 'boil over', losing his virility. Similarly, a man should not be the first person to eat from a newly fired pot" (Evers and Huffman 1988: 739).

things people like to eat best, and so stands for intercourse. A larger vessel called *rongo* ... symbolises fertility, and a young bride should take a new one to her husband's home to signify the transfer of her fertility to his group. As David et al found with pots in the Cameroon, the *rongo* is decorated with designs that are also found on the human body or that represent articles of clothing¹⁶⁰. (My footnotes).

That such metaphorical correlations can be found, sometimes even associated with specific taboos, possibly indicates that symbolic frames of reference may also have been operative amongst First-Millennium Agriculturists. Evers and Huffman (1988: 739, 740), however, cautioned that "most ceramic decoration, in contrast to the motifs representing animals, bodily decoration, or parts of the anatomy, is said to be without meaning ... we do not know how strong the correlation between certain motifs and meaning is in southern Africa".

Zanoxolo Gitywa (1970: 55, 68) has graphically illustrated that wariness towards attributing meaning where those specific meanings may not reside is appropriate. This writer observed that in the making of Xhosa beadwork, for instance, the maker "expresses herself in the pattern, form and colour ... which *must be pleasing to her* to make it a worthy present to pass on to a loved one" (my emphasis). Thus there is an emphasis on individual design choice, albeit within "the limits of traditional acceptance".

¹⁶⁰ Evers and Huffman (1988: 739) observed that "a triangle of punctates on the shoulder is equivalent to the cicatrization marks on a woman's abdomen, and a narrow band of oblique hatching or crosshatching (or something similar) at the neck/shoulder junction represents the beaded belt a woman wears around her waist to protect her fertility" (citing Aquina 1968).



Gitywa (1970: 55) has also noted that “unlike among the Zulu ... the beadwork exchanged in the love life of the Xhosa has no coded messages”, thus indicating dramatic differences in design field interpretation practices amongst Nguni speakers. This observation further exemplifies a potential pitfall of careless extrapolation, even in the ethnographic present, never mind for the distant First-Millennium Agriculturist past.

Yet, Martin Hall (1987: 7) pointed out that “in addition to design placement, the *actual motifs* employed may have a far greater significance than has yet been acknowledged”. Both **Matola** and **Kalundu** ceramics are based on similar shapes, scale, and iconographic programs, just expressed in different configurations [fig 122]. In an effort to find significances it is tempting to try and decipher what the specific design components may have meant. In a recent conference paper entitled “Pots that talk” by Dieter Reusch (1999: 4, 5), for instance, it was suggested that triangles, in specific contexts within Zulu culture, “pointing downward are male symbols, and a diamond motif might suggest that a pot is reserved for married women”¹⁶¹. Yet, Reusch found that “according to Wickler & Seibt (1990: 82-83) “a triangle pointing downward symbolises females”¹⁶².

That diametrically opposite findings emerge from the same culture in the ethnographic present shows that motif meaning may indeed be very subjective. Yet it is likely that specific

¹⁶¹ Reusch cited Schoeman & Mertens (1975: 105).

¹⁶² Evers & Huffman (1988: 740) found meanings embedded in a design field among urban Sotho-speaking Pedi people. Here the vortex of a chevron or triangular motif may mimic “the triangular tips of a [woman’s] rear skirt ... Other designs include the moon, associated with menstruation and fertility, snails, also associated with fertility, and trees, associated with, among other things, shade”. These authors noted that many of the designs here are concerned with ‘cooling’ the ‘heat’ produced by fertile women”.



Fig 123: **Kulubele** engraved grooves often lap into neighbouring zones (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 124: Vigour in execution is evidenced by depth of **Kulubele** engravings (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

design components on pots carried specific meanings. Furthermore, that those specific meanings embedded in a vessel design field may well remain a mystery is just so, and is one of the sources of pleasure to be derived from these works.

The **Kulubele** ceramic assemblage was only a part of the overall symbolic order of that time, part of a structure that produced “not rules but dispositions, and underlie not determinacy but strategy” (Miller 1995: 103) within a dynamic society. Yet, despite being an integral part of this symbolic order, elements within the assemblage may also evidence playfulness by one or more potters, signs of a search for pleasing pattern and form perhaps. Design playfulness in the **Kulubele** assemblage cannot be ruled out, partly because the engravings are fresh and vigorous [figs 123, 124]. Engraved grooves do not seem intensely belaboured, are frequently not equidistant from each other [Fig 125], and often lap into a neighbouring zone or alternating design segment.

Engraved elements often meet up unevenly, despite that

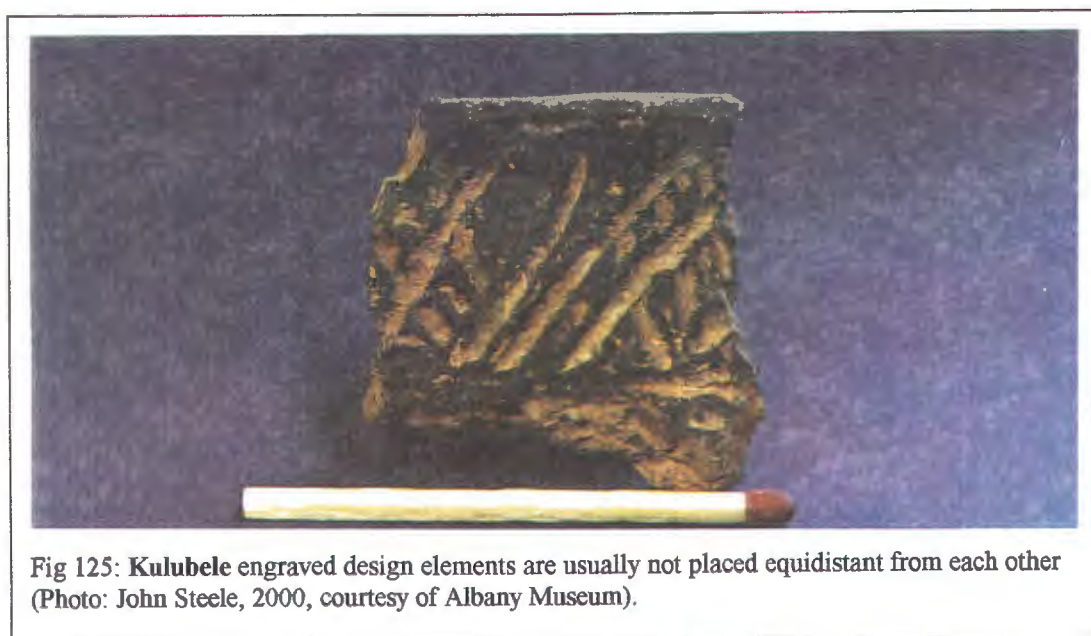


Fig 125: **Kulubele** engraved design elements are usually not placed equidistant from each other (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 126: **Kulubele** engravings foreground an overall geometric essence (Photos: John Steele, 1999 and 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

equidistance could have easily been attained by virtue of linearity and geometric essence [fig 126] characteristic to such formats. Vigour in execution gives the impression of confidence and pleasure in a creative act rather than of inexperience, or tentativeness. The depth of grooves, which seem to have been rapidly incised, affirms this impression.

At **Kulubele**, within a framework that may have corresponded with Gitywa's (1970: 55) idea of being within "limits of ... acceptance", focus was placed on repetition and juxtaposition of motifs [figs 127 and 128], be those herringbone, triangular, crosshatched, parallel independent incisions, or punctates.

Combinations of these engraved design elements were most





Fig 129: **Kulubele** engravings were sometimes placed both outside [above] and inside the neck of the same vessel (Photos: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

frequently banded about the vessel neck exterior, although they do sometimes appear on a vessel interior [fig 129], infrequently on the lip [fig 130], and on rare occasions drop down from a banded area of the neck onto the belly [fig 131, overleaf]. Such an eclectic combination of engraved strokes indicate a dynamic relationship between potters and soft clay surfaces, a relationship in which, perhaps, the creative act itself was foregrounded, rather than severe precision of message or engraved design field.

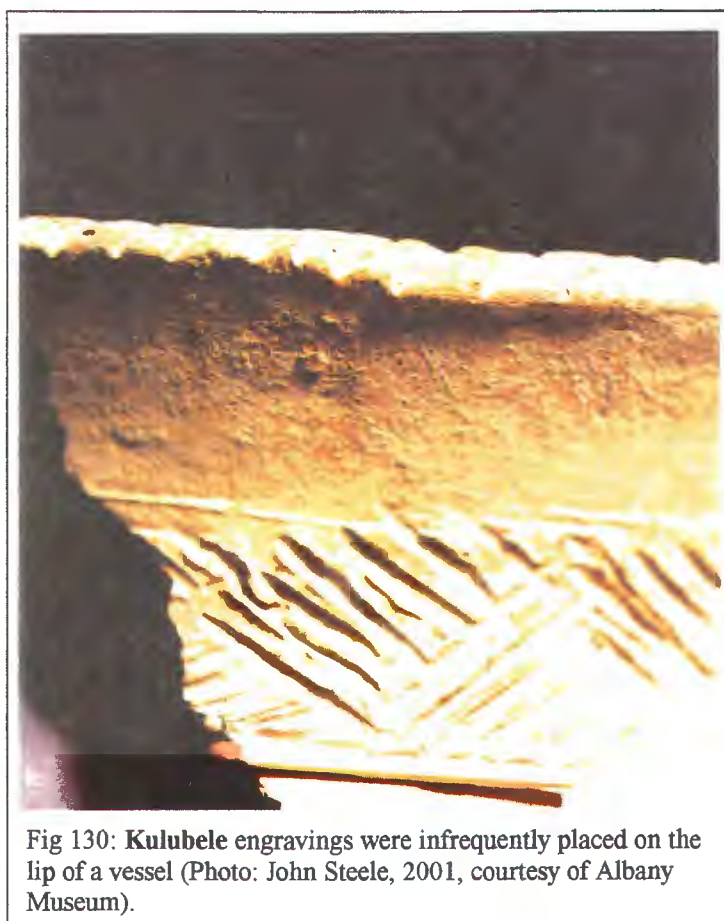


Fig 130: Kulubele engravings were infrequently placed on the lip of a vessel (Photo: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

It is also noteworthy that open bowls [fig 132, overleaf] are the only vessel form not to have been regularly engraved. In an attempt to come to an appreciation of why a potter may have chosen to incise the clay surface of a vessel, or leave the vessel plain, it is useful to return to the idea that some aspects of ceramic style may have facilitated articulation of social boundaries in the past.



Fig 131: On rare occasions **Kulubele** engravings drop down from a banded area of the neck onto the belly of a vessel (Photos: John Steele, 2001 [above], and 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

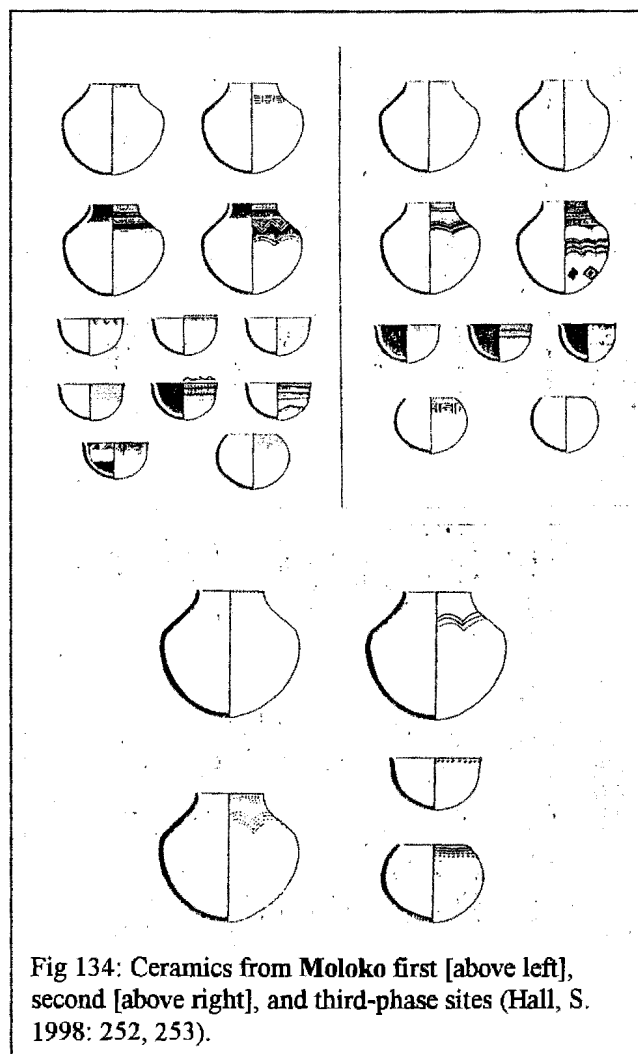
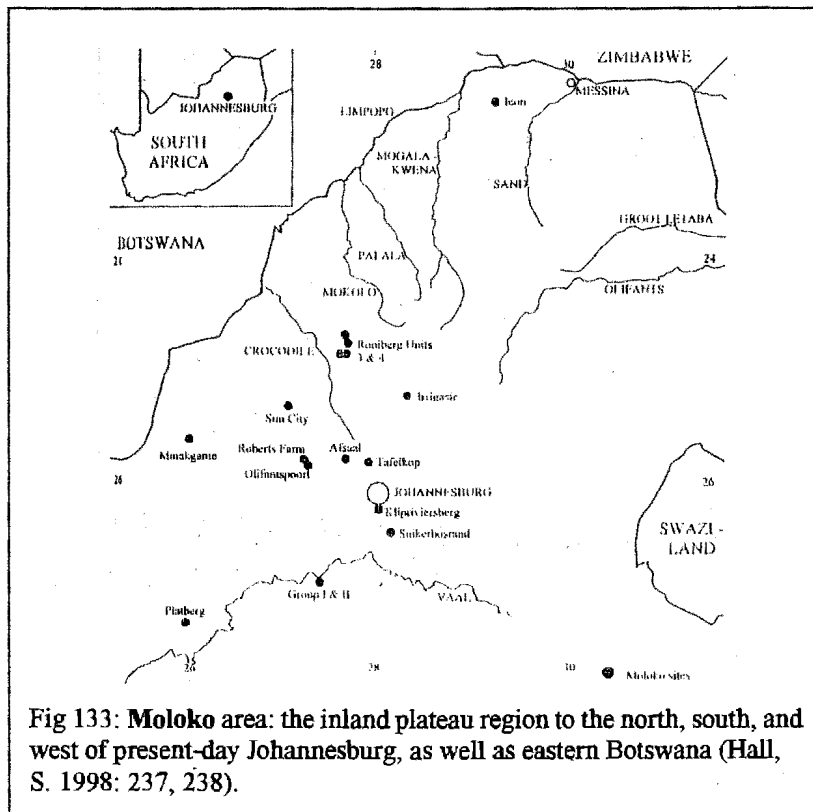


Fig 132: Unengraved Kulubele open bowl rimsherd (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Simon Hall (1998:249, 250) cited Braithwaite (1982) as having shown

that pottery used in spaces where men and women interact tends to be decorated, while vessels that are used in private contexts are not. She suggests that decoration ‘functions’ as a low-key ritual and symbolic marker in contexts where breaches in the social order do, or potentially can, occur ... In general, elaborate decoration correlates with high vessel visibility because it communicates information about social categories, roles, and status”.

To illustrate this point he documented engravings on **Moloko** ceramics spanning the Sotho/Tswana sequence in the Western Highveld of South Africa between the AD 1400 to 1700 first and second phases, and post AD 1700 third phase.



Simon Hall (1998: 236, 249) found that the extent of **Moloko** [fig 133] clay body incisions and other surface treatments decreased with the passing of time [fig 134]. He suggested that

in the relative intimacy of first phase settlements¹⁶³, symbolic boundaries assume more importance than in third-phase settlements, where physical boundaries controlled, directed, and regulated encounters between men and women. Vessel visibility is high in the first phase, but with spatial segmentation in the third phase, vessel visibility declines. (My footnote).

This explanation may also partly account for a similar decrease in engraving visibility that occurs when considering changes in the **Msuluzi** to **Ntshekane** assemblages. There is also a dramatic change in shape from everted neck to inward sloping neck in these assemblages, a probable indicator of 'new' people arriving in the region, and/or some or other significant renegotiation of use value and/or social boundaries.

Such shifts in engraving visibility and in shape hint at wide-ranging symbolic roles for ceramics, amongst other functions, as boundary marker, within both an intimate domestic sphere and the community, and between surrounding villages. It is thus significant that the **Kulubele** assemblage as a whole gives an impression of sustained high engraving visibility. This suggests a possibility that ritual and/or domestic activities such as cooking and eating may have taken place within a relatively confined space, an intimacy characteristic of first-phase settlements.

Further archaeological evidence that is fundamental to glimpses of a First-Millennium Agriculturist past at **Kulubele** are the iron-working remains:

¹⁶³ An extensive review of spatial expression of boundaries evident in settlement pattern for this region is to be found in Hall, S. (1998: 238-248). In putting this review together he cited Hall, S. 1981, 1985; Hanisch 1979; Lathey 1995; and Taylor 1979.



Fig 135: Slag from **Kulubele** (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 136: Clay tuyère similar to those that would have been used at **Kulubele** (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

The relatively large quantities of slag¹⁶⁴ [fig 135] and tuyère¹⁶⁵ [fig 136] fragments in the midden excavation indicate that iron-working activities were commonly practiced at Kulubele. The slag consists mainly of small pieces but the occasional fist-size piece was found. Only a few pieces of heavy, dark coloured ore [fig 137, overleaf] were recovered ... Iron artefacts from the midden excavation include ... iron beads and a small flat point (Binneman 1996(a): 31) [fig 138 (a), overleaf]. (My footnotes and figs.)

I am intrigued by congruencies in metalworking and clayworking practices, and also by use of clay in furnace and tuyère construction. Both metalworkers and potters developed form from earthy raw materials, which were then transformed utilising the power of fire prior to domestic and other use. The symbiotic relationship between people, earthy materials and fire must have been dynamic and profound indeed, especially considering a possible association with procreation that both pot making and smelting/smithing processes may have embodied.

Moreover, Rachel MacLean (1998: 173) has postulated that the three processes of iron smelting, procreation, and pot cooking represent the transformation of *natural products*, stone/ore, blood and semen,

¹⁶⁴ Refuse separated from a metal in the process of smelting.

¹⁶⁵ The clay nozzle through which air is blasted into the forge or furnace, probably utilising bellows made from a whole animal (perhaps approximately the size of a goat) skin.

Van Schalkwyk (1994(b): 135), in a study of clay tuyère pieces excavated at **Mamba 1** in KwaZulu-Natal, has observed that "it appears that the tuyères were proximally flared and tapered towards their distal ends with a constricting bore". He also noted that "much of the length of the tuyère lay in, or close to, the actual furnace charcoal-bed ... [and] it appears that tuyères were discarded after each smelt". Furthermore, some insight into manufacturing techniques was offered by "the presence of striations, and leaf node impressions along the bore of the tuyère pieces [that] suggested they were individually moulded around a scraped stick. It is assumed that these were then left to dry before being fired, in the same manner as clay pots were dried and fired". The fact that tuyère pieces excavated at **Msuluzi Confluence** were apparently also "fired before use" (Maggs 1980(b): 132-133) suggests that this was not an isolated approach, and could probably be thought of as a practice adopted at **Kulubele** as well. See Friede and Steel 1977 for a replication study.



Fig 137: Iron ore and a block of fired clay furnace wall [neither artefact is from **Kulubele**], on display at the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

plants and animals, into *cultural products*, iron, a child, cooked food, and are linked through their fundamental nature of irreversibility and by the use of heat as a primary force in the effecting of the transformation. The cooking pot is seen as analogous to both the furnace and the womb or body of a fertile woman.

Such observations, while not necessarily wholly rooted in archaeologically evidenced fact, nonetheless facilitate ways of possibly conceptualising some deep past thought processes and symbolic frameworks.

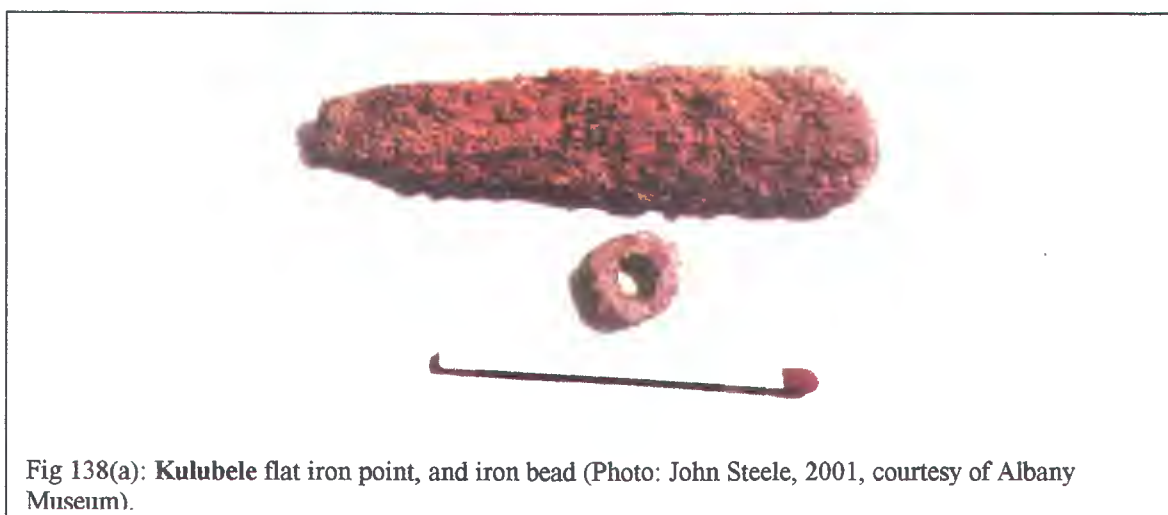


Fig 138(a): Kulubele flat iron point, and iron bead (Photo: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

A degree of speculation is inevitable, especially considering that artefacts are not isolated 'trophies' from the past carrying fixed meanings at the time of creation, or into present time. The ceramics, and other objects of material culture, were created within a community, wherein that social context and shifting concomitant symbolic framework contributed significantly to meaning and use value. Indeed, Martin Hall (1987: 8) has suggested that systems "of signification through ceramic design would be precisely analogous to, and to a large degree contemporary with, the system of signification through rock art". Such an analogy is possible because, to rephrase Anne Solomon (1999: 55), the arts of painting and ceramics were an integral part of those respective people's cosmology and environment.



Fig 138 (b): Creative individuality is observable throughout the various assemblages discussed. Differences in motif and engraving style are evident if these two **Msuluzi** ceramic era utility vessels from **Nanda** are compared, despite that they both feature everted necks and engravings dropped down towards the belly. The vessel section [above] has a height of 210mm; diameter at belly 235mm; thickness at lip 7mm; thickness at belly 11mm. The more intact vessel has a height of 320mm; diameter at lip 213mm; diameter at belly 320mm; thickness at lip 12mm; thickness at belly 11mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

Thus, metaphysical and physical milieus may have been accorded equal importance as part of a driving force motivating daily lifeways. Vessel form and clay body incisions should be regarded as exhibiting multitextual use values, much of the potency of which was originated by potters at the moment of investing their knowledge in creating vessels engraved with eloquent symbols.

Patterns of clayworking knowledge acquisition in First-Millennium Agriculturist societies are not known, but it can be assumed that knowledge of raw materials, processing and construction practices, firing techniques, and post-firing treatment of the medium would have been passed down from generation to generation. Likewise, specific lore, and taboos, may well have been learned as part of activities in which individual people [fig 138 (b)] engaged in clayworking as only one of many tasks in any particular day.

The prodigious knowledge required for successful technological choice making should not be underestimated just because of the probably informal nature of this skills acquisition process, nor because this process was possibly integrated into daily, or seasonal, lifeways. For instance, raw clay, while being in abundant supply in southern Africa, varies considerably in quality and consistency. **Kulubele** potters would have had to be aware of "factors that affect the qualities of clays such as mineral composition, degree of crystallinity, plasticity, particle size, and the amount of soluble salts, exchangeable cations and non-plastics present" (Arnold 1985: 21)¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁶ Arnold (1985: 20-32); Searle & Grimshaw (1960: 273-882); and Singer & Singer (1963: 3-524), can be consulted for in depth analyses of these and other factors influencing the composition and performance of clays.

Furthermore, clay preparation in itself was likely to have been a finely tuned procedure whereby foreign matter would have been removed from the raw material, any additives for strength or workability included, and then this clay body would have needed to be pounded and kneaded into a workable consistency. Such a workable consistency required just the right amount of water for the clay to be malleable, yet not so much as to render it too soft for construction purposes. Even if the clay consistency was optimal for those **Kulubele** potters, the process of vessel fashioning by hand¹⁶⁷ (rather than with hands and a potter's wheel) was in itself fraught with "a series of difficulties. Vessel walls get out of shape, pressures exerted are either too weak or too strong, parts of the profile disjoint, the final shape of the vessels remains irregular, and so on" (Gosselain: 1998: 94).

Effects of the weather on the behaviour of clay would also have had to be taken into account by **Kulubele** potters. As noted by Arnold (1985: 62):

lack of careful attention to drying can produce disastrous results. If the drying process is too rapid, strains may develop which may cause cracking because of uneven drying or excessive shrinkage (Palmer 1968: 75). Drying pottery in the sun or wind without turning the vessels can also cause uneven drying with potentially similar results such as warping and cracking (Lackey 1982: 110).

¹⁶⁷ With regard to vessel construction procedure it is interesting to note that Maggs & Michael (1976: 718) specifically mention that "no [pots with] flat bases" were found at **Ntshekane**, and Gavin Whitelaw has extended this observation by commenting that he has "yet to see a flat bottomed vessel from any First-Millennium Agriculturist assemblage" (personal comment, 2000). Characteristically rounded bases suggest that these vessels may have been made upside down, starting with the lip and working additively upwards towards the base, final closure thereof being easily accomplished with a plug of clay smoothed off later when the interior of that vessel was attended to. Larger vessels may have been made in two or more parts that were later joined near the belly once the sections had hardened sufficiently to be handled without distorting the shape. This suggestion is borne out by observable thickening in part of the belly region of some vessels, such thickening being congruent with that expected of a joining process other than 'normal' additions of clay sections or coils.

Inadequate drying, on the other hand, may affect firing success because the water trapped in the clay may cause cracking and breakage because of excessive shrinkage or the formation of steam (Curtis 1962: 493).

And, as if the foregoing technological intricacies of clayworking are not problematic enough, the firing process itself was perhaps the most potentially difficult of all. It is not known exactly how **Kulubele** potters proceeded with firing their works, other than that these ceramics do not seem to have had the benefit of specially built kilns that allowed for precise temperature control¹⁶⁸.

The ceramics were most likely to have been fired in the open, perhaps utilising a hollow in the ground, the works to be fired having been placed within and above mounds of fuel such as sticks, dung, or whatever combustible material was the custom, and fired bonfire style. Losses would have occurred if the thermal shocks of rapid heating and cooling were too great a strain for the clay body to bear. For instance, a sudden stiff breeze fanning the flames, or an unexpected downpour of rain during firing would have adversely affected results given that clay is notorious for cracking as a response to sudden thermal shock.

Furthermore, such technical considerations as were engaged in by individual **Kulubele** potters "constitute culturally grounded systems in which the choice of ... raw materials, tools, and

¹⁶⁸ No remains approximating an above ground level specifically built kiln for firing ceramics has been reported in any of the First-Millennium Agriculturist literature that I am aware of. Themba Nogwaza (1994:104) did, however, mention a First-Millennium Agriculturist "possible site for firing" at **Canasta Place**. On the occasion of a visit, (September 2000), this possible firing site was pointed out by Mrs Horrman, and can be described as a series of shallow hollows in the earth, each approximately a metre in diameter.



Fig 138(c): **Kulubele** rimsherd with parallel engravings (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

processing modes does not merely relate to natural pressures, but also symbolic, religious, economic, and political ones" (Gosselain 1998: 78). Ceramic artefacts [fig 138(c)] should thus be regarded as "full-of-meaning objects, part of the way in which people made sense of and organised their lives" (Dobres 1992:18), rather than as merely representative of a particular skill developed by First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples.

There is no particular reason to discount a possibility that some 'full-of-meaning' artefacts within the **Kulubele** ceramics assemblage may have been intended as mediating agents between the metaphysical [ancestor] realm and the physical realm of daily life as lived, particularly on transformative occasions such as birth and death. A look at ceramics as an agent conjoining physical and metaphysical realms is undertaken in the next chapter.



Fig 139: **Kulubele**: foetus/infant burial in/with a vessel [view from above] (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Chapter 5

DELIBERATELY BURIED CERAMICS: ARTICULATED EXPERIENCES OF DEATH AND TRANSFORMATION

Specific rituals seem to be practiced by most peoples particularly at transition phases in life, such as change from puberty to adulthood, and at times of birth and death. The as yet unpublished recent recovery by Johan Binneman of a foetus, or infant¹⁶⁹, buried in a pot [figs 139, and 140 overleaf] at **Kulubele** is the only one of its kind from the Eastern Cape, and thus hints at early burial practices of First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples in the region. This artefact is deeply disturbing, partly because of an unnatural conflation of birth and death. That this particular death at **Kulubele** was regarded as a significant event is partly evidenced by 'wholeness' of the vessel¹⁷⁰, a rarity in the **Kulubele** assemblage to date¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁹ With regard to skeletal remains 'terminology' Alan Morris (e-mail: 10/11/2000) noted that there is some variation in the way in which the term *infant* is used, and that he tends to think of *infants* as being less than one year old. *Juveniles* are regarded as being older than about two years, and below the age of puberty. An age of between 16-18 years is known in the literature as *sub-adult*. In this way of looking at age group terminology those between about one and two years old at the time of death are not clearly catered for. Thus to be precise about my use of terminology I will use the term *young juvenile* to indicate the latter age group.

¹⁷⁰ Johan Binneman described the excavation process, in conversation 1999, as one in which the pot was carefully exposed, and then clear glue was poured over and into the in situ vessel which was lying lip down over the skeleton. Thus, once the glue had dried, the contents and pot was secured as one piece. This was necessary because the pot was broken, but not scattered about, and would have collapsed if just removed without the precaution of using the glue to hold everything together.

¹⁷¹ I do, however, get the impression that there are several reconstructable vessels. The practice applied by Binneman has been to keep sherds together which may belong to each other, and only reconstruct particularly diagnostic sections. The remainder, due largely to such factors as under (Footnote continued overleaf)



Fig 140: **Kulubele**: side view of foetus/infant burial in/with a vessel. The burial vessel features boldly crosshatched engraving around the neck (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Johan Binneman (personal communication, 2000) has noted that the positioning of the **Kulubele** foetus/infant burial relative to important activity areas is a factor directly relevant for an assessment of burial practices. Furthermore, John Barrett (1996: 399) has explained that "the places selected [for burial sites in prehistory] were never arbitrary, they were located in a landscape already structured by routine and ritual cycles". Excavations at **Kulubele** are, however, not sufficiently advanced to comment with certainty on positioning of this artefact.

Broadly, mortuary rituals are those that articulate transitions from life to death. Those living compose such actions to "renegotiate certain of their own relations of affinity and obligation. This they may do with reference to the dead, ancestors and gods" (Barrett 1996: 395). Such rituals may have been formulated as rites of passage that, generally speaking, can be divided into stages suggesting "rites of separation, rites of liminality, and rites of incorporation". With regard to place of interment and associated artefacts it has been suggested that these may "have been encountered in daily life ... [the selection thereof being] the means [by which] people draw diverse experiences toward a dominant reading of cultural order" (Barrett 1996: 396, 397).

Johan Binneman (personal communication, 1999) has said that the **Kulubele** foetus/infant pot burial was found "upside down". Upon careful inspection it can be seen that the bones of the foetus/infant are located across the mouth and exterior of the vessel¹⁷² [fig 141, overleaf]. Johan Binneman (e-mail:

funding of personnel to undertake such tasks of reconstruction, remain fragmentary.

¹⁷² The skull was not retrievable because of advanced decomposition (Binneman, personal communication, 2000).



Fig 141: **Kulubele**: another side view of foetus/infant burial in/with a vessel, showing bones distributed across the top and outside the vessel (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 142: **Kulubele**: reconstructed section of a very large vessel using the original two rimsherds [fig 90] discovered by Victor Biggs, and two bodysherds subsequently excavated which matched. These four pieces measure approximately 200mm high x 250mm wide. From the curve of the neck it is estimated that the neck diameter could have been roughly 500 mm (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

13/11/2000) has suggested that the mouth of the pot [approximately 15 cm wide], and its interior space, may have been big enough to fit "a foetus".

Thus the body may have originally been placed in the pot, and fallen out at the time of deposition when the pot and contents were turned over to place it upside down. Binneman (e-mail: 13/11/2000) has pointed out that, on the other hand, "it is also possible that the pot was placed over the foetus and in time moved to 'cut' it". Or, the pot may not have been "placed over the body properly" if the foetus/infant was laid in the burial pit first, and then the pot was placed over the remains; or the pot may have "shifted when the hole was back filled".

It may also be that no sufficiently large vessel was available in which to place the deceased. A number of very big vessels, [large enough to fit several infants at a time], are nonetheless featured in the **Kulubele** assemblage [fig 142]. Perhaps other factors aside from size of vessel were considered when a choice was being made as to which vessel to use from among an existing household/communal assemblage¹⁷³.

It may well be that contemporary ideas of interment within an enclosed/sealed container are inappropriate here, particularly as the earth itself may have been regarded as an appropriate receptacle. Comparison with a later Second-Millennium Agriculturist infant buried within a pot from Midden 4 at the site 001, **Makgwareng**¹⁷⁴ (Maggs, 1976: 79, 81) is useful, because in

¹⁷³ The amount of time needed to dig, process, shape and fire clay (probably more than a couple of weeks) would have been too long for this particular pot to have been 'custom made' for the deceased infant.

¹⁷⁴ This 'Sotho' site is located in the Lindley district of the Free State. The settlement was mostly built of stone, dated approximately AD 1650 and later (Maggs 1976: 46, 48, 129).



Fig 143: 001 Makgwareng 'infant pot burial' in Midden 4, 'lid' broken by overlying stone (Maggs 1976: 79).

this case the infant was interred upright within a sealed ceramic vessel. Such an almost diametrically contrasting way of deposition possibly indicates a partly differing worldview, but quite what specific divergences in cosmology there may have been seems likely to remain largely unknown.

Commenting on the 001, **Makgwareng** artefact [fig 143] Maggs (1976: 79) has indicated that the pot is "barrel shaped ... with a flat base¹⁷⁵ and [features a] row of finger pinching¹⁷⁶ on the rim" (my footnotes). He also noted "the combination of pot, lid and large stone on top showed that the burial had been carefully carried out ... [the] still-born or new-born child [was] placed head upwards and [was] apparently supported by some small stones placed around it".

The assessment of this artefact by Maggs is purely descriptive, and comments are not offered regarding possible symbolic overtones, or on mortuary practices associated with infant death. Nonetheless, a striking image is provided of ceramic vessels [pot and lid] as 'coffin' in an upright position, in direct contrast to the foetus/infant and pot burial at **Kulubele**. The ceramics of both burials probably contributed to the relatively 'good' preservation of the skeletons, and may be regarded as evidence of differing 'grave goods' expressive of respective burial belief systems among agriculturist peoples of South Africa separated by both space and time.

¹⁷⁵ As noted previously, flat-based vessels are not known to occur in First-Millennium Agriculturist assemblages (Gavin Whitelaw, personal communication 2000).

¹⁷⁶ Finger-pinching of the rim became a viable wet clay surface treatment option because the flat base of the vessel would have allowed construction to take place from the bottom of the vessel upwards, the final coils forming the rim, which was probably pinched upon completion.

Alan Morris (1993: 84) had recorded a total of 10 *infant and juvenile* First-Millennium Agriculturist burials up to that year of publication. Some of these burials, only two of which are not from KwaZulu-Natal, featured ceramic grave goods. Of the *juveniles* identified at **Broederstroom**¹⁷⁷, one was described as part of the mandible of a “child between 8 and 10 years” old¹⁷⁸, burial 24/73 Ko, that had been buried in a pot with the “maxilla of a person in his or her 20s” (Mason et al 1973: 324; Mason 1986: 167, 168)¹⁷⁹. The other *juvenile* burial at **Broederstroom** was described as “parts of mandible, maxilla and cranium ... of a 12 year old”, buried in an inverted pot, burial 24/73 Azzt G-AS, (Mason 1986:167, 172, 173). Steyn & Nienaber (2000: 112) also mention an infant found at Pont Drift, found with pottery, (c. AD 810-1110), and “four infants (c. AD 815-900) from **Schroda** (Hanisch 1980)”. These are listed in Morris 1992: 104-105) as having “no data” available about associated grave goods”.

Of the eight *infant and juvenile* burials excavated in KwaZulu-Natal before 1993¹⁸⁰, only two interments each feature a

¹⁷⁷ Located on the borders of Gauteng and North West Province.

¹⁷⁸ There is some confusion here because this mandible portion is variously referred to as being of a “6-12 year old” (Mason et al 1973: 324), then as of a “child between 7 and 9 years” (Mason 1986: 167), and then as of a “child between 8 and 10 years (Mason 1986: 168). These assessments all seem to refer to the lower teeth of burial 24/73 Ko, and thus to the same individual.

¹⁷⁹ Institution Catalogue #s WA31 and WA32, Morris (1992: 112, 113).

¹⁸⁰ Alan Morris (1993: 84) reported the discovery in 1980 of a *juvenile* or *sub-adult* from **Magogo**, but this discovery does not feature in the site report of 1984 by Maggs and Ward: (Institution Catalogue # PMB80/1, Morris 1992: 116, 117). A four year-old *juvenile* was reported as having been discovered at **Mhlopheni** by Maggs & Ward (1984:139): (Institution Catalogue # PMB80/21, Morris 1992: 116, 117). Two *juveniles* (a 7 year-old and a 2½ year-old) were discovered at **Wosi** by Van Schalkwyk (1994(a): 75, 76): (Institution Catalogue # KCM84/52, and KCM84/53, Morris 1992: 116, 117). Gavin Whitelaw (1993: 52, 53, 72, 75) has recovered an approximately 8 year-old *juvenile* from **Nanda** (Institution Catalogue # KCM86/1T4.2, Morris 1992: 116, 117). Thus 5 KwaZulu-Natal First-Millennium Agriculturist *juveniles* are recorded as having been excavated by the time of Morris’ 1993 report.

(Footnote continued overleaf)



Fig 144: **KwaGandaganda** foetal burial in east section of Square 25. The upright vessel was positioned near the base of the midden, and was possibly deliberately associated with iron smelting debris, "the rough looking material on either side of the pot" (Whitelaw e-mail of 21/12/2000). (Photo: Gavin Whitelaw, 1988).



Fig 145: Close up of **KwaGandaganda** foetal burial vessel (Photo: Gavin Whitelaw, 1988).

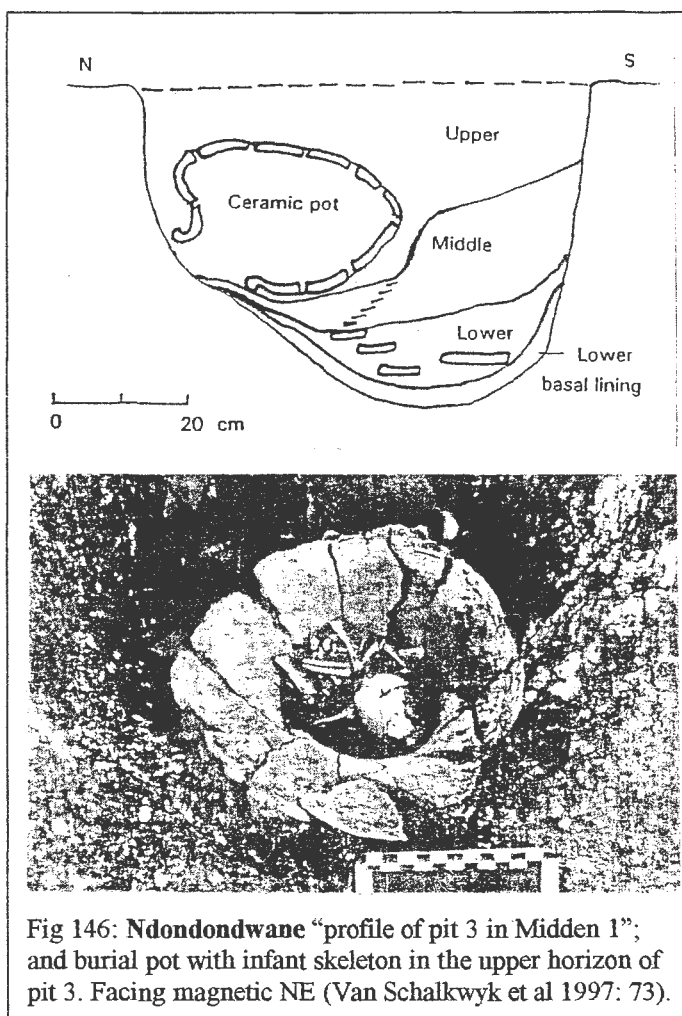
*foetus/infant buried in a pot*¹⁸¹. Subsequently Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 71) recorded a further infant buried within a pot. Thus there appear to be only three published accounts of First-Millennium Agriculturist foetus/infant burials in pots for the South African region, all of them having been excavated in KwaZulu-Natal. Discoveries of such artefacts are rare, which makes the presence of the vessel and minute skeleton at **Kulubele** all the more significant. A brief look at the three already published foetus/infant burials allows some insight into possible thinkings associated with usage of ceramic vessels as part of interment rituals.

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(a): 73, 74, 75) has recorded the burial of a foetus that was "inside a pot [featuring deeply engraved counter triangles around the neck] at the base of the midden in Square 25" at **KwaGandaganda** [figs 144 and 145]. Alan Morris (1993: 95) estimated the age at death as being "between 32 and 36 weeks post-menstrual". This upright interment "was situated on the edge of a slag heap", and probably buried during the **Msuluzi** phase (Whitelaw (1994(a): 74, 102)¹⁸².

Of the remaining three skeletons excavated in KwaZulu-Natal, one was discovered in D6 at **Msuluzi Confluence**: "an infant burial [that] had been partly exposed by erosion" (Maggs 1980(b): 120); (Institution Catalogue # PMB77/30.2, Morris 1992: 116, 117). It is described as having been "buried on its left side in a flexed position facing approximately north-east. *There were a few sherds around it, but it had not been buried in a pot*" (my emphasis). The term *infant burial* here seems somewhat inappropriate because this skeleton is described by H de Villiers, who also used the term *infant*, (in Maggs & Ward (1984: 140), as being approximately "two years of age". Thus *young juvenile* might have been a more appropriate term to use in this instance. Other observations regarding this burial include that it "had been partly exposed by erosion. It was a shallow grave no more than 20cm deeper than the MH. This suggests that it was interred at a later stage of the EIA [F- MA] occupation or perhaps even subsequently" (Maggs 1980(b): 120). H De Villiers added: "it is not possible to comment on the sex of the individual represented" (Maggs & Ward 1984: 140).

¹⁸¹ Whitelaw (1994(a): 73); and Whitelaw & Moon (1996: 60).

¹⁸² Whitelaw (1994(a): 74) also noted that the pot "although encircled by slag, was surrounded by a fine midden soil with its base set in the subsoil (Footnote continued overleaf)



Two years later Whitelaw & Moon (1996: 60) reported a three-month old infant buried in an undecorated **Msuluzi** phase pot at **Nanda SVP5**. "Other artefacts collected at SVP5 include sherds, tuyère fragments, a few small pieces of daga, and stone artefacts". The authors respectively offered no other comments about the **KwaGandaganda** and **Nanda** foetus/infant burials. Such lack of further comment was probably because the focus of each excavation was stated as being on "settlement patterns" (Whitelaw 1994(b): 1), and "the ceramics and distribution of pioneer agriculturists in KwaZulu-Natal" (Whitelaw & Moon 1996: 53) respectively.

The other published burial of an infant within a pot (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 71, 72, 73) was reported from a midden area at **Ndondondwane** [fig 146]. Excavation revealed that a large inverted pot contained the burial placed

face down in the deposit, implying that [the infant] was lying on its back in the pot with its face up toward the mouth of the pot, as the pot was being carried to the pit. The pot was inverted into the pit and the infant fell forward.

The cultural contents of the deposits in this area strongly suggest a domestic-type space ... The large ash deposit [associated with Midden Deposit 1] was probably the repeated deposition from a single kitchen area.

In this description a glimmer of activities enacted by real people has begun to emerge¹⁸³.

below the slag heap. Had the midden been deep at the time of burial, the burial pit would most likely have been visible in the east section of the original square. This suggests the infant was buried when the midden was partially formed but considerably smaller than its final size". See also Whitelaw (1994(b): 34).

¹⁸³ Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 71, 72) add that the kitchen "was probably located in the unexcavated areas to the south or west of the excavated area. It is likely that the structures associated with Midden 1 are located to the south or west of the excavated area. This conclusion is based upon the relative distribution of storage, refuse and living areas in ethnographically documented household compounds from this region, given the nature of the slope (sloping from west to east) and the semicircular distribution of pits and ash deposit".

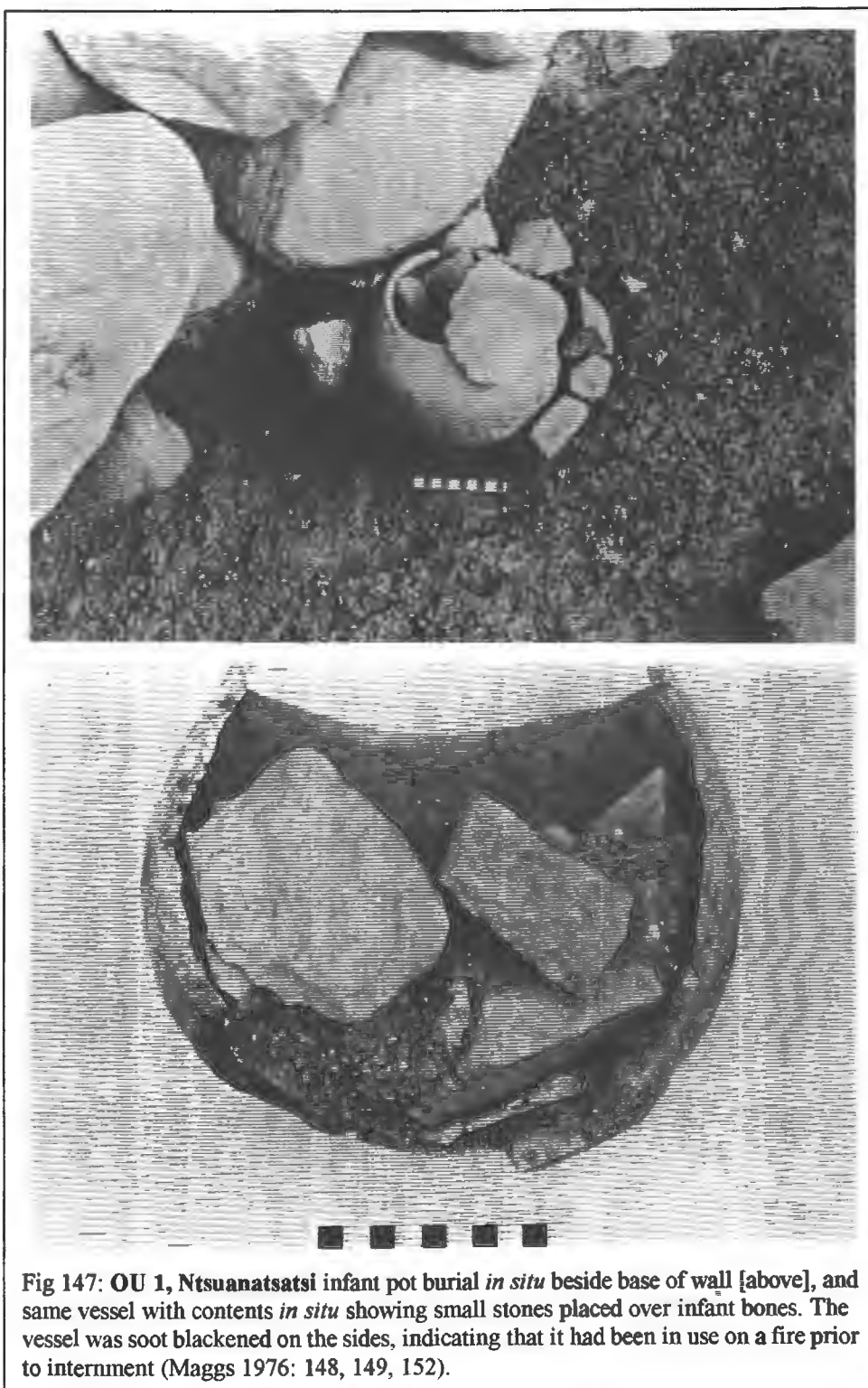


Fig 147: OU 1, Ntsuanatsatsi infant pot burial *in situ* beside base of wall [above], and same vessel with contents *in situ* showing small stones placed over infant bones. The vessel was soot blackened on the sides, indicating that it had been in use on a fire prior to internment (Maggs 1976: 148, 149, 152).

All four First-Millennium Agriculturist foetus/infant burials in or with pots¹⁸⁴ feature vessels that were probably previously in ordinary domestic use. Of these burials two¹⁸⁵ are located in middens, two are associated with some metalworking paraphernalia¹⁸⁶, two were buried upright¹⁸⁷, two were deposited in vessels placed upside down¹⁸⁸, and three are associated with the **Msuluzi** ceramic era¹⁸⁹.

A striking similarity between the burials is that, unlike the Second-Millennium Agriculturist burial at **OU 1, Ntsuanatsatsi** (Maggs 1976: 148, 149, 152) [fig 147] in the Free State, all four KwaZulu-Natal/Eastern Cape First-Millennium Agriculturist foetus/infant burials discussed featured ceramic vessels that seem not to have been covered at the mouth by sherds from another vessel.

Furthermore, in the absence of information to the contrary, it seems that all four KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape foetus/infant corpses were deposited with/within whole pots that had not been ritually altered prior to deposition. It seems unlikely that such continuity of practice during the First-Millennium over a widespread area would have occurred without some deeply motivating and shared cosmology.

Some written text associated with photographs of First-Millennium Agriculturist foetal and juvenile burials, featured in the Clay Through Time Exhibition at the Albany History Museum

¹⁸⁴ **Kulubele, KwaGandaganda, Nanda, and Ndondondwane.**

¹⁸⁵ **KwaGandaganda and Ndondondwane.**

¹⁸⁶ With slag at **KwaGandaganda**, and tuyère fragments at **Nanda**.

¹⁸⁷ Buried in vessels placed upright at **KwaGandaganda** and **Nanda**.

¹⁸⁸ Buried in vessels placed upside down at **Ndondondwane** and **Kulubele**.

¹⁸⁹ **KwaGandaganda, Nanda, and Kulubele.**



Fig 148: KwaGandaganda foetal burial in Square 25, showing contents of vessel (Photo: Gavin Whitelaw, 1988).

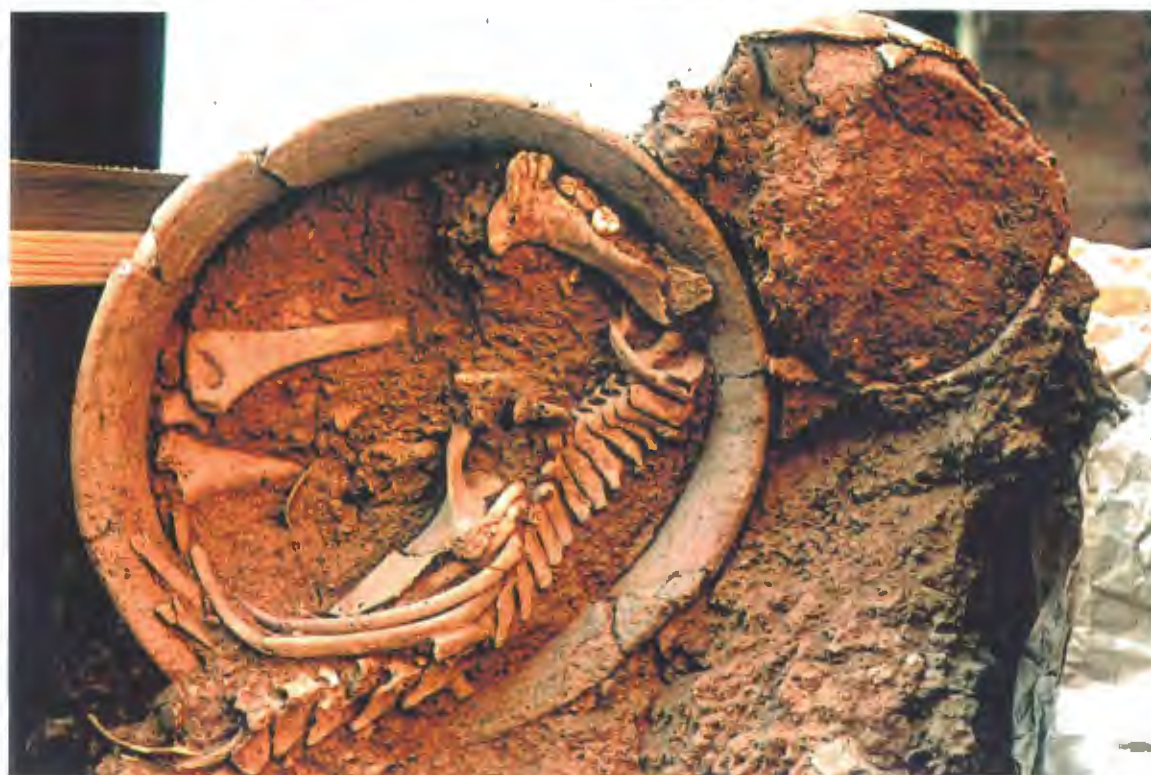


Fig 149: Nanda eight-year-old juvenile burial. Note the mandible inside the pot. See also the still articulated left arm, and vertebral column separated from the skull and folded over and into the vessel (Photo: Gavin Whitelaw, 1986).

in Grahamstown, offers an inkling of possible thought processes associated with burials such as these. The photographs feature the foetus from Square 25, **KwaGandaganda** [fig 148], and an eight-year-old (Morris 1993:92) juvenile from Trench 4, **Nanda**¹⁹⁰ (Whitelaw 1993: 52)[fig 149].

The Clay Through Time Exhibition was jointly curated by Marijke Cosser, Lita Webley and Anita Klingenberg, and officially opened in September 1995. These curators observed that actions utilising domestic ceramics at a time of burial might have been a metaphoric expression of a way of thinking that attributed linkage between life giving forces and clay vessels:

creating vessels from clay means creating something from mother earth, which gives life ... Clay is made up of earth, fire, and water: - three life giving forces ... Clay vessels with their link to life-giving forces are sometimes seen to represent womanhood. In societies where this occurs clay vessels are seen as being symbolic of a woman's womb and the birth of children ... During the Iron Age [F&S-MA] some societies buried children who died in a clay pot, this may symbolise a return to the womb of the earth.

This multifaceted suggestion seems to imply that an absence of lids, and/or mouth down placement of vessels in their burial pits over a deceased foetus or infant may have served as a symbolic rebirth into the earth.

¹⁹⁰ Whitelaw (1993: 52, 53, 72) described the burial as follows: "The child had been buried facing an easterly direction, in an upright position with the knees flexed and the hands drawn up to the face ... Soil movement had forced the upper body of the child into [a] pot. The lower spine was folded over the pot's rim, and the mandible was completely separated from the rest of the skull and displaced into the pot. The maxilla and skull were outside the pot, resting on it. The vertebrae, ribs and right arm and shoulder inside the pot were articulated, indicating that this happened soon after the burial of the child ... [which was well] preserved, presumably because the body was forced into the pot. This happened before the body had completely decomposed, suggesting that the pot was empty when placed in the grave or filled with something (possibly vegetable matter) that decayed rapidly".

Such a suggestion of thought behind an action may seem rather speculative, especially considering the immense time difference between then and now, and concomitant vast variances in cultures and thinkings. Yet, without suggesting a one to one correspondence, there may be some substance to this proposal as evidenced by Evers & Huffman's (1988: 739) observation that amongst the Shona¹⁹¹ in Zimbabwe [in the ethnographic present] "the neck of the pot [may be seen] as the neck of the cervix"¹⁹² (my footnotes). Different peoples treat death uniquely, yet it may be that some southern African similarities and/or continuities in mortuary practice at least give an idea of possible motivations behind actions that have left a trace in the archaeological landscape.

Furthermore, McEdward Murimbika (2000:1), in assessing ways in which mortuary rituals may aid a transformation from one form of life to another, came to a conclusion that "Shona people have maintained the core concepts of these practices from prehistory into modern historical times". He also pointed out a fundamental difference in the way in which adult and infant mortuary rituals are conceptualised amongst Shona peoples.

¹⁹¹ I have specifically chosen to look at Shona cultural practices in the 'ethnographic present' because research is quite extensive, and Zimbabwe is relatively far away from the Eastern Cape. Thus differences and similarities in aspects of cultural practice may be fairly distinct, and consequently carry some weight. A direct correspondence in present day cosmology between some Shona and some Zulu/Xhosa speaking peoples is not being suggested, nor that such a correspondence should be transposed directly back into prehistory. This choice is also informed by researches that indicate the presence of **Kalundu** tradition ceramics in the physical space now known as Zimbabwe, [see Huffman (1989(a): 76), for instance], occupied in the 'ethnographic present' by Shona speaking people.

¹⁹² The context for this statement is a discussion about clay body incisions and other surface treatments afforded pots by Shona peoples, wherein a finished pot may be viewed as "upside down relative to the human body" (Evers and Huffman 1988: 739).

Dead adults who had families, for instance, are said to enter a liminal phase for about a year after death, and are thus “temporarily disabled ... [until] another ceremony is conducted to return the spirit of the dead (*kurova guva*) into the family as an ancestral spirit” (Murimbika 2000: 4). The point is that becoming an ancestral spirit is not an automatic process: the living family must call the spirit, and there are conditions attached.

Such conditions exist because “the dead are returned as spirits in order for them to protect their family ... any person who is not survived by his or her own family will not have a reason to return as a spirit” (Murimbika 2000: 5). Such a cosmology has direct import for the way in which deaths of infants and juveniles are treated. Because they do not have ‘dependant family’, the mortuary rituals for such youngsters “close immediately after they are buried [and] their spirits are not returned to the family”.

Shona mortuary practice is geared toward facilitating a process whereby “society transforms itself and ensures its continuity” (Murimbika 2000: 5, 6). In a situation of an unexpected death, as in that of an infant, Murimbika has explained that an emphasis in Shona cosmology is placed on continuity of human and crop fertility, rather than on continuity in terms of presence as an ancestor.

Mortuary ritual, and choice of site, express a belief that

people who die ‘unnatural’ deaths are considered to be angry even in death and therefore revengeful. The living have an obligation to ‘cool’ the spirit’s anger by burying the body on cooled ground ... [The practice of burying infants in cooler places is believed to] protect the womb of the mother ... from drying out ... [Likewise, cooler ground is sought because] if infants are buried on dry [hot] ground, it will cause rain not to fall, leading to crop failure and drought (Pwiti & Mahachi 1991: 58-59).

Choice of site, and probably the procedures adopted at the time of interment are, in Shona thinking, geared towards continuity and maintenance of balance between the past, present and future wherein both an individual (mother) and communal good are considered.

Whether a similar cosmology may have been operative at **Kulubele** more than a thousand years earlier remains unknown. However, account must be taken of the centrality afforded ancestors by Southern Nguni speaking peoples in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape before all possibilities of a variant further down south are discounted.

In discussions focussed on Xhosa oral traditions and cultural practices pertaining to infant death, with Nombeko Mpako and Thembeke Mpako-Ntusi (2000)¹⁹³, several points of general congruence between Shona and Xhosa cosmologies in the ethnographic present were pointed out. Ancestors appear to be integrated into lifeway thinkings to such an extent that their presence can be said to be all-pervasive, connecting past, present and future. Thus centrality is accorded to ancestors, who may only become such upon being called following a liminal period after death. At the time of death, and upon interment, specific procedures, wrappings, and placement of grave goods are regarded as being essential for the welfare of the spirit of the deceased, and as 'gifts' to already established ancestors¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹³ Nombeko Mpako is Associate Director and Head of School, Border Technikon School of Applied Art. Thembeke Mpako-Ntusi is Director of Research, Border Technikon.

¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, Mpako-Ntusi (in conversation, 2000) indicated that according to Xhosa cosmology, as in Shona thinking, infants and others who had not yet substantively contributed to society were accorded different treatment at the time of death. Such persons would still be treated with respect and be accorded various grave goods associated with a safe passage, but would not be called back after a liminal period.

In reviewing both infant/juvenile and adult First Millennium Agriculturist burials of the KwaZulu-Natal region Len Van Schalkwyk (1991: 126) has observed further similarities, including that, whether situated in middens or pits, they are "all associated with specific domestic household artefacts and specific household debris". He suggested that the inclusion of such artefacts

may possibly then 'signify' (sensu Giddens 1984) ... symbolically and subliminally ... the role and status [of women in the community] as reproducers of the means of production, and as reproducers of the relations of production ... and may have ... [contributed] to provide ontological security to the 'longue durée' of the community.

In a sense the presence of domestic artefacts as grave goods may thus indicate a fundamental importance of home and family, such goods also having been proposed as linking the past with the present, thereby assuring the future. Furthermore, McEdward Murimbika (2000:8) has indicated that southern African "ethnographic information indicates that grave goods are meant to facilitate the smooth and easy settlement of the spirit of the deceased in a new world". In this way First-Millennium Agriculturist grave goods may indicate attempts to secure the future by deliberately valorising the past.

The absence of grave goods associated with the **Kulubele** and KwaZulu-Natal foetus/infant burials in pots¹⁹⁵, other than the particular vessel used for interment, is also likely to be of significance. It may be deduced, on account of no other archaeologically durable grave goods being specifically associated with any of these four burials, that the main

¹⁹⁵ See Whitelaw (1994(a): 74); Whitelaw & Moon (1996: 60); and Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 71).

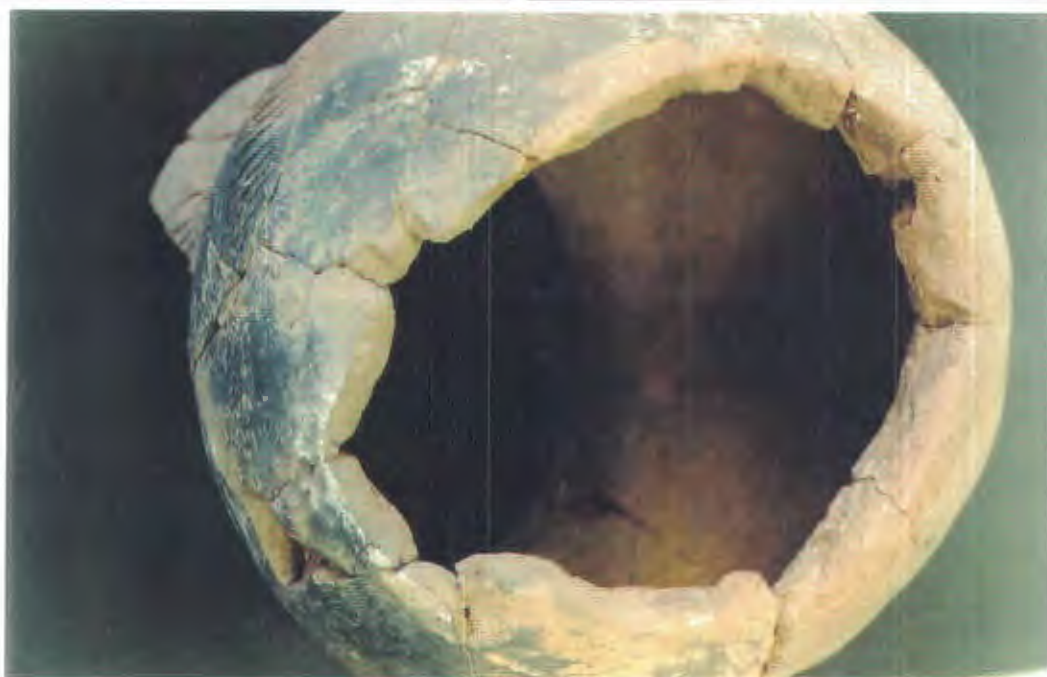
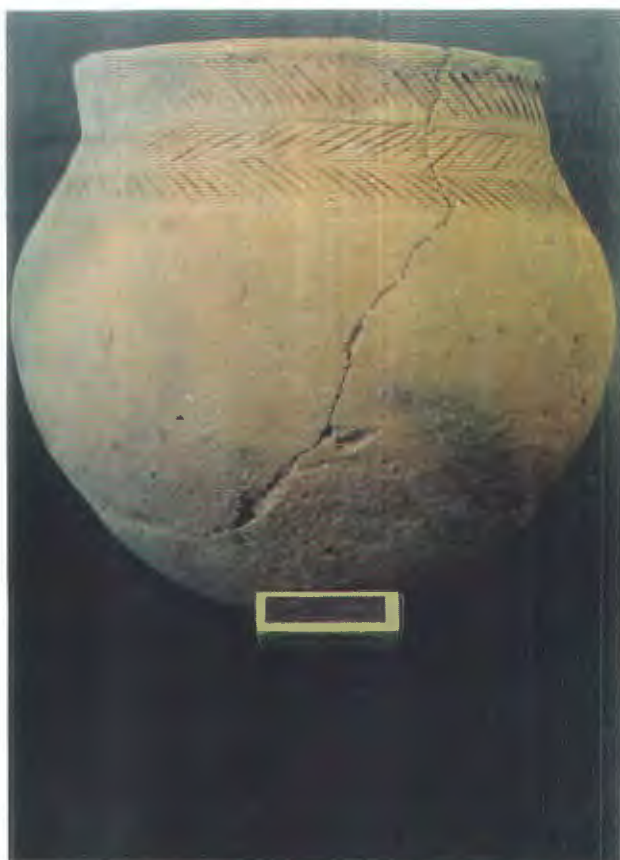


Fig 150: Nanda half a vessel [left], placed over a hole in the bottom [below] of another upside down vessel [right], in the Trench 4 Burial 2 pit. Height of vessel half 265mm; thickness at lip and base 9mm and 14mm respectively. Height of bottomless pot 235mm; diameter at lip and belly 195mm and 230mm respectively; thickness at lip and base 9mm and 14mm respectively. Diameter of hole in base 140mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

accompanying item was the pot. Perhaps such a burial was accompanied by gift/safe journey vegetable matter, and possibly by an animal hide, such hides becoming available in the ethnographic present, according to Mpako-Ntusi (personal communication, 2000), upon mandatory ritual slaughtering associated with mortuary procedures. Such grave goods would have decayed and thus left no immediately visible trace.

In contrast, some juveniles seem to have been accorded a sumptuous burial. The burial pit of the **Nanda** Trench 4 eight year-old (Whitelaw 1993: 52), for instance, "was marked by a concentration of pots, large sherds, quartzite heat-spalls and a mass of daga (baked clay)". Whitelaw related that

some 15cm below the surface ... [was an] upside-down base of a pot: further excavation revealed that half a pot had been placed over a *neat hole in the bottom of another upside down pot*. The base of the second pot had clearly been carefully removed and the edges of the hole rubbed smooth in places [fig 150]. The hole is oriented at an angle of 33° to the rim of the pot, indicating that it was not the result of a coil break, but must have been deliberately made. (My emphasis and fig inclusion.)

Furthermore, slightly lower down in the pit, the upper body of the juvenile was discovered to have been forced by soil movement into another "large, undecorated pot with a *neat hole in its base* [which] had been placed on its side on the right of the body". Also of relevance here is Whitelaw's (1993: 53) observation that "the vertical distribution of the skeleton and other artefacts strongly suggests that the upper 65cm of the pit was filled at the time of burial".

That an inverted vessel was placed over the hole in the lower upside down vessel possibly indicates an intention to re-articulate closure of some sort, perhaps even to seal earthwards whatever metaphysical contents the lower vessel was thought to

embody after it had been pierced. Furthermore, in contrast to those foetus/infant burials that were placed with/within pots that were then interred upside down, this juvenile was deposited in a flexed (seated) upright position, and pots placed within the grave were turned upside down.

A fundamental significance regarding burial position may perhaps reside as much in how the corpse was deposited as in symbolism expressed by a lip-down placement of associated vessel/s. Martin Hall (1987: 9) has observed that

“signification of the connectedness of present and past is achieved through sets of ritual artefacts. Although we have no knowledge of the rituals which bound first millennium households to their past the role of ceramics in signifying such connections is apparent”.

Mouth-down placement of a vessel in conjunction with a corpse probably attributed a new significance to such a vessel at the time of being consigned back to the earth, a region from which the original raw material was ‘mined’ to begin with.

That such a specially selected pot had been deliberately pierced after firing and probable domestic use, and the hole carefully smoothed off at some stage prior to interment, must have been an act of reconfiguring use value that carried deep significance. Furthermore, despite differing circumstances and concomitant changes in meaning, a similar sort of symbolic significance may probably be attributed to the act of burying a pot as to that of burying an infant.

This reconfiguration of ceramics use value at the time of piercing and inversion has been described by Martin Hall (1987: 9) as a “double negation of the role of the vessel”, and has been interpreted as possibly being part “of the symbolic process binding together time”. Burial of such a vessel can probably be



Fig 151: Another Nanda vessel deliberately pierced at the base. Height 380mm; diameters at lip and belly 350mm and 410mm respectively; thickness at lip, belly and base 18mm, 16mm and 22mm respectively (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

regarded as a further negation of the role of the vessel, so it is appropriate to speak of a triple negation. The act of piercing an unbroken vessel, which was then inverted upon burial, seems to be a practice that reflects a widely shared cosmology amongst First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples in southern Africa.

Buried bottomless pots appear not only at **Nanda** [fig 151], but also in other assemblages attributed to both eastern stream **Kwale/Matola** and western stream **Kalundu** tradition ceramics. Such reconfigured vessels occur from sites as far afield as, for instance, **University Campus** in Mozambique (Maggs & Whitelaw 1991: 13), **Lydenberg Heads Site** in Mpumalanga, and at **Broederstroom** (Whitelaw 1993: 52). Several sites in KwaZulu-Natal¹⁹⁶ also feature bottomless pots, and Prins & Granger (1993: 163) report their presence at **Ntsitsana** in Transkei, Eastern Cape.

Prins and Granger (1993: 163) hint at some variance in the practice of burying pots with pierced bases by mentioning that some of those recovered from **Ntsitsana** were probably "ritually" broken into pieces prior to interment¹⁹⁷. And, unlike the bottomless pot from Burial 2 pit at **Nanda**, the pierced vessels from **Ntsitsana** were buried in their own right without a human corpse.

Another variation in practice is evident at **Wosi G111** from where Van Schalkwyk (1994(a): 73) reported the discovery of two such

¹⁹⁶ See, for instance, **Msuluzi** confluence (Maggs 1980(b): 119); **Ntshekane** (Maggs & Michael: 1976: 712); **Magogo** and **Mhlopeni** (Maggs & Ward 1984: 116, 130); **Wosi** (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 73); **Nanda** (Whitelaw 1993: 53); and **KwaGandaganda** (Whitelaw 1994(b): 19).

¹⁹⁷ This particular observation is based on the discovery at **Ntsitsana** of "potsherds belonging to the same vessel [having been] recovered from two separate pits (3&6), suggesting ... pits ... filled contemporaneously" (Prins & Granger 1993: 163, 164).

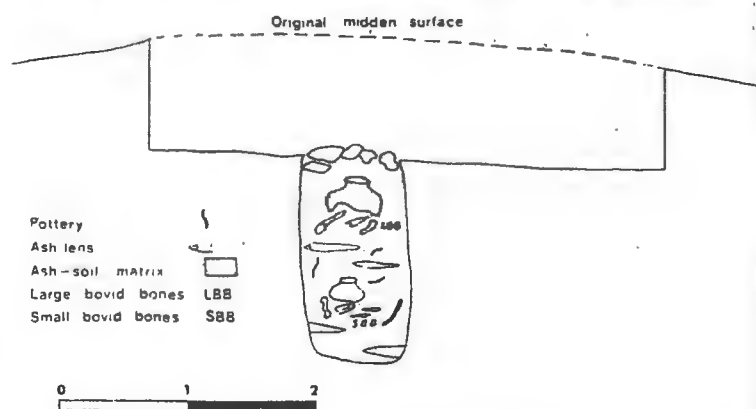


Fig 152: Wosi midden matrix in Grid 1 [above], and section of the pit in the Grid 111 midden (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 69, 75).

pierced vessels in an *upright* position in a pit that was discovered in the Grid 1 midden. Given that accreditation of intentionality is appropriate, and that burial of artefacts are likely to be both meaningful and expressive of worldview, it is worth looking at the contents of the whole pit, which in itself is an artefact wherein smaller parts make up the whole [fig 152].

That the pit was situated in a midden area possibly indicates that the midden space itself was significant in terms of past thinkings, and should not be confused with present day dismissive attitudes regarding waste and rubbish dumps. Careful capping of the pit with packed stones was probably intended to seal the contents within for all time. The stones selected were not just any stones immediately available in the surrounding area, but were specifically "pieces of lower grindstone, heat-spalled hearth stones, and broken cobble grinders" (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 73).

These stones were possibly thus all previously associated with processing and cooking of food, perhaps in an intimate domestic space. The broken state of the lower grindstone and cobble grinders may indicate a deconstruction and reconfiguration of use value, possibly of similar import to the removal of a vessel base.

The two bottomless pots appear to have been methodically placed upright within various layers of domestic debris, ash, bovid bones, and ovicaprine bones that were clustered below the bottom pot. The layering, and nature of these artefacts, is thought to collectively indicate that this pit had been "purposely filled during a number of separate dumping episodes" (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 73, 75). The particular significances of the artefacts carefully deposited within this pit remain unknown, but ash for instance, has been cited as being "a 'cooling' agent in 'hot'

situations" (Whitelaw 1994(a): 92). Furthermore, centrality of bovids and ovicaprines to lifeways has already been established.

A significant link between the pit and contents, and the upper bottomless pot is established by an observation that "consistent external blackening below the shoulder [of the pot] would seem to indicate that the vessel had been used as a *cooking pot* before its base had been removed" (my emphasis) (Whitelaw 1994(a): 73). Thus all the artefacts seem to have become ritually interlinked by virtue of association with one or more hearths prior to deposition.

Perhaps the pit was dug specially for the occasion, and perhaps the ashy matrix within the pit was a result of several specific cooking and/or symbolically transformative fires associated with a particular rite. Furthermore, some of the bones in the pit may be of specific animals sacrificed as part of proceedings. Piercing of the bases of both vessels may have indicated a point of no return after whatever cooking/brewing was accomplished for the purposes of the activities being engaged in.

Then, as an act of both physical and symbolic closure, the tools used to prepare foodstuffs for the duration of the ritual may have been ceremonially reconfigured and used, in combination with the hearthstones that had 'contained' the cooking fires, to cap the pit. This admittedly speculative partial reconstruction of events at least attempts to place such enigmatic artefacts as bottomless pots within a realm of action decided by ways of thinking directed at achievement of particular ontological goals. What these specific goals may have been eludes surety, but some indications have emerged from amongst the diversity of contexts in which such pots have been retrieved.

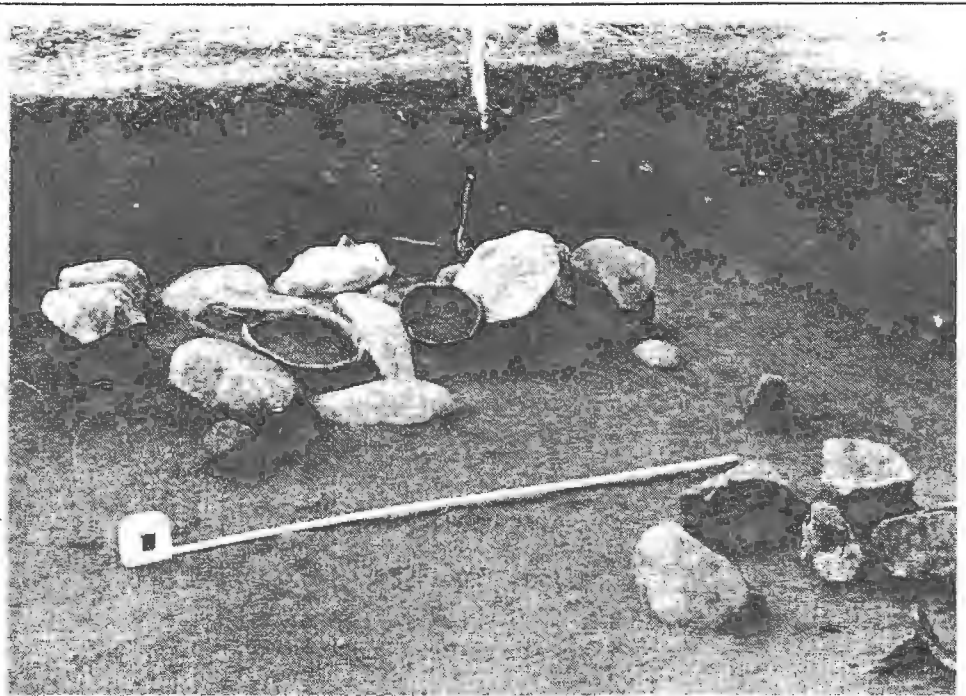


Fig 153: **KwaGandaganda** topless pots, and some stones, marking the upper zone of Pit 4 (Whitelaw 1994(b): 31).

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 31), for instance, has reported on a topless [fig 153] variant of the bottomless pot phenomenon from **KwaGandaganda**. Here, in Pit 4, he discovered two vessels from which "the bodies of both had been broken away at the neck/shoulder junction prior to being placed in the pit ... Interestingly, body sherds from the two pots were scattered throughout the pit" which also featured an extensive ashy soil matrix. Like the bottomless pots of **Wosi**, the topless versions at **KwaGandaganda** were not associated with burial of any human remains.

Commenting on the presence of bottomless pots at **Nanda** and elsewhere Whitelaw (1993: 55, 76) has suggested that, on account of a symbolic association between pots and women, among Karanga-speakers for instance,

it is conceivable ... that ELA [F-MA] pit fillings were related to girl's puberty or initiation rituals which marked the transformation to adulthood¹⁹⁸ ... ELA [F-MA] bottomless pots in pits may be the product of a ... symbolic defloration, which involved the careful breaking away of the base of a pot and, ultimately, its deposition together with other associated debris into a pit. (My footnote).

Continuing along this line of thought, particularly with regard to observed pit stratigraphy, Whitelaw (1993: 76) has added that

the event may have necessitated the seclusion of the girl or girls for a lengthy period, allowing an initial gradual build-up of debris within the pit, which was filled finally at the end of the seclusion period ... These artefacts, given the

¹⁹⁸ To substantiate this line of thought Whitelaw (1993: 76) cited Hammond-Tooke (1981) who conducted an anthropological study among the Kgaga. Hammond-Tooke was said by Whitelaw to relate that "among the Kgaga, the *lefagolong* rite, carried out during girl's initiation, involves the pouring of beer from small pots into the vaginas of girls held head downwards". Whitelaw cited Hammond-Tooke as speculating "this rite symbolises sexual intercourse ... After the ritual, the pots are broken, which Hammond-Tooke sees as a symbolic defloration".

possible association between pots and people, may have been particularly susceptible to sorcery or witchcraft, necessitating their concealment in pits.

Furthermore, perhaps because of the intimate nature of some procedures enacted, certain taboos and concerns about "a threat of pollution" (Whitelaw 1994(b): 54) may have been another motivating factor accounting for the burial of artefacts associated with such rites.

Such suggestions regarding possible motivations for particular actions have a beguiling coherence that may well disguise a possibility that similarly configured artefacts may not necessarily always have been achieved for similar purposes, or embody similar meanings. As a point of departure, however, it does appear that topless/bottomless pots are likely to be physically representative of some form of lifeway thought process associated with transition. It also appears that there is a remarkable consistency of practice seen in an upright positioning of topless/bottomless pots in pits not associated with burials.

Likewise, the association of both topless and bottomless pots with the approximately eight-year-old juvenile of Burial 2 at **KwaGandaganda** (Whitelaw 1993: 52) [see fig 149] does not necessarily contradict the initiation/puberty rites scenario. Children of that age may well have been quite grown up in a society where survival and doing whatever work one is capable of had fundamental significance. The inversion of both topless and bottomless pots may in this case be indicative of death, rather than of a rebirth into society as would be implied by a successfully accomplished rite of passage. Another difference lies in the respective pit fillings. This human burial pit did not feature layers of ash described previously but, according to Whitelaw (1993: 52), indications are that the top section of an

existing pit may have been widened to accommodate the corpse and grave goods, and was then filled in one session.

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 55) has also suggested that the positioning of pits containing topless/bottomless pots within the village space would be deeply significant, and also perhaps act as a diagnostic device in determining the size and political importance of the village relative to others in the area. He has recorded that:

in small villages the preferred place of discard was in the byre area, the focus of social and religious attention in the settlement, where both old grain pits and specially excavated pits may have been used. In contrast, the central byre area at [large] political centres had significance for the entire community ... [and thus at such larger village sites] pits with puberty-related fillings ... would be found within the [household] residential area.

One way or another it seems that the byre area, centrally placed and surrounded by dwellings and other specifically designated activity areas, may well have been thought of as a very significant space. Such an enclosed area perhaps expressed an idea of safekeeping and ceremonial safety wherein at least some of the possibly communal food resources (grain and livestock) as well as spiritual resources (ancestor interventions) could be utilised or communed with as deemed appropriate.

Furthermore, Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 68) have observed that in historic times the byre has been seen to be "a ritually safe area to dispose of ash and the remains of other activities that could otherwise be used by others to harm its original makers and users". Thus the phenomenon of bottomless pots has led to some revealing explorations into possible ways of thinking that may have contributed to the distribution of artefacts within the First-Millennium Agriculturist landscape.

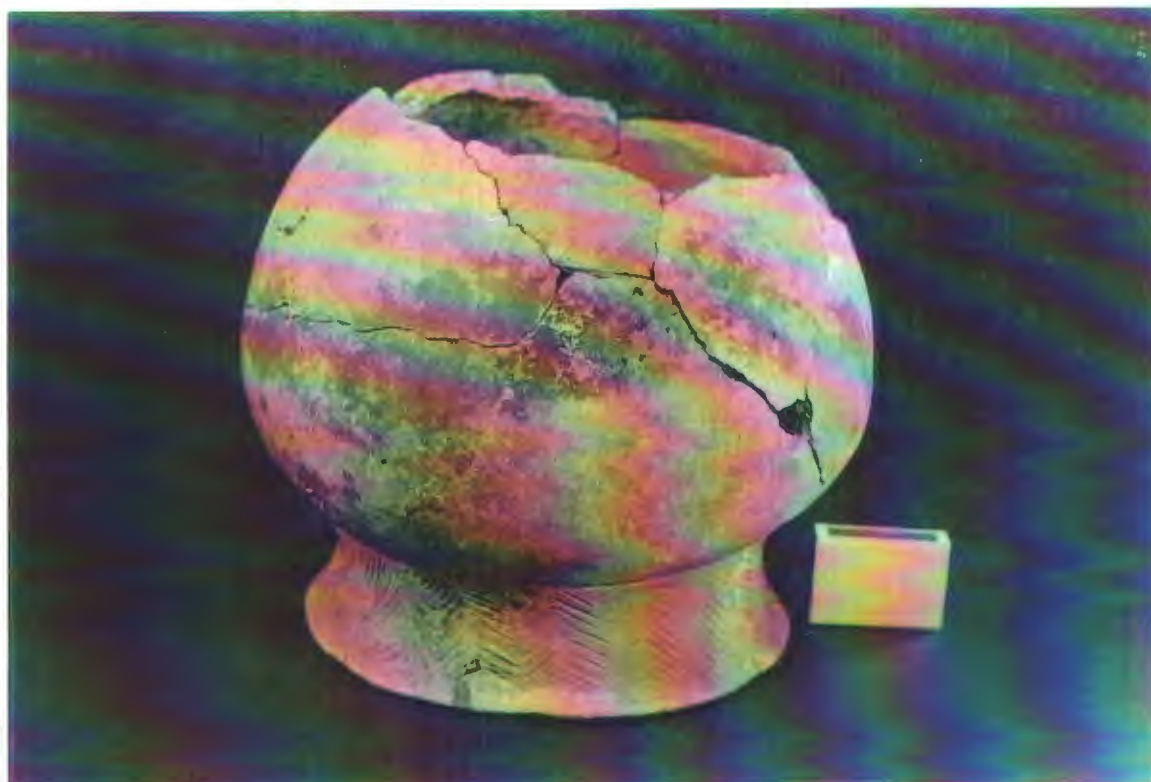


Fig 154: **Kulubele** vessel that may have a deliberately removed base, although the jagged edges suggest otherwise (Photo: John Steele, 1999, courtesy of Albany Museum).

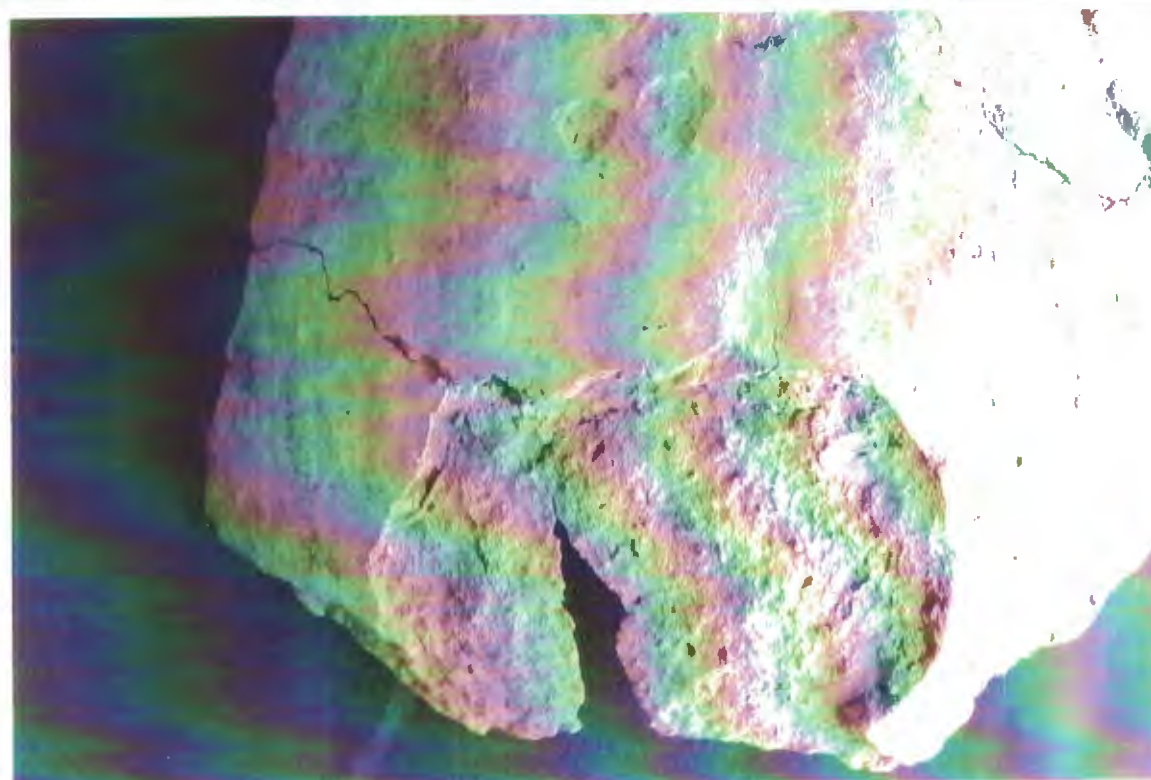


Fig 155: **Kulubele** reconstructed ceramic section showing partial piercing of the vessel (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

Such thinkings may well have been operative at **Kulubele**, but only a much more extensive excavation of the area and related sites will confirm correspondences or reveal anomalies at this currently southernmost *in situ* First-Millennium Agriculturist settlement.

It would certainly be interesting to know more about the location relative to the rest of the settlement, for instance, of one vessel from **Kulubele** which may have had its base intentionally removed [fig 154]. It is, however not possible to be sure of deliberate piercing because the edges at the hole in the bottom do not show a characteristic rounded and 'rubbed' surface. It is nonetheless likely that bottomless pots were created at **Kulubele** because the practice was so widespread, and because one reconstructed vessel section from **Kulubele** F-10-II shows distinct signs¹⁹⁹ of intentional partial piercing [fig 155]. This particular section must have come from a very large vessel, the sherds illustrated alone measuring approximately 350mm x 320mm, and being about 20mm and 14mm thick towards the bottom and belly respectively. The purposely partially pierced central part measures 140mm across.

Indications that a partial piercing of the body of this vessel was deliberate include signs of chipping or pecking with a sharp tool; the even depth throughout of the partially pierced portion; the roundness of that portion [fig 156, overleaf]; and a clearly 'squared off' edge towards the belly of the vessel. In my experience of clay segments being blown off²⁰⁰ during firing, (the nearest explanation for this phenomenon other than specific and

¹⁹⁹ As yet unpublished.

²⁰⁰ This is caused when an air pocket in the clay body of the vessel expands to a greater extent than the clay during firing. This expanded air literally forces its way out, blowing out a piece of clay wall of the vessel in the process.

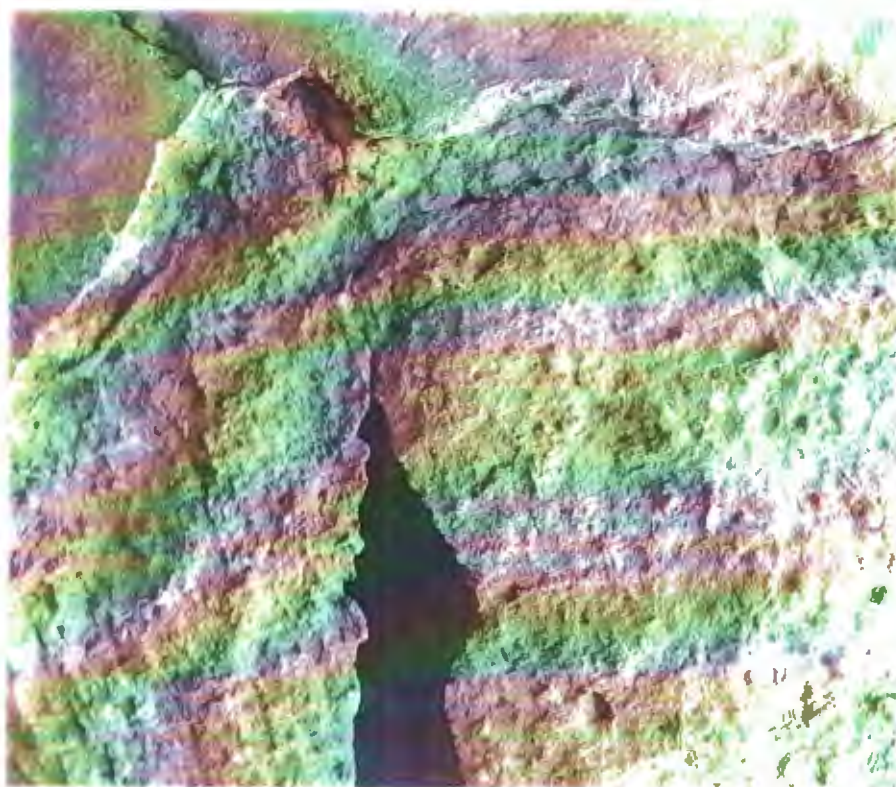


Fig 156: **Kulubele**: close up showing deliberate pecking marks (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

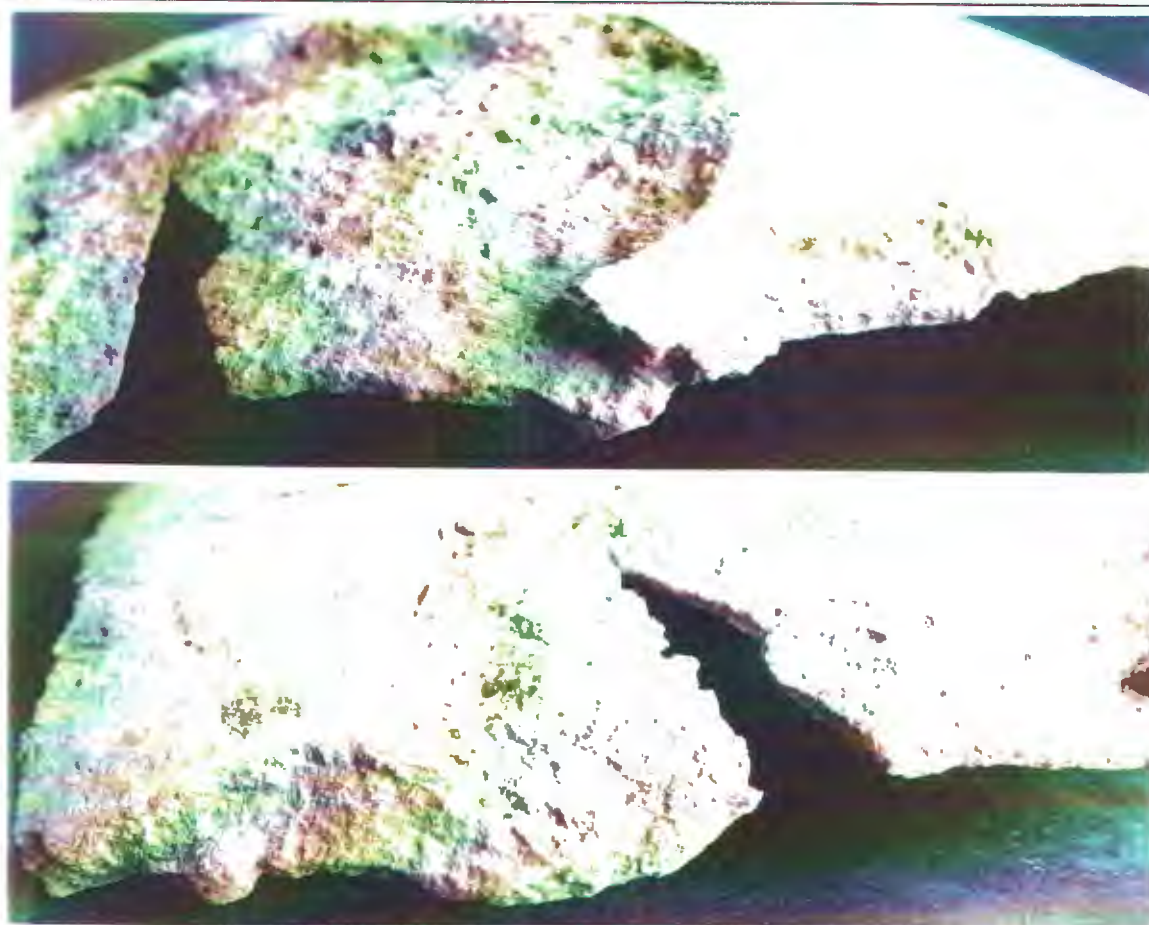


Fig 157: **Kulubele** partially pierced potsherds showing extension of central pecking towards right [above], and left (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

deliberately careful human agency), the cross section of the piece that comes off is unlikely to be of an even thickness. The piece that comes off is usually thickest at the point of the air pocket, and diminishes towards the extremities of the segment. Thus, I feel confident in ascribing careful human agency to the partially pierced sections of the **Kulubele** vessel.

The 'squared off' edge of the partially pierced **Kulubele** vessel seems to serve as a demarcation area, which both indicates a dividing zone between this portion and another, and also allows entry into the neighbouring partially pierced segment to the right that seems to be taking on a vaguely circular shape as well. On the other side of the main partially pierced centre segment clear evidence of another segment merging with the middle one can be seen [fig 157]. Thus a picture of a configuration of partial piercings, perhaps resembling the beginnings of a sort of cloverleaf shape, located towards the bottom of this vessel, emerges.

The occurrence of partially pierced sections towards the bottom of a vessel is not limited to an isolated incident at **Kulubele**. Similarly manipulated vessels [fig 158 (a) and (b), overleaf] were recovered, for instance, from **Nanda** in KwaZulu-Natal. I suspect this practice is likely to be related to that of deliberately removing a whole portion of the bottom of a pot. Thus, as with bottomless pots, meanings associated with the partially pierced **Kulubele** vessel, which initially had specific utilitarian attributes associated with containment of liquid or other foodstuff²⁰¹, was probably reconfigured into a realm where utility and containment was re-expressed in a symbolic way.

²⁰¹ Some similarly shaped and incised vessels show cooking residues, for example (personal comments, Whitelaw and Binneman, 2000).



Fig 158(a): Nanda vessel displaying two partially pierced zones towards the bottom. Height 270 mm; left pecking 100mm x 90mm; right pecking 90mm x 80mm. Note the narrow pecked channel at the bottom joining up these left and right pecked areas (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).



Fig 158(b): **Nanda** vessel displaying rounded deliberate piercing and beginnings of angular piercing on the shoulder. Height 155mm; diameter at shoulder 210mm; body thickness 7mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

It seems clear that symbolic acts were an integral part of First-Millennium Agriculturist lifeways. Seen in this light, some aspects of the description of **Kulubele** Pit 1 by Johan Binneman (1996(a): 29), for instance, takes on added significance. To the observation that “a scatter of cobble stones marked the top” can now be added that contextual and ethnographic evidence elsewhere in the region suggests that those cobbles both marked the top, and may have been so placed as to render the contents ritually sealed and safe.

Given the probable importance of ash in such pits, the presence of ash in Pit 1 at **Kulubele** may have been a significant ‘cooling’ agent, and unlikely to have been the result of ordinary housekeeping. Likewise, it may be suggested that the “loose soil” of the topmost unit within the Pit, and the “thick layer of broken potsherds” immediately below were the result of a single deposition event, perhaps at the end of a particular ritual cycle.

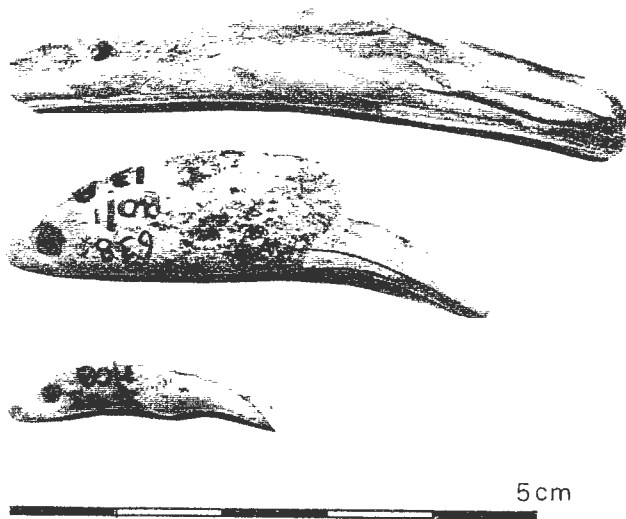
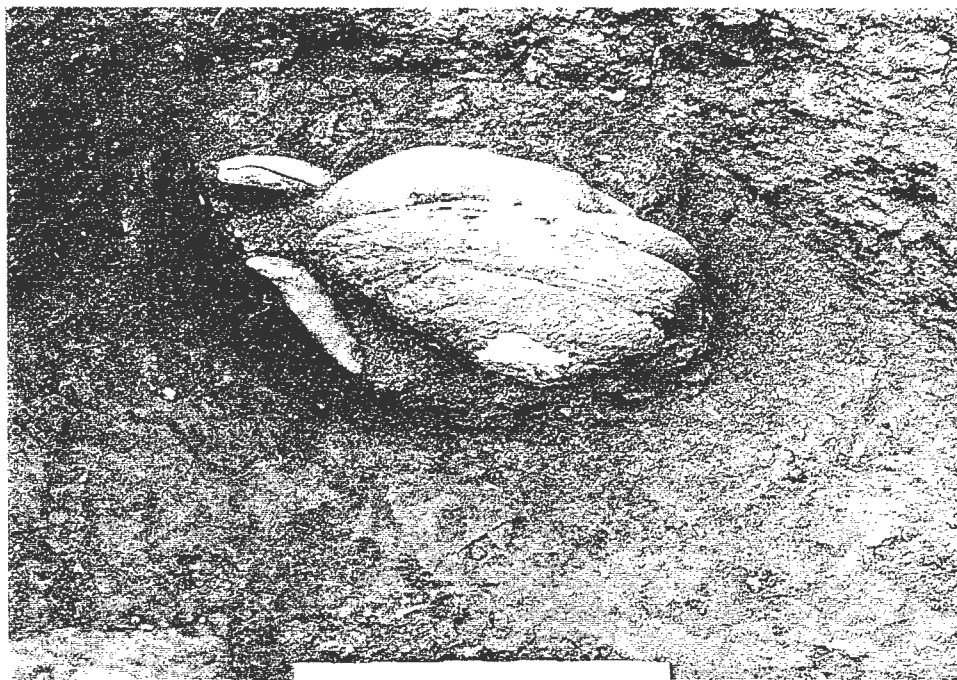


Fig 159: Lower portion of **Magogo** Pit 13B showing carefully placed group of four fitting mussel shells and two drilled canine teeth [above], and [below] the drilled teeth (from top) of bushpig and leopard from Pit 13B, and black-backed jackal from the gully near Pit 1 (Maggs & Ward 1984: 115).

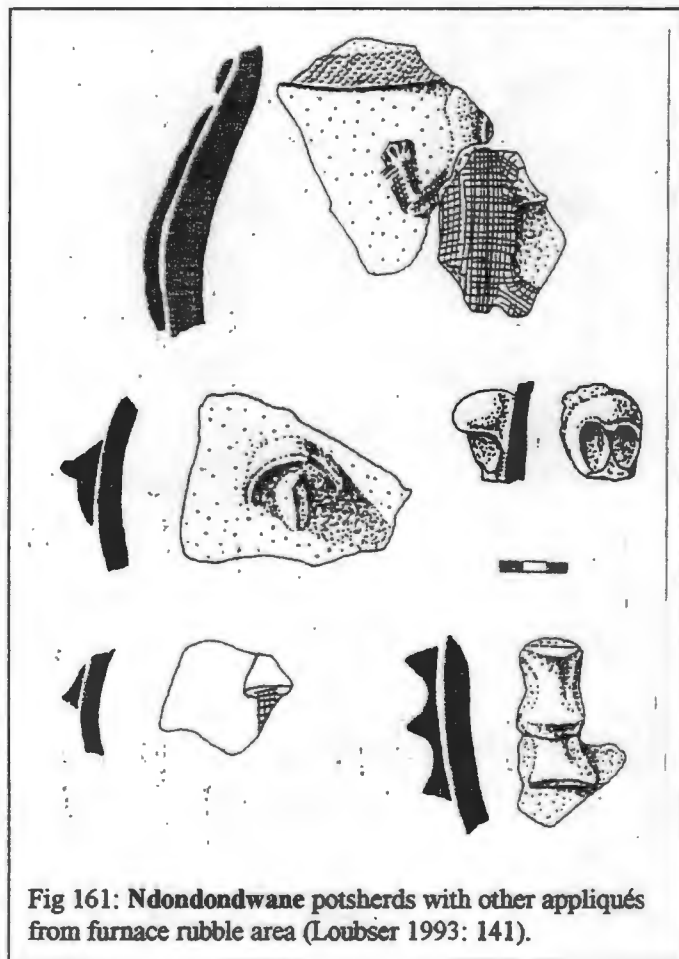
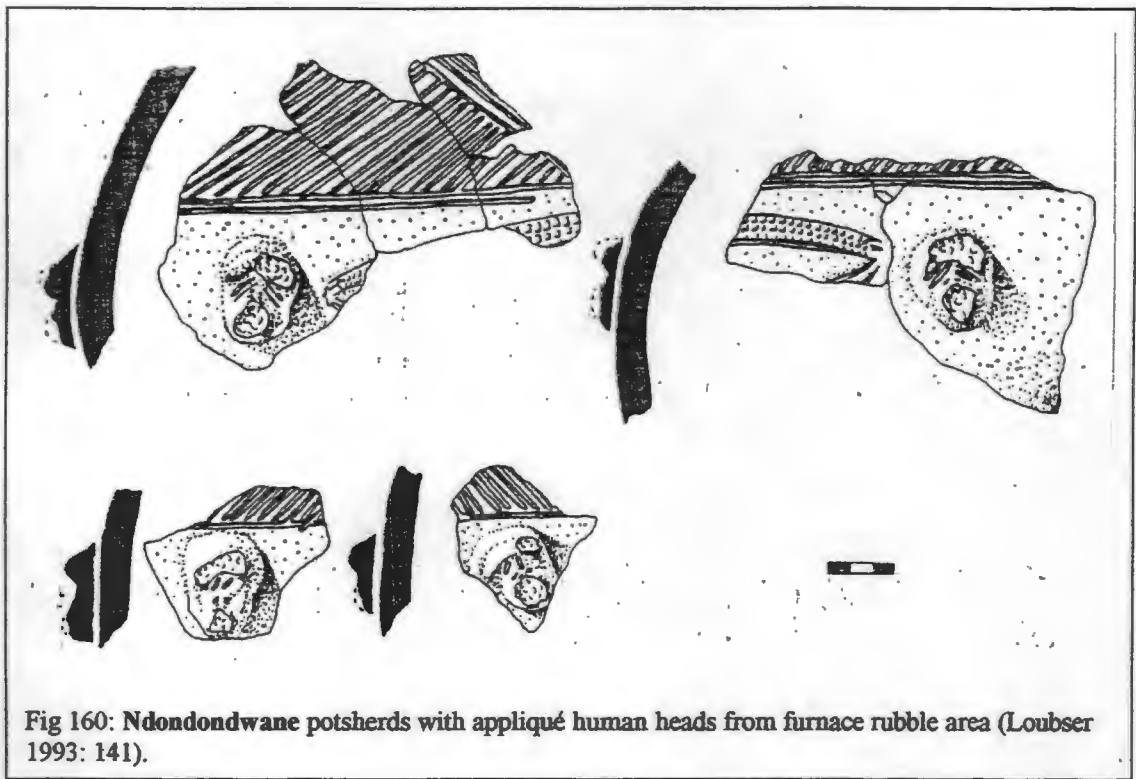
Other contents, such as “stone flakes, shell beads and a fresh water mussel pendant” (Binneman 1996(a): 29) take on added significance, the extent of which remains unknown, except that they may have been part of some form of sacrifice.

Such intimate personal possessions were probably unlikely to have been tossed into the pit unthinkingly or by mistake. Ritual placement of these important items, for whatever reason, seems to be congruent with a cosmology that may have identified strongly with an idea of holes in the earth as being portals into another realm, womblike, or at least as a space removed, safe and special. Such intentional burial of intimate personal possessions in the bottom of some pits appears to be quite a widespread First-Millennium Agriculturist practice. Maggs & Ward (1984: 115), for instance, record the presence of a “carefully placed group of four fitting mussel shells and two drilled canine teeth” [fig 159] at **Magogo** in KwaZulu-Natal.

Furthermore, burials of ceramic vessels, not necessarily in association with human remains, or pits, have also been widely excavated at First-Millennium Agriculturist sites in the rest of Africa south of the equator. Rachel MacLean (1998: 171) recorded such pots as having been found “hidden at the base of furnaces in Rwanda and Tanzania”²⁰². She commented, (citing Schmidt 1998: 143), that these vessels “have been interpreted as symbolic features, possibly containers for smelting ‘medicine’, a practice common in recent times”.

Ndondondwane has yielded remarkable vessels in association with furnace rubble. Jannie Loubser (1993: 125, 127, 141)

²⁰² MacLean cited Van Noten (1979: 65-67); and Schmidt & Childs (1985: 74-75, 81).



discovered potsherds with “appliqué heads [located] just below a band of counter hatched triangles on the vessel’s shoulder ... [and] each head has incisions on the face” [fig 160]. Such scarification on the appliqué face echoes the engraved incisions on the pot itself, cicatrization of a different calibre. “The furnace rubble [also] yielded a necked jar with a ... lizard-like ... creature moulded on its shoulder ... [and] other, less figurative, appliqués occur on vessels of unknown shape” [fig 161]. Given the close association with furnace rubble it can be speculated that the vessels and imagery evident in these potsherds probably embodied powerful metalworking medicine.

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 34) has also reported recovering a pot from within a 43cm ashy deposit “rich in large pieces of charcoal, pottery [and] small ore fragments” between SVP 80 and 81 at **KwaGandaganda**. Within this probable metal forging area

a pot had been buried in the subsoil near the base of the deposit. It was filled with an ashy material similar to the deposit above, and there *was no sign of a pit below*. A similar feature was found at **Msuluzi Confluence** near heaps of iron ore and slag (Maggs 1980(b), but its significance is unknown. (My emphasis.)

A suggestion for possible significance of the contents of such pots placed in or near metal forging or smelting areas, based on current and early historic accounts of the process among the Pangwa of Tanzania, has been offered by Peter Schmidt (1998: 140, 143). He, like Rachel MacLean (1998: 170), reported finding core iron smelting symbolism to be intimately associated with human reproduction processes. Schmidt (1998: 143) has, for instance, referred (citing Stirnimann 1976) to an “opening ... [which] was where the medicine pot, with its complex concoction



Fig 162: Ndondondwane burial of whole ceramic pot in quad T6, in centre of Dung area, facing magnetic SSW (Van Schalkwyk et al 1997: 68).

of symbolic semen, was inserted and [from] where bloom or 'baby' was also delivered"²⁰³.

Thus, without suggesting an exact one to one correspondence in cosmology and practice, possible interpretations for the **KwaGandaganda** and **Msuluzi Confluence** vessels interred in similar metalworking area surroundings are suggested. It has certainly become evident that much of First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics recovered in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape were items likely to have been deliberately interred for specific reasons, rather than being just bits and pieces of a previous civilisation haphazardly abandoned.

A vessel interred on its own was found at **Ndondondwane** [fig 162] from where Van Schalkwyk et al (1997: 68) have reported "the ritual burial of [an upright] whole pot at the supposed top entrance to the enclosure" of a cattle byre. That particular precautions and importance may have been attached to the entrance of such a possibly safe and communally central area, which may have served as a repository of both material and metaphysical wealth, may be thought of as likely. Consequently, the interment of a ceramic vessel and its original contents at the entrance, or opening, of a byre area may be regarded as being analogous in some ways to the interment of individual pots

²⁰³ Schmidt (1998: 143, 144) referred to a perception wherein "pots are vessels that metaphorically mimic the reproductive female attributes of the iron smelting furnace, a function that is amplified when the pot is situated inside the iron smelting furnace". He also recounted "a plethora of sexual symbols [that] were included among the ritual objects [inside the pot]: four juicy, 30cm long phallic creepers ... [and] leaves and a root that produce white liquids symbolic of semen; a plant with red flowers, symbolic of menstrual blood; and red sand, a symbol of dried blood". Schmidt has also suggested that "most important in this suite of symbols is that the entire female reproductive cycle is incorporated in the ritual ingredients ... Although symbols for semen tend to predominate, nonetheless this historic example unifies both male and female symbols rather than presenting a dichotomised symbolic field identified strictly with one gender".



Fig 163: **Mapungubwe: The Hill:** Covered cooking pot (Gardner 1963, plate V3: 177). This artefact may represent a variation of practise previously noted at **Nanda**, from where Whitelaw (1993: 52, 53) recorded a covered pot.

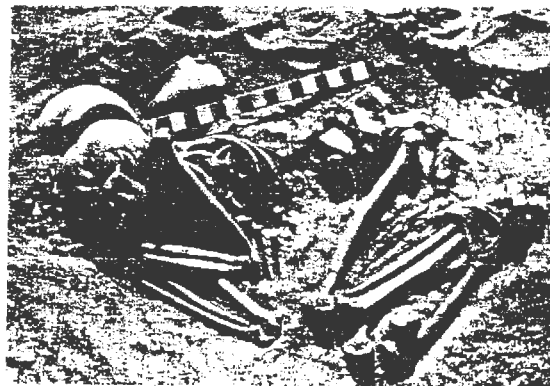


Fig 164: **K2** adult burial # 29 with “deliberately broken” ceramics (Gardner 1963: 44, 187).

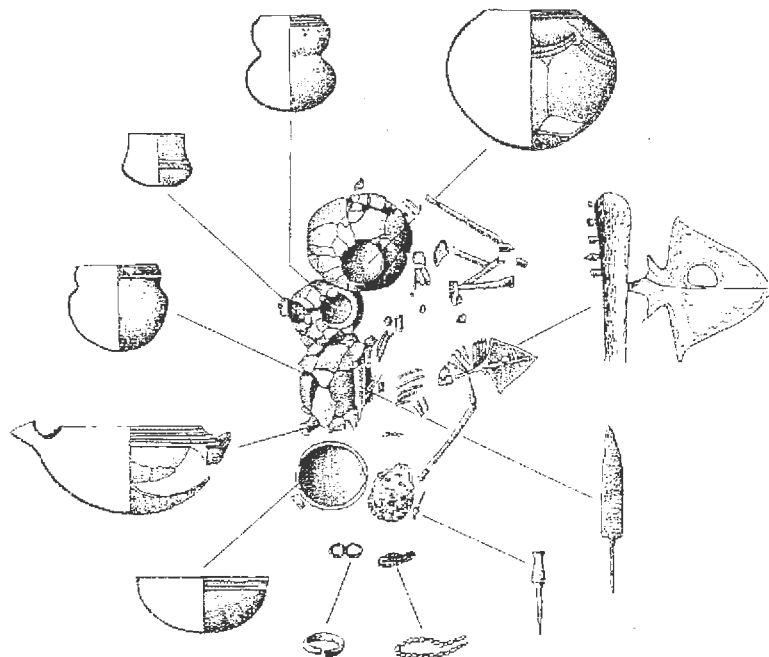


Fig 165: Early **Kisalian** burial of a man and grave goods, c. 8th – 9th Centuries AD (De Maret 1999: 156).

containing appropriate medicine in metalworking areas. In the next chapter deliberate deposition of ceramic objects other than vessels within and outside of byre areas is considered.

Before proceeding with this line of enquiry, however, it is appropriate to briefly mention that burial practices utilising ceramics are both geographically widespread, and are not confined to the First-Millennium Agriculturist era. Some spatial and cosmological continuities between first and second millennia, as indicated by reconfigured use value of ceramics is suggested, for instance, by deliberate burial of vessels on their own at **Mapungubwe**²⁰⁴ [fig 163]. Human adult burials have also often been associated with ceramic grave goods. Such reports have been recorded, for example, from **Nanda** (Whitelaw 1993: 52), **K2**²⁰⁵ (Gardner 1963: 187) [fig 164], and **Kisalia**²⁰⁶ (De Maret 1999: 156) [fig 165].

Reports of ceramics linked to first and second millennium burials of young children are plentiful. Such reports have come, for instance, from **K2** (Gardner 1963: 46, 188) and **Mapungubwe** (Gardner 1963: 52, 53, 176) [fig 166, overleaf] respectively. Furthermore, Maria van der Ryst has recounted (e-mails: 29/3/2000, 2/5/2000, and 28/2/2001) a recent recovery of a foetus/newborn baby buried in a pot "lifted during a salvage operation" at **Lapalala Wilderness** in the Waterberg, Northern Province. She also mentioned that Jan Boeyens and herself had previously found "another pot burial" at **Kirstenbos** in the Waterberg"²⁰⁷. Of particular significance here is that enquiries in

²⁰⁴ Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist site situated in the Limpopo Basin, Northern Province.

²⁰⁵ First-Millennium Agriculturist site, Limpopo Basin, Northern Province, near **Mapungubwe**.

²⁰⁶ First-Millennium Agriculturist site, Upemba Depression, Zaire.

²⁰⁷ The publication cited by her is: Van der Ryst 1998.

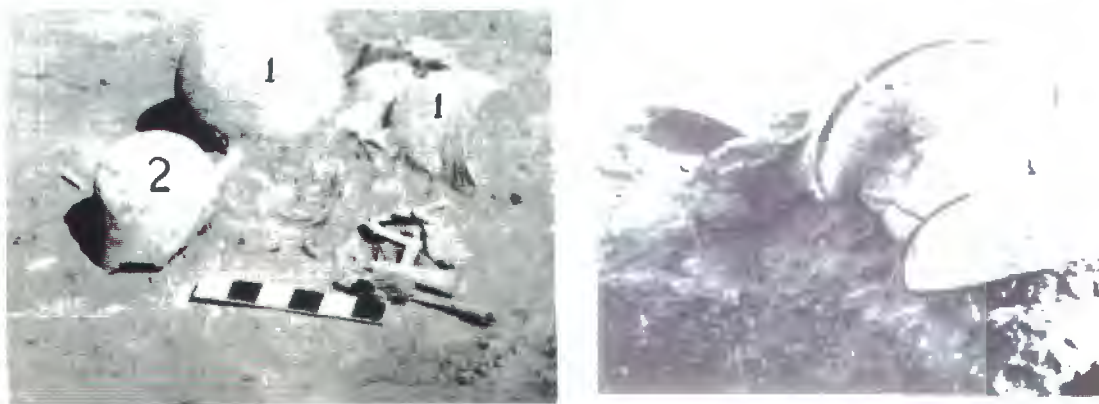


Fig 166: First and Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist child burials: K2 young child burial # 38 [left]. A broken portion of the pot marked 1 had been placed over the front side of the head. When the two vessel pieces marked 1 were joined the vessel was found to be complete (Gardner 1963: 46, 188). Mapungubwe, The Hill young child burial #26 with ceramics. The deceased was placed in a flexed position, on right side, facing east (Gardner 1963: 52, 53, 176).

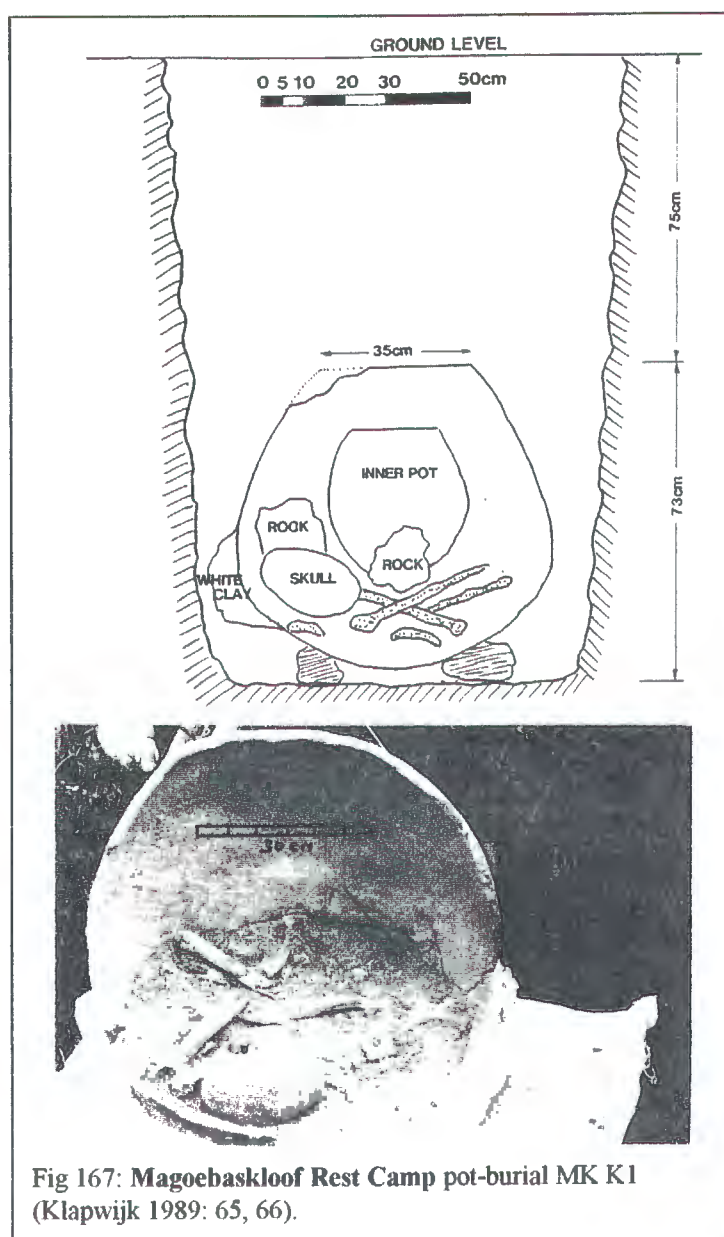


Fig 167: Magoebaskloof Rest Camp pot-burial MK K1 (Klapwijk 1989: 65, 66).

the Waterberg subsequent to the recent salvage operation at **Lapalala** revealed that "the local people, at least in recent memories, continued with this practice".

Other examples of ceramics use value in burial contexts include placing of body parts within vessels prior to interment. Mason (1981: 405) has reported ceramics associated with deposition of adult human body parts from the First-Millennium Agriculturist site of **Broederstroom**. He described the contents of Burial 6 as "part of mandible and maxillar and traces of cranium. Found under an inverted jar".

Klapwijk (1989: 65-69) has also recorded such "dismembering of bodies in order to fit them into pots" for the Precolonial Second-Millennium site **Magoebaskloof Rest Camp** near Tzaneen. "Pot-burial MK K1" [fig 167] features an inner pot containing "the radius, humerus, tibia, femur and ilium". A "skull [and] fragments of the mandible and some teeth" were found between the inner and outer vessels. Furthermore, the inner pot had been pierced, having had its base removed prior to deposition. Another vessel from this site, "Pot-burial MK K3"²⁰⁸, sealed with sherds and stones, contained human bones "lying in random fashion in the pot with the skull on top" [fig 168, overleaf].

Given that ceramic vessels have been carefully interred in various settings by Agriculturist peoples throughout the previous two millennia, it is likely that other ceramic items of material

²⁰⁸ Klapwijk (1989: 69) commented that the remains may have been "of human sacrifices", and that closure of pot openings may have served "to contain the spirit" of the deceased. He also suggested that the unusual nature of the **Magoebaskloof** burials is "more apparent when normal burials are considered. Posselt (1935) noted that at **Penhalonga**, Zimbabwe, holes were normally left in stone-filled graves to allow the spirit to escape. Similarly, Thornycroft (1974) described a rock burial which included a 'shaft' to give the spirit a passage to the outside".

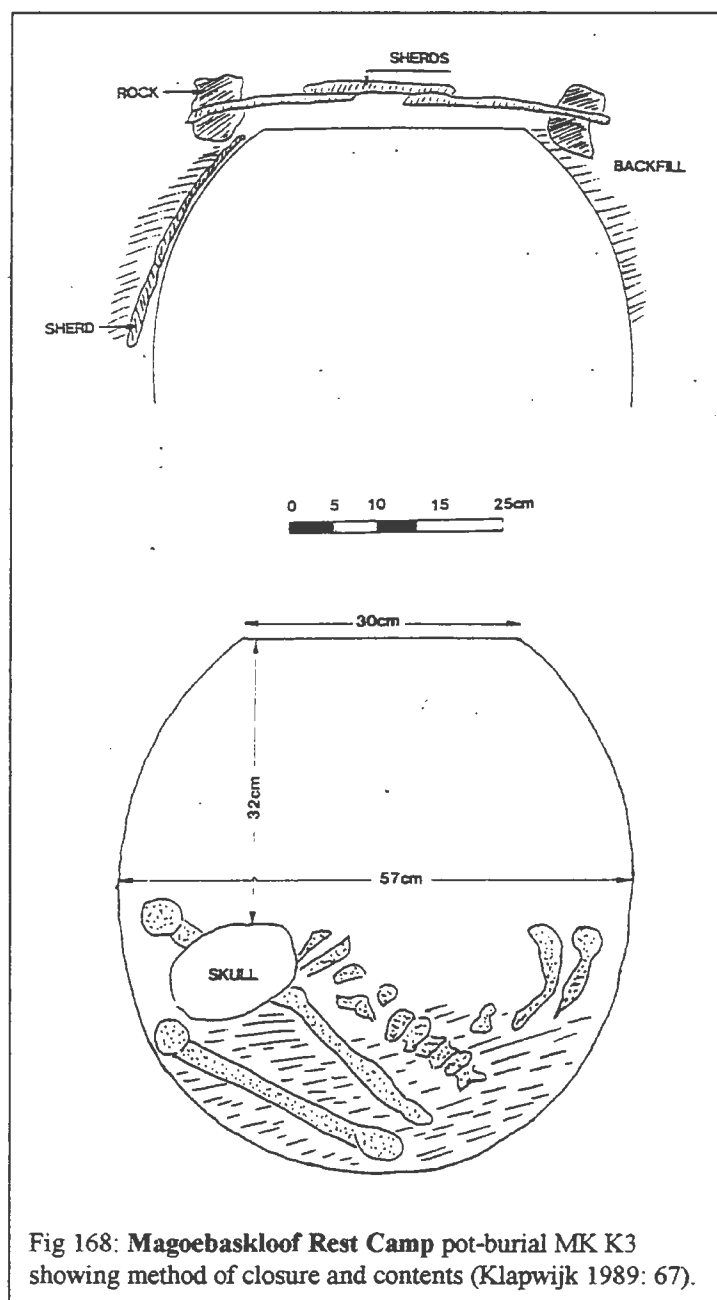
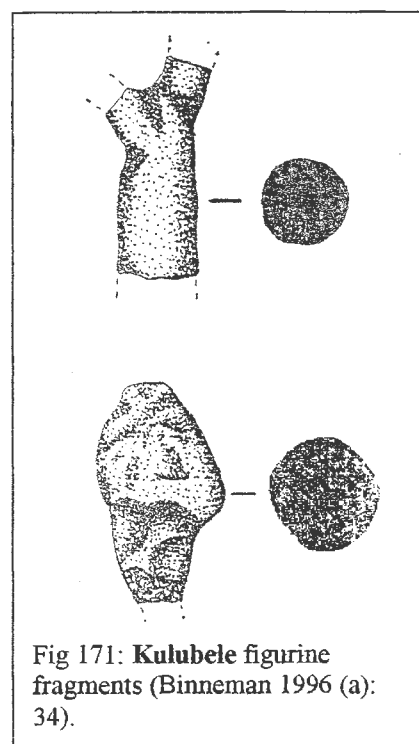
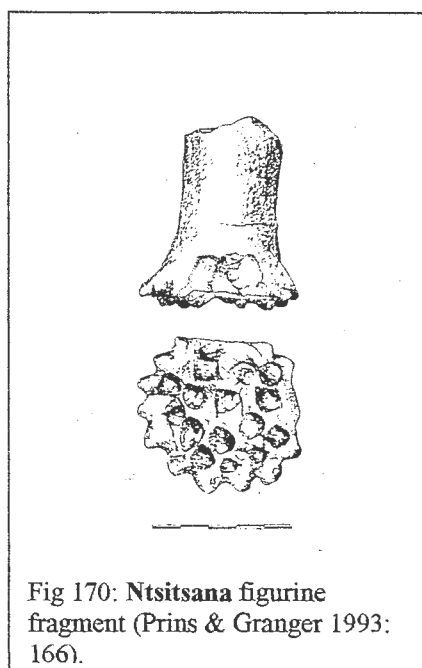
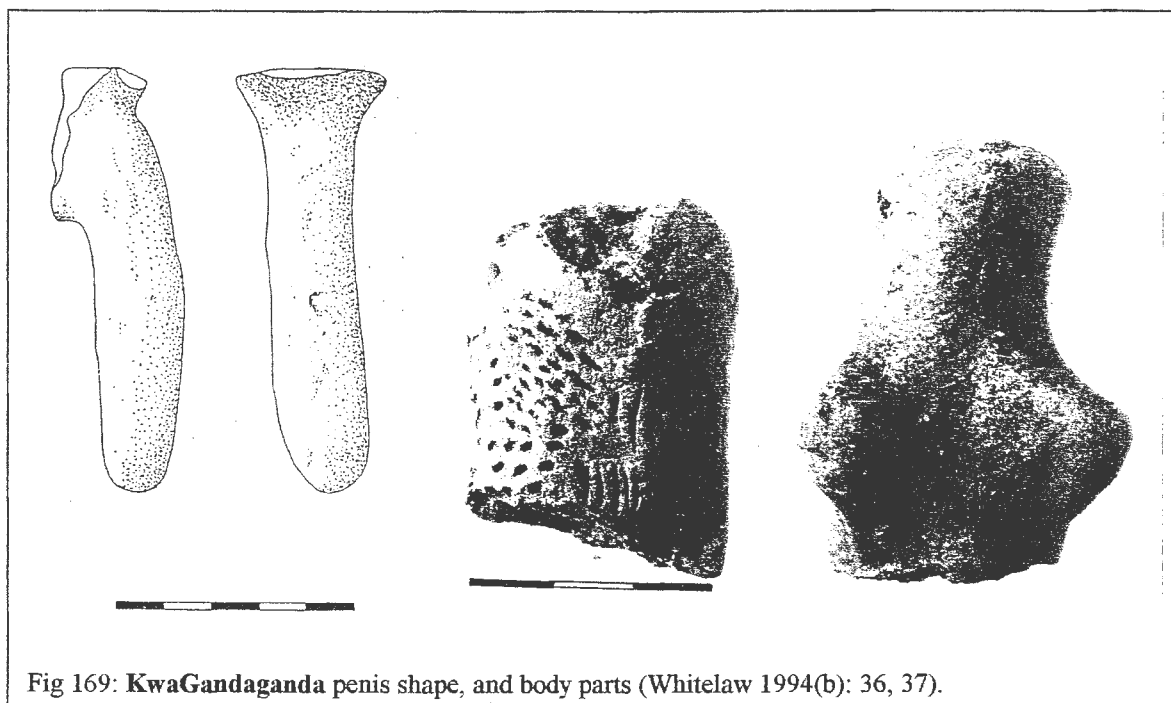


Fig 168: Magoebaskloof Rest Camp pot-burial MK K3 showing method of closure and contents (Klapwijk 1989: 67).

culture will have been just as deliberately deposited. Likewise, it is unlikely that any particular aspect of a ceramics assemblage lacks importance. Thus, in the next chapter, possible significances associated with various ceramic figurine remains, and the settings in which these items have been found, are investigated.



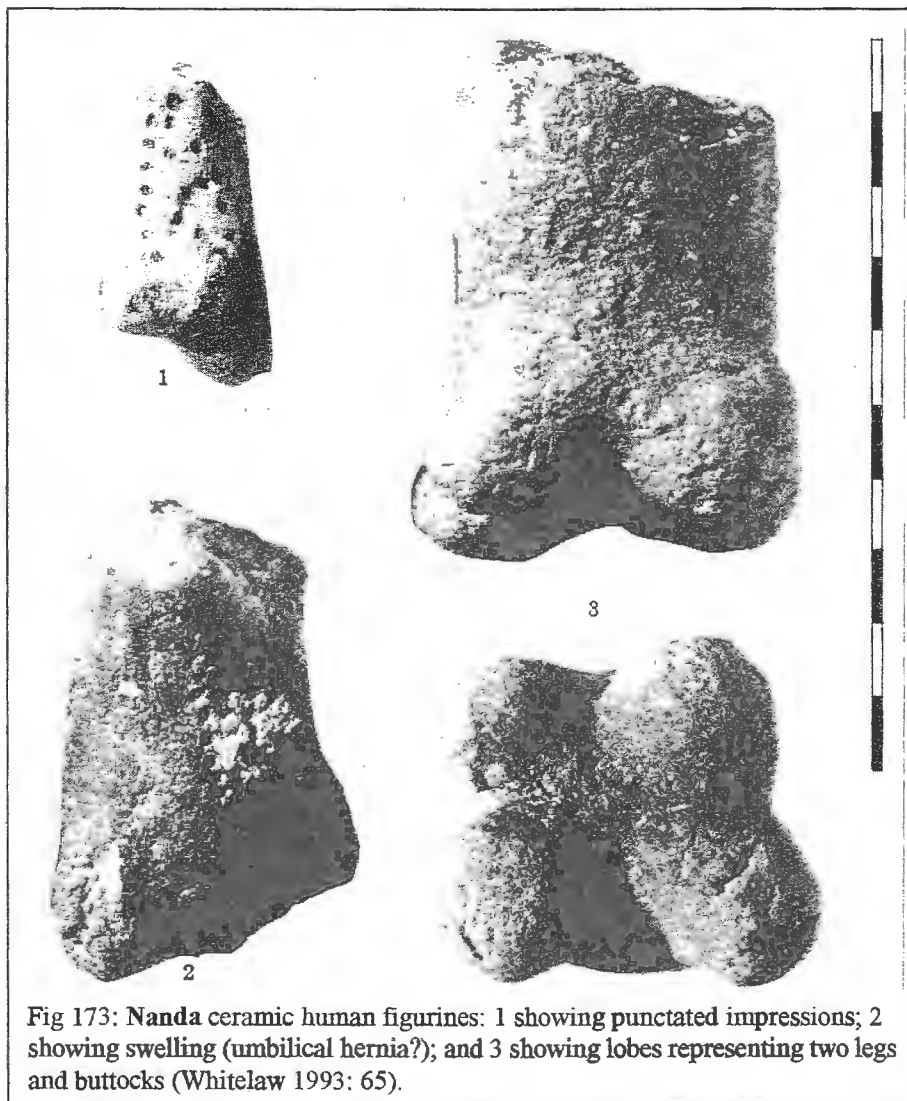
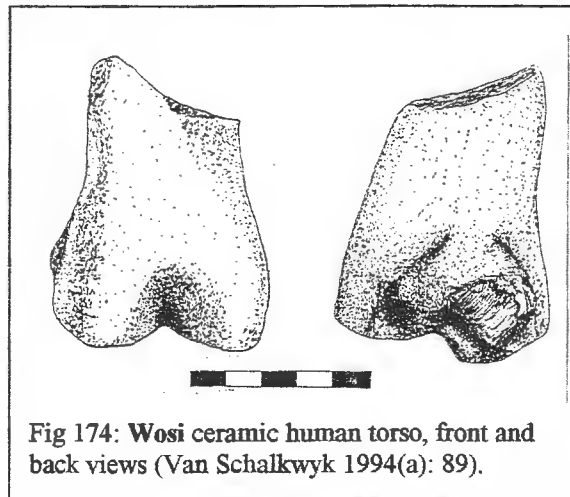
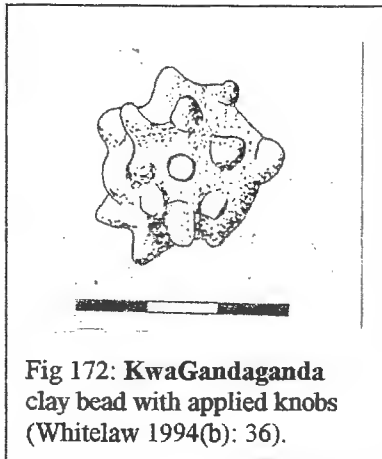
Chapter 6

FIGURINES AND EVULSIONS: MARKING TIME

Other First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic artefacts found deliberately deposited in or near byre areas include smallish, possibly palm sized or less, solid figurine fragments. At **KwaGandaganda**, for instance, Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 35-38) reported ceramic sculpture as coming from midden deposits on the southern edge of Byre 1, and the Byre itself. Other sculptural fragments may have been associated with Pits 2 and 3. Some of these finds [fig 169] were described by Whitelaw as "fragments of [human] figurine bodies ... a penis-shaped object ... two of the figurine bodies have incision marks".

Prins and Granger (1993: 165, 166, 170) discovered solid figurine fragments at **Ntsitsana** [fig 170] in Pit 2, for instance, which was "situated at a distance from, and not directly related to the stock byre". Thus, just as differences between deposition practices featuring other types of artefacts have been noted amongst different early farming communities, so there appears to be no hard and fast rule as to where the figurine fragments would be buried. Nonetheless, remarkable similarities between these artefacts and those from **Kulubele** and elsewhere become apparent upon closer inspection.

From **Kulubele** [fig 171] Johan Binneman (1996(a): 31) has reported the recovery of "several small ceramic fragments ..., which may have been parts of figurines". As is characteristic of the **Kulubele** 1996(a) site report, not many specific comments are



offered regarding possible use value or associated deposition practises. To try and get an idea of thinkings that may have motivated creation of these images by people living in a real community of women, men and children it is again useful to look within a wider context.

Returning to the figurines from **KwaGandaganda** and **Ntsitsana** for some such context, these sculpted fragments appear to be quite abstracted representations featuring human physical characteristics. The pieces seem to usually have been modelled from a solid piece of clay, probably by a rolling and pinching/pulling method, rather than by paring away subtractively from an already slightly hardened lump. As can be seen from the **Ntsitsana** fragments, and a clay bead from **KwaGandaganda** [fig 172], sometimes knobs or pieces of clay have been attached to a basic shape.

A stylistic emphasis on abstraction rather than on exact representation of particular physical features predominates, suggesting that realism was not an objective of this creative process. Some sufficiently intact human figurines, such as those from **Nanda** [fig 173] "represent lower human torsos with stumpy legs and accentuated buttocks" (Whitelaw 1993: 59). Characteristically, these figurines seem to feature a semi-cylindrical torso fattening towards the genital area. Such a plump lower region can also be observed, for instance, in some small figurines from **Wosi** [fig 174]. Despite relative absence of clearly articulated breasts in the **Wosi** and other assemblages, general appearance of these small artefacts has suggested to Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) that "many figurines ... are models of human females".

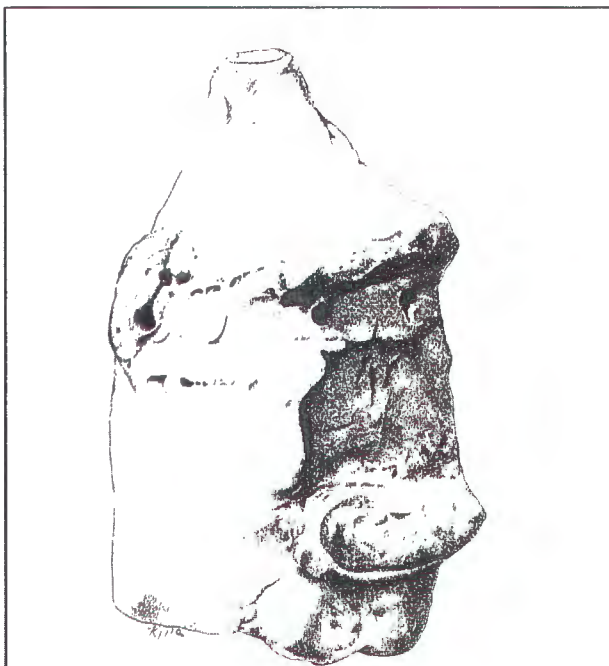


Fig 175: **KwaGandaganda** small ceramic head from trench 2 U3. Height 50mm (Whitelaw 1994(b): 37).

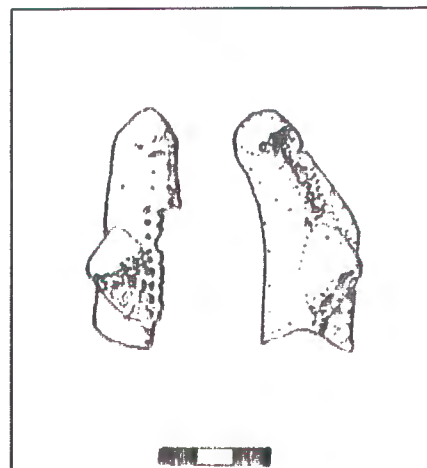


Fig 177: **Ndondondwane** intact head and torso segment (Loubser 1993: 146).



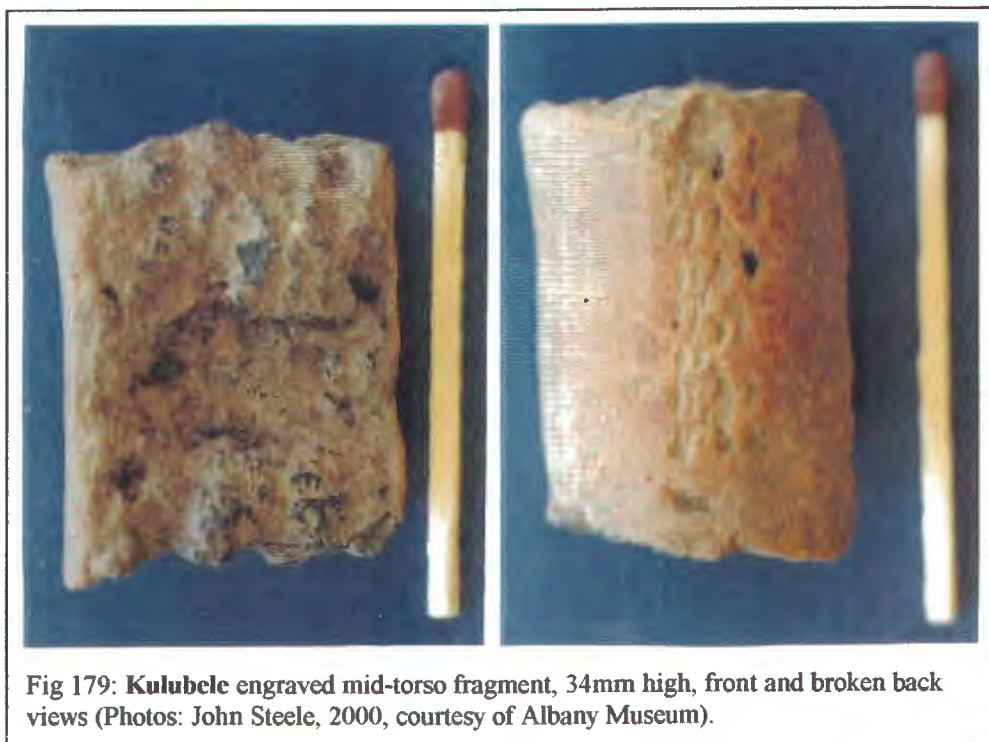
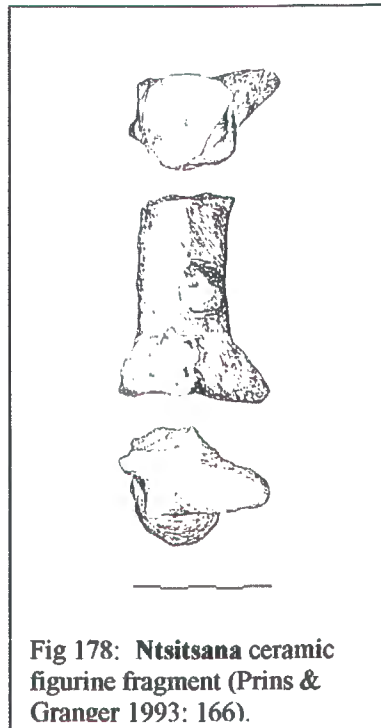
Fig 176: **Magogo** solidly modelled torso [62mm high], rear view shows possibly deliberate break at the neck (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

Absence of heads on the **KwaGandaganda**, **Kulubele**, **Nanda** and **Wosi** figurines, amongst others, makes the rare discovery of a small (50cm high) detached solid head at **KwaGandaganda** [fig 175] particularly noteworthy. Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) has suggested that indications are that the heads may have been deliberately broken off prior to burial [fig 176].

Rarity of heads in the archaeological record may indicate that they were disposed of separately from the torsos, perhaps entirely destroyed, or discarded outside of village space. Without a particular body to attach the **KwaGandaganda** solidly modelled head to, it remains an anomaly. It can, however, be seen that the facial features, like the other torsos, were not modelled realistically. It is safe to think that the makers specifically chose to represent facial and other human features semi-abstractly because of a probably symbolic purpose for these artefacts.

This observation is provisionally confirmed by the presence of an intact head and torso segment retrieved from the mound area at **Ndondondwane** [fig 177]. This figurine is described as having "broken along the line of a double row of puncta on the front of the body...[and has] an arm or breast [that] protrudes from the intact side" (Loubser 1993: 132). The head on this figurine is so severely abstracted that it appears more like a knob than anything else, indicating that for this piece at least, the head area was of secondary importance and reduced to a minimal symbol only.

Some possible thinkings prompting such stylistic choices, and motivations behind what appears to be deliberate breakage of the figurines prior to deposition, have been suggested by several researchers with reference to cultural practices in the 'ethnographic present'. Frans Prins (1993: 153), for instance, has



noted that sculptures recovered at **Ntsitsana** show "striking similarities to clay human figurines made as toys by Mpondomise girls" in present era Transkei. Remarking on the usual occurrence of breakage at the upper torso [fig 178] of First-Millennium Agriculturist small human sculptures he has also suggested that "breakage may be ritual and ...[these] figurines suggest an association with initiation".

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) largely concurs with this suggestion, adding that "ceramic or wooden figurines are used by a number of Bantu-speaking groups in initiation schools today"²⁰⁹. He also cited Evers & Hammond-Tooke 1986, Inskeep & Maggs 1975, and Loubser 1993 as scholars who have argued First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic sculpture as having possibly been "associated with rites of passage". Furthermore, he has drawn attention to a frequent appearance of clay body incisions on torsos, and noted that human scarification practices have been observed in the 'ethnographic present' as being part of "transformation from girl to woman"²¹⁰ rituals. If indeed these solidly modelled First-Millennium Agriculturist sculptures were in some or other way part of a transition into womanhood practice, a strong emphasis seems to have been placed on the torso zone. Such emphasis on the torso is enhanced by a frequent display of lateral, vertical and punctated clay body incisions.

Such engravings are evident on an as yet unpublished probable torso fragment from **Kulubele** [fig 179], on many of the examples already illustrated, as well as on those excavated at **Magogo** [fig 180, overleaf - see also fig 176]. Upon closer inspection of the **Magogo** torsos it becomes evident that the clay body incisions

²⁰⁹ Here Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) cited Mönnig 1967; Nettleton 1989; Richards 1945; and Stayt 1968.

²¹⁰ Here Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) cited Earthy 1924-26; and Junod 1962.



Fig 180: **Magogo** engraved mid-torso fragments, 92 mm [left] and 97mm high respectively (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

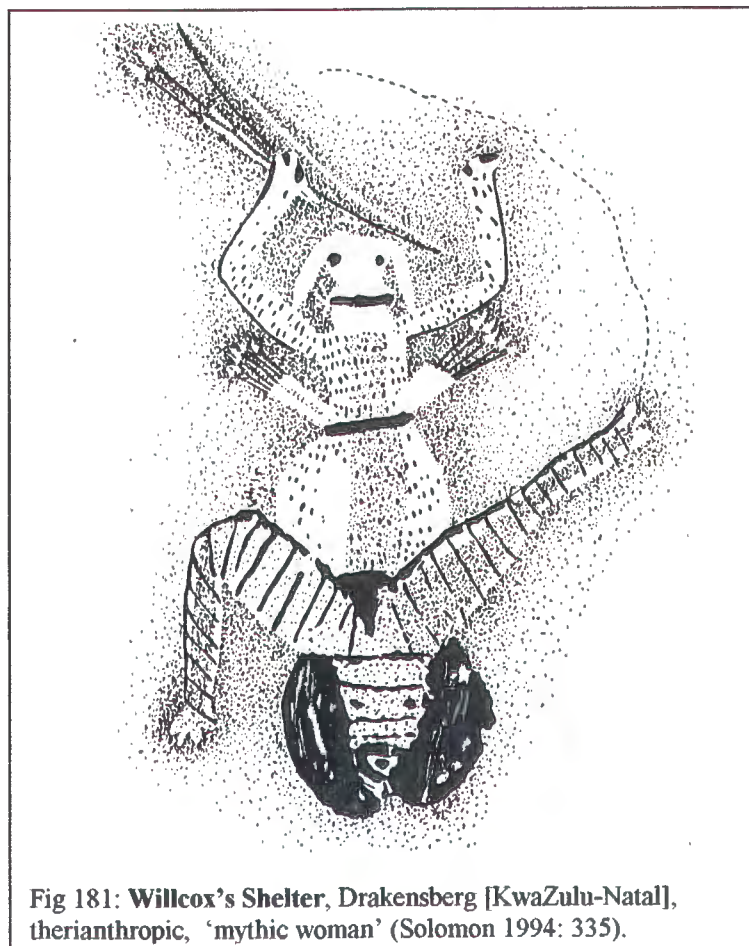


Fig 181: **Willcox's Shelter**, Drakensberg [KwaZulu-Natal], therianthrope, 'mythic woman' (Solomon 1994: 335).

encourage a focus of attention specifically towards the umbilical and genital areas, serving to conceptually link the two. Such explicit use of anatomical reference may have symbolised particular power/energy centres that were thought to have been located in these zones. A focus on umbilical and genital regions, enhanced by plumpness, may have been associated with thinkings about human reproduction, and associated mythologies, especially if these sculptures were used during the liminal phase of a rite of passage. Anne Solomon (1994: 363), in an admittedly different context of San mythic women rock art imagery, has suggested that some "female-linked sexual symbolism" is associated with significances of menstrual blood and amniotic fluids as powerful "communicatory / mediatory substances" [fig 181].

That the **Magogo** figurine does not 'show' female bodily fluids does not mean that such fluids would not have been considered as part of a symbolic package connoted by such a sculpture. If indeed this, and other small sculptures, had once been part of a "rite of passage" (Whitelaw 1994(b): 51) associated with changes in female reproductive capacity, considerations of potencies associated with menstrual cycles, birth, and death may well have featured prominently.

Such considerations would have been articulated according to agriculturist cosmology, perhaps along broadly similar lines to those sketched by Solomon as representative of some relevant San thinkings²¹¹. The **Magogo**, and other solidly modelled

²¹¹ Solomon (1994: 351, 352) has observed: "San narratives make extensive use of anatomical and biophysiological symbolism ... [wherein] fat, as a symbol of fertility and prosperity, is associated particularly with femaleness, and especially the female initiate" (citing Solomon 1989, 1990, 1992; and Lewis-Williams 1981). She (1994: 337) has also noted: "Female body fluids – menstrual blood and amniotic fluid – are (Footnote continued overleaf)



Fig 182: **Kulubele** solid figurine fragment, height 30mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).

figurines such as those from **Kulubele** [fig 182], draw attention to conceptions of the human female body as constituting a potent presence within the landscape, both as biological organism and as a cultural construct.

Gavin Whitelaw (1994(b): 51) has suggested that destruction, in the form of breakage and burial, "typically symbolises an irreversible change of status ... [and may have] had a didactic function in the teaching of proper social behaviour". Such utilisation of figurines as part of activities geared towards meaningfully understanding lifeway changes would have probably taken place within specially designated physical spaces.

In a look at spatial organisation as evidence for girls' initiation rites at **eMgungundlovu**²¹² F. Roodt (1992: 9, 12) has found features that "can be interpreted as evidence of *umgongo* screens built for the purpose of secluding a girl initiate when reaching puberty. [Such seclusion took place upon] her first menstruation, and [may have lasted for] any period of up to three months" (citing Krige 1936: 101). Perhaps it was during this time of seclusion, if indeed such an occurrence took place, that some of the small ceramic figurines were made, utilised and eventually deposited. Without wishing to impose an unacceptable "presentism" (Dobres 1992: 2) on matters of initiation or solid

particularly associated with *n/ow*, a potency which is central to beliefs about birth and death, and good and bad weather ... Various San narratives suggest that constructions of female anatomy and biophysiology are fundamental to conceptualisation of the universe, its origins, the current order, and the current place of men and women within it" (citing Bieseke 1975, 1993; Huffman 1983; Marshall 1957, 1976; and Marshall Thomas 1959).

²¹² **Umgungundlovu** was established in AD 1829 as the main seat and military headquarters of the Zulu king uDingane ... The settlement was located in the emaKhosini valley, which forms part of the greater White Umfolozi drainage system (Roodt 1992: 9).

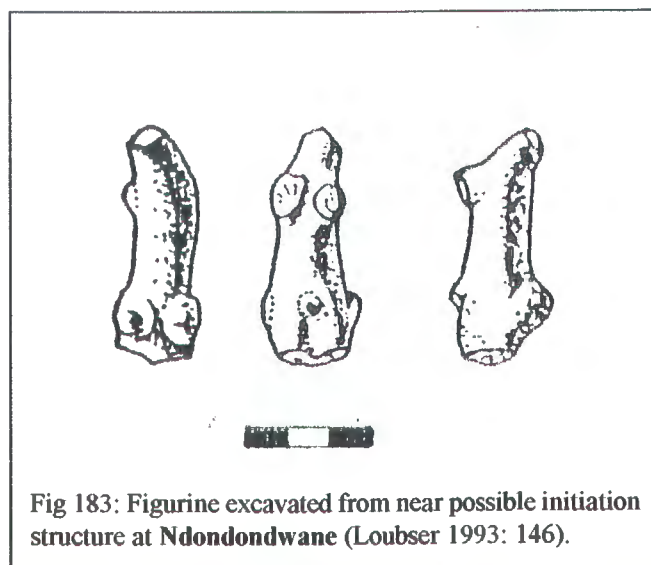
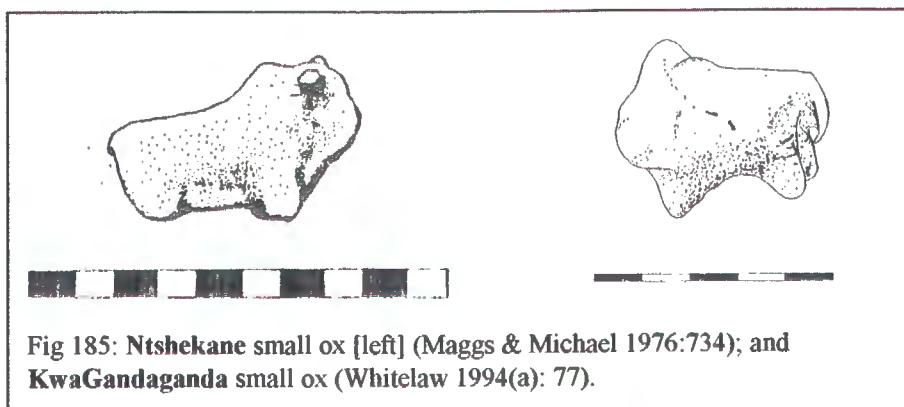


Fig 184: **Kulubele** ceramics fragment in the shape of an animal horn (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



ceramic figurines, it is nonetheless useful to explore this line of thinking a little further.

Jannie Loubser (1993: 145, 147) indicated, for instance, that “a survey of historical and ethnographic literature” has shown that within some “communities male and female initiates, mainly during puberty and premarital ceremonies, are shown various sacred objects”. Towards the end of these ceremonies the objects were “either discarded or burnt ... together with the initiation lodge” ²¹³ (my footnote). Furthermore, he is of the opinion that evidence for a pole and branch enclosure that may have served as an initiation related structure was discovered at **Ndondondwane** “in the mound area” within which “broken ceramic figurines” had been buried. One such figurine is described as “a female body with pronounced buttocks ... The legs and breasts are broken” (Loubser 1993: 132, 141, 146, 147) [fig 183].

Other than human figurines, **Kulubele** ceramic artefacts of interest include a “fragment in the shape of a horn [that] may have been part ... of a sculptured ceramic animal ...” (Binneman 1996(a): 34) [fig 184]. Significances of this find become apparent when contextualised with others from First-Millennium Agriculturist sites, including a discovery at **KwaGandaganda** of a “small ox” in “Pit 2 in Grid 6” (Whitelaw 1994(a): 77) [fig 185]. This pit had been dug into a midden, and “yielded bone fragments, small sherds, charcoal, upper and broken lower grindstones and miscellaneous stone”, a context that at least indicates that burial may have been deliberate.

²¹³ Here Loubser (1993: 147) cited Van Warmelo (1932: 74), and Hammond-Tooke (1981: 59, 76); and Krige & Krige (1980: 138).

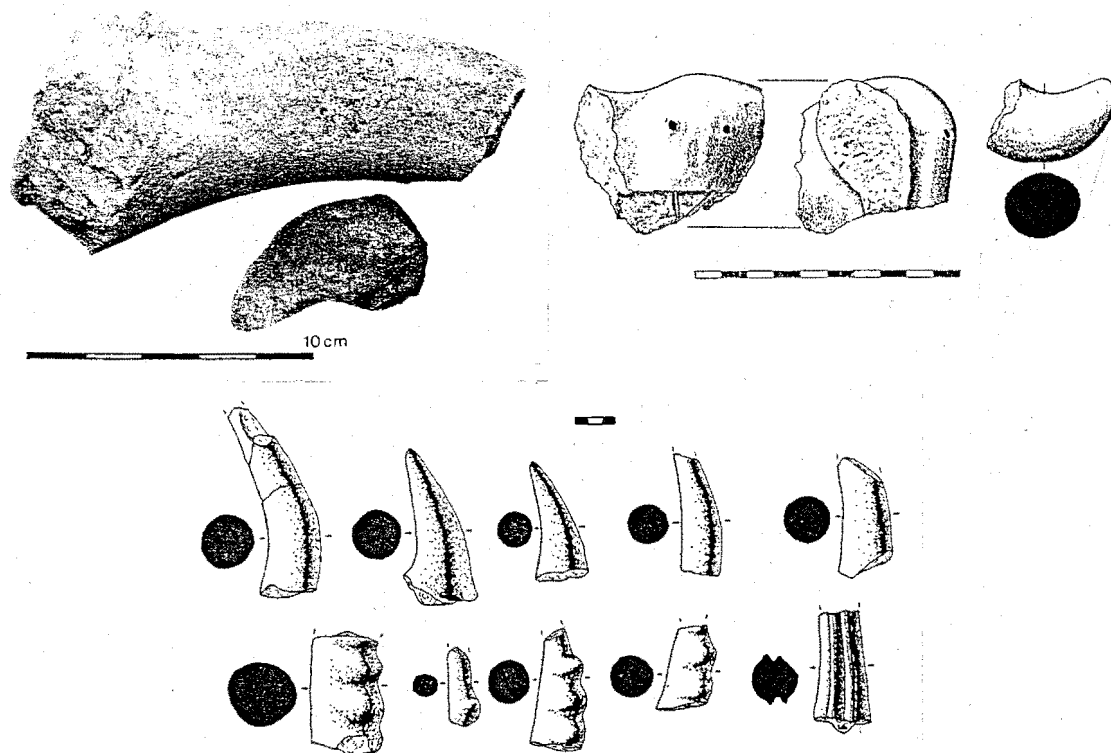


Fig 186: Horn shapes from **Magogo** [above left] (Maggs & Ward 1984: 122); an animal figurine with possible 'horn', probably cattle from **Msuluzi Confluence** [above right] (Maggs 1980(b): 132); and horn shapes "probably associated with hollow ceramic heads" from **Ndondondwane** (Loubser 1993: 145).

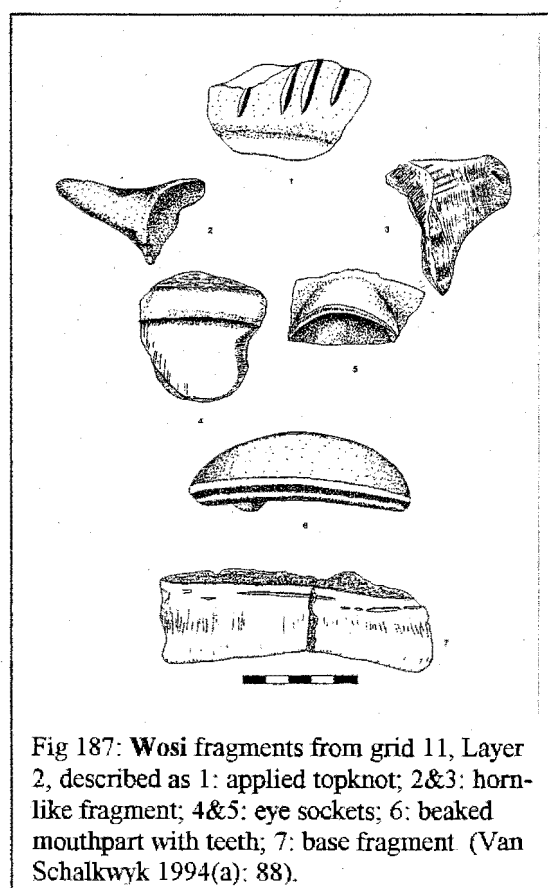


Fig 187: **Wosi** fragments from grid 11, Layer 2, described as 1: applied topknot; 2&3: horn-like fragment; 4&5: eye sockets; 6: beaked mouthpart with teeth; 7: base fragment (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 88).

Furthermore, the far more frequent occurrence of broken horn shapes than oxen from **Magogo**, **Msuluzi Confluence**, and **Ndondondwane**²¹⁴ [fig 186], amongst other sites, indicate that they may not necessarily have originally been parts of such oxen. Johan Binneman (1996(a): 31) has commented that the **Kulubele** horn shapes may have been "part either of a sculptured ceramic animal or *attached to a mask*" (my emphasis).

In the absence at **Kulubele**, to date, of either animal figurines large enough to have carried such horn shapes, or masks for that matter, it is once again useful to turn to a wider First-Millennium Agriculturist milieu in an effort to locate some social context significances that these artefacts may hint at. Interestingly, these shapes appear frequently in conjunction with other sculpted fragments, as at **Wosi** (Van Schalkwyk 1994(a): 88), that are clearly associated with "hollow ceramic head fragments" [fig 187], giving credence to Binneman's *attached to a mask* suggestion.

Len Van Schalkwyk (1994(a): 82) recounted that of the **Wosi** collection "none of the pieces could be fitted together", and may thus represent more than one hollow ceramic sculpture. He also explicitly noted that "a broken clay horn of similar size as the other fragments suggests that some sculptures were horned". Furthermore, a possible allusion to human heads in some of the fragments was seen by Van Schalkwyk, leading him to suggest, "these sculptures appear to have been therianthropic in form".

The **Wosi** collection of mask fragments is by no means an isolated occurrence. Clay mask fragments, including a horn

²¹⁴ **Magogo** (Maggs & Ward 1984: 122); **Msuluzi Confluence** (Maggs 1980(b): 132); **Ndondondwane** (Loubser 1993: 145).

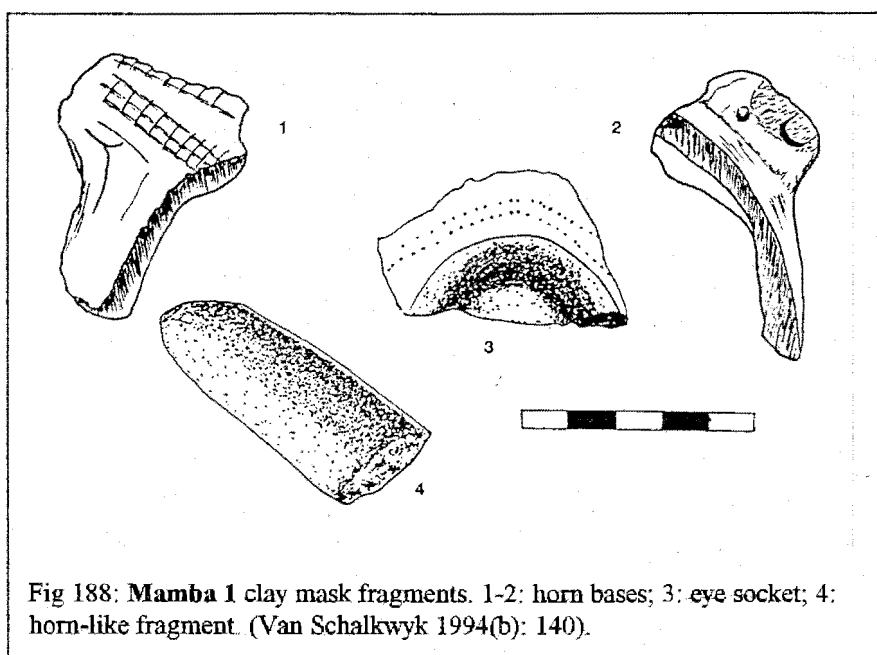


Fig 188: **Mamba 1** clay mask fragments. 1-2: horn bases; 3: eye socket; 4: horn-like fragment. (Van Schalkwyk 1994(b): 140).

shape, have also been recovered from area A11 at **Mamba 1** [fig 188], the same square from which small shell disc-beads, and two ground *Cypraea* marine shells that may "have served as body adornment" were recovered. Furthermore, "four baked pottery beads, roughly 1cm in diameter and 1-1.5 cm in length, each with a hole through its length, were recovered from the matrix of A11. The holes suggest that the beads were strung and they may possibly have served as body adornment" (Van Schalkwyk 1994(b): 138). In an effort to catch a glimpse of a social context it can thus be suggested that other activities that took place near where these mask fragments were found may have included a divesting, for whatever reason, of items of personal adornment.

Area A11 at **Mamba 1** has been described by Van Schalkwyk (1994(b): 125,126) as having been a dump of an ashy matrix, marked by a small surface scatter of stone manuports and river cobbles in a clearing within a thorn thicket. This spot in the landscape was "probably a dump for domestic rubbish for it yielded the richest pottery and bone [cattle and ovicaprine] sample of the whole site". A view of possible social context increases appreciably with an observation that area A11 is situated 150m away from a "mound of furnace debris, roughly 6m in diameter...[that] indicated an extensive period of smelting" at the latter locale.

Such proximity of activity areas serves as a reminder that even though such areas may have been separated by space, they were utilised by peoples of the same community. That First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples chose to engage in daily domestic activities around the homestead that included farming, pot making, and metalworking should be regarded as enterprises aimed at ensuring ongoing and future communal well-being. Small ceramic figurines, and these clay mask fragments, thus hint

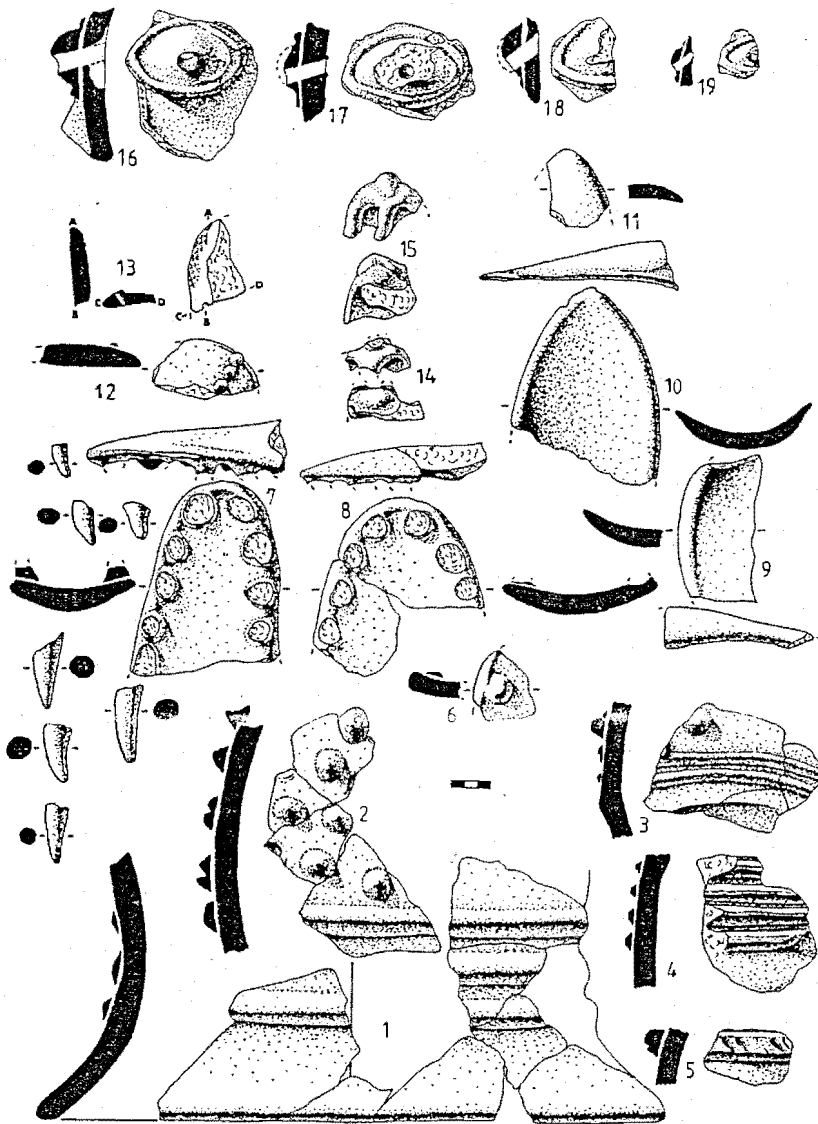


Fig 189: Ndondondwane fragments of hollow ceramic heads, with several horn shapes illustrated on the left. The sherds are on average 17mm thick, slightly thicker than ordinary potsherds which are around 14mm thick. As evidence for the presence of different heads-Loubser pointed out that the temper and surface texture of #s 1&2 differ from #3, which in turn differs from #s 4&5. Support for the existence of more than one ceramic head also comes from eight fragments resembling beaks, #s 6-13, which Loubser differentiated into at least four different groups. He also noted the presence of fragments with nostril-like shaped holes, #s 14&15, adding that the broken base of each fragment indicates that they were attached to a slightly curved ceramic surface, most likely a beak. He also observed that most noses have appliques on top, the one in the form of a band and the other in the form of knobs. Four eyes, #s 16-19, each of which has a bulging ball which is pierced, also suggests more than one head, especially considering that one eye is slightly smaller than the rest. (This description was loosely quoted from Loubser1993: 127-132. The graphic appears on page 144).

at ways of thinking and acting which were probably fundamentally aimed at securing the future by means of a series of actions.

Relatively extensive deposits of ceramic hollow head sculpture fragments at **Ndondondwane** [fig 189] have been mostly retrieved from against the outside of the mound area enclosure. Jannie Loubser (1993:141) reported discovering "at least four heads ... all [of which] were broken before being discarded"²¹⁵ *against the enclosure*" (my emphasis). Significantly, this is the same enclosure referred to earlier as the space within which solidly modelled human figurines had been deposited (Loubser 1993: 141). Thus a picture emerges of the mound area enclosure, centrally located within the settlement and in conjunction with the livestock byre, as having been a place of fundamental ritual significance to the community of that time.

Excavation of the ashy matrix of the mound area "suggests at least five episodes of dumping" (Loubser 1993: 113), two of which, when rendered diagrammatically, show the spread of successive depositions of hollow head ceramic sculpture [fig 190, overleaf]. Such successive deposition events alongside the enclosure perimeter in the mound area indicate both repeated intentional deposition in that space of this type of artefact, and an ongoing special regard for that particular spot as being ritually appropriate.

²¹⁵ Evidence for breakage prior to deposition can be found in the wide distribution of sculpted sherds possibly from the same mask within the mound area itself. The discovery, for instance, of "pieces of the same ceramic head [that] came from the mound and the dung area, more than 40m apart" (Loubser 1993: 140) further suggests the likelihood of breakage prior to deposition.

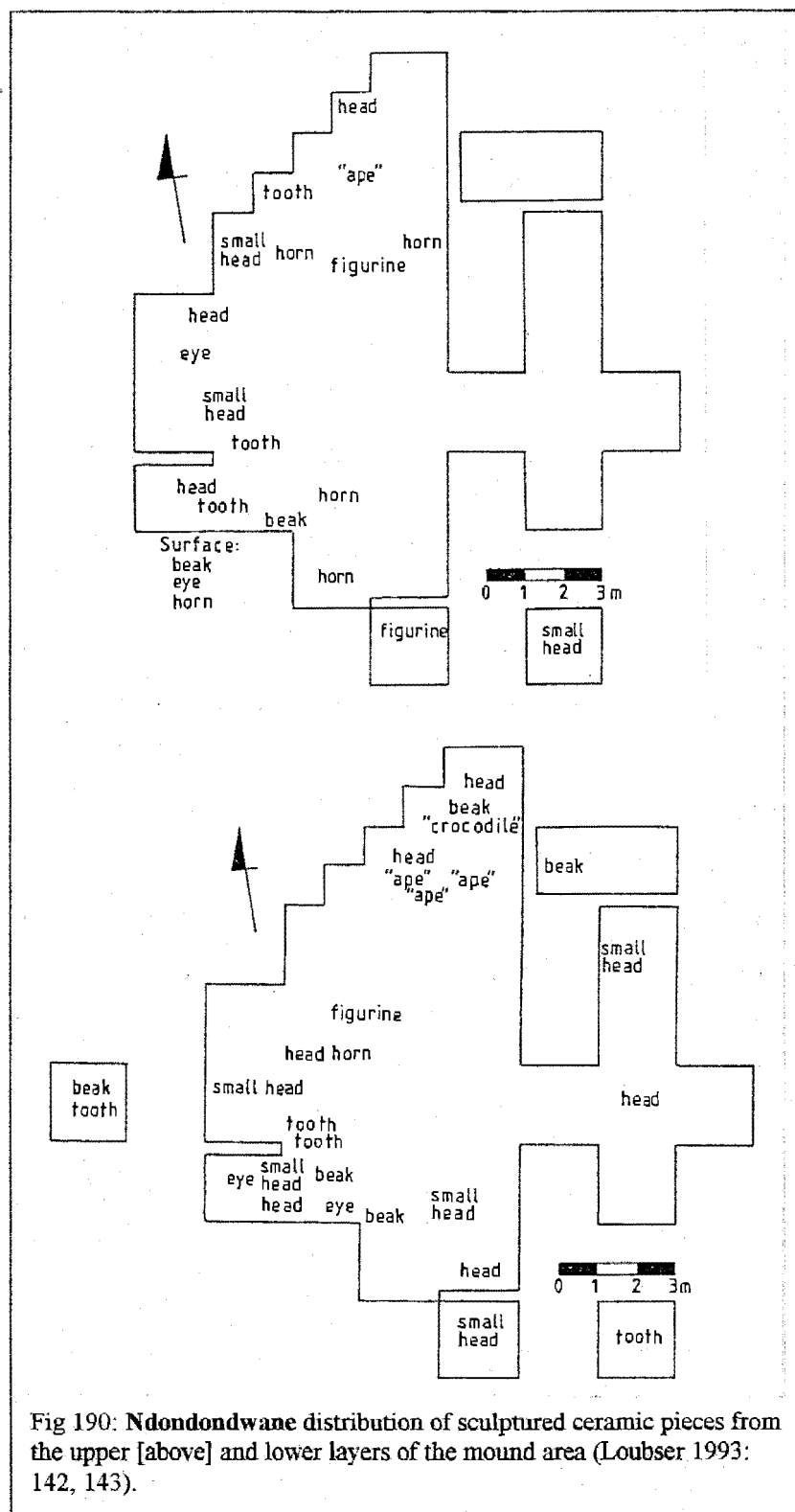


Fig 190: Ndondondwane distribution of sculptured ceramic pieces from the upper [above] and lower layers of the mound area (Loubser 1993: 142, 143).

Jannie Loubser (1993: 145-149) has suggested, as with the small human figurines, that the head fragments may well have been associated with activities that involved rites of passage. In this regard he has suggested, "reed and grass masks used by the north-eastern Sotho and Venda have certain features in common with the clay heads from **Ndondondwane**" (1993: 147, 148). In substantiation of this suggestion he cited Krige & Krige (1980: 138) as having described such a mask as "rising to a crested summit, flanked by what appears as scales and fronted by a crocodile-like snout".

A conceptual link between the **Ndondondwane** mask and symbolism expressed by the idea of crocodile "is further strengthened by the fact that the masked dance performed by initiates and instructors emulates a lizard ... In some instances the masked initiate is actually called crocodile (Loubser 1993: 48, citing Kruger 1937: 101). Acting on the mental image conjured by some of the fragments recovered, Loubser drew a pencil sketch impression in 1983 of what one of the Ndondondwane heads may have looked like [fig 191, overleaf], thus reconstructing from ceramic fragments his idea of an identifiable image.

Len Van Schalkwyk (1991: 128,129) has opposed the initiation ritual interpretation proposed for the presence of the mask fragments. He has noted that

their varying therianthropic form is suggestive of some form of *symbolic portrayal of group affiliation* or 'totem' allegiance. Further, their execution in clay, and decoration with the 'unambiguous potent symbolism', similar to that applied to other household containers, suggests a possible association with primary food production ... [These sculptures] may have functioned within specific rituals relating to crop production and harvest, basic sustenance, and general community well-being. (My emphasis).



Fig 191: Impression of what one of the Ndongondwane hollow ceramic heads may have looked like. (Original pencil drawing by Jannie Loubser dated 1983. Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

This suggestion does bear consideration on account of probable group celebration at a culmination of communal harvesting activities, for instance.

It was also proposed that celebratory activities, and associated rituals, "are widely recorded in such contexts amongst extant Bantu-speaking peoples [citing Gluckman 1935; Hammond-Tooke 1974; and Junod 1962], and analogous activities and rituals may well have been performed in the past". Considering that 'celebration' is a climax-related activity, possibly associated with seasonal undertakings such as harvest, it should be noted that a culmination point of initiation ceremonies might also have incorporated a symbolic harvesting ritual. On such an occasion new initiates may have been 'harvested' back into society as changed entities, having undergone appropriate rites of passage transformations. Thus, aspects of both initiation and totemic interpretations for those therianthropic mask fragments are not necessarily mutually exclusive, especially considering that whatever the context, use of these sculptures and associated rituals probably represented efforts at ensuring the well being of individuals and the community.

Jannie Loubser and Len Van Schalkwyk's suggestions as to how usage of such heads may have contributed to the way in which First-Millennium Agriculturist people organised their lives have tended to ignore significances that may have arisen at times of manufacture and deposition. It may be possible, considering intentionality attributed to potters and others engaged in creative acts, and considering a probable fundamental significance associated with usage of these therianthropic masks, that special rules were adopted during the making and breaking processes. There seems to be too little evidence to support a proposition that clayworking procedures may have ritually taken into account

significances of forthcoming ceremonies, and that specific rituals may have begun at the time of making. Yet, these artefacts were created with specific social events in mind. Thus, in this instance I suggest that the production cycle, as a whole, may be viewed as a series of metaphoric actions running parallel to, and corresponding symbolically with a process of birthing, transformation during a rite of passage, and as embodying expression of a metaphorical death of the past at moments of deliberate breakage and burial.

Breakage and deposition at designated safe sites within communal space may thus have symbolised irreversibility inherent in a passing of season or human age characteristic that was consciously being left behind. Just as such ceremonial activities may have acknowledged the past and present as irrevocably interlinked, so they may have also focussed on securing the future. The basic conformation in shape and style of the **Ndondondwane** artefact to a human head must have been intentional, and possibly served to invest such an artefact with superhuman power. This admittedly speculative approach towards social contextualisation of these sculpted heads at least takes focus of attention away from enumeration of physical characteristics and suggested use value of those works. Such a digging for social significance embodied in the life cycle of these sculptures serves to enrich appreciation of the works within a wider context of possibilities open to real people making sense of their existence.

Thus, some significances have emerged for contextualising the **Kulubele** sculpted artefacts, and particularly the small horn fragments. It is probably safe to propose that Johan Binneman's suggestion of the **Kulubele** horn fragments having previously been "attached to a mask" is more likely than the suggestion that

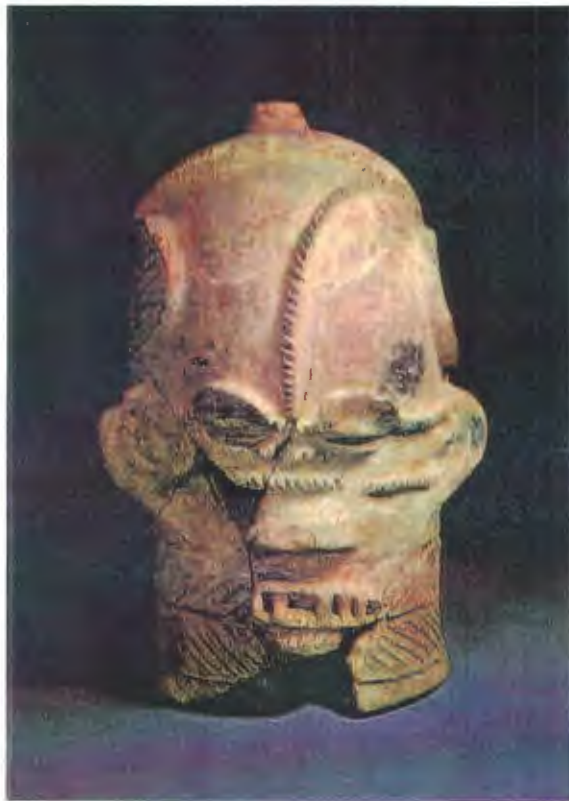
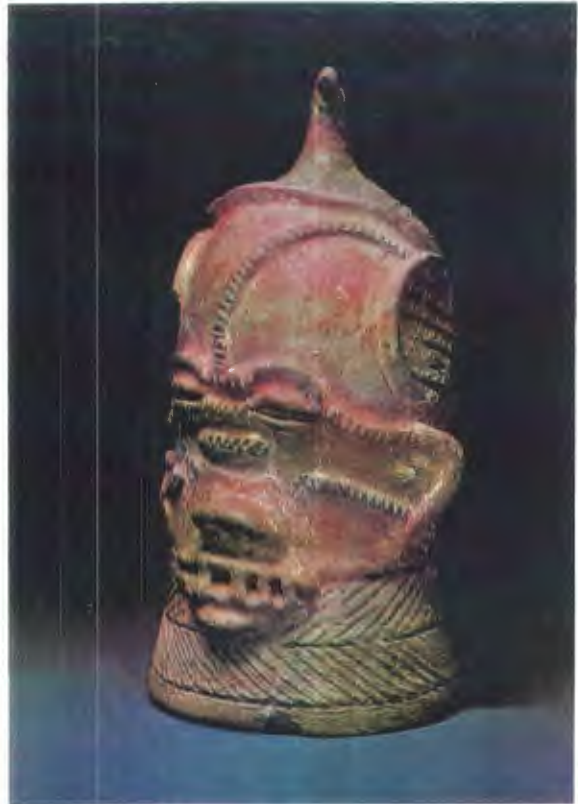
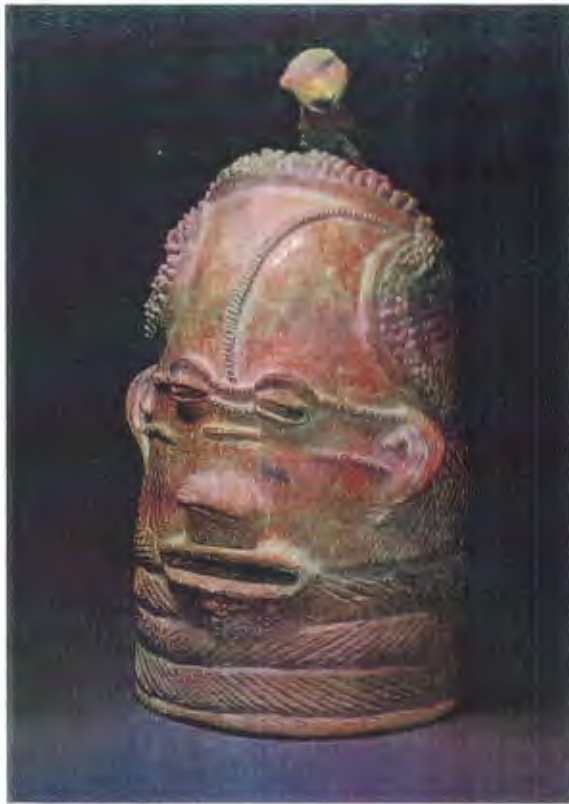


Fig 192(a): Lydenberg heads, numbered according to Inskeep and Maggs: 1 [top left], height 380mm; 3 [top right], height 210mm; 4 [bottom left], height 200mm; 7 [bottom right], 240mm high (Inskeep & Maggs 1975:122-131) (Photos by Aubrey Byron for South African Museum).

such horns may have been part of "a sculptured ceramic animal" (1996(a): 31), unless that animal was therianthropic in form. Furthermore, it is contextually significant that sculptures occur in First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramic assemblages elsewhere in southern Africa. Of these assemblages, the stately group of seven approximately life-size or less²¹⁶ hollow **Lydenberg** heads [fig 192 (a), and (b) overleaf] have been chosen for brief discussion as a way of contextualising the **Ndondondwane** heads, and **Kulubele** horn shapes, more fully.

The one therianthropic and six human **Lydenberg** heads are widely accepted to be part of the **Kalundu** ceramics tradition, as are the **Ndondondwane** and **Kulubele** ceramics assemblages. Stylistic similarity in clay surface treatment can be seen, for instance, in boldly engraved clay body herringbone and other incisions on the **Lydenberg** heads, as well as in both the **Ndondondwane** and **Kulubele** vessel assemblages. Furthermore, dates towards the end of the first millennium assigned to the respective assemblages from Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal indicate that they are roughly contemporary with each other²¹⁷.

It can be seen that a substantial investment of time and capacity to manipulate the medium was expended on each of the **Lydenberg** heads. Stylistic fluidity, within accepted symbolic bounds, is evident in the wide variety of modelling techniques and substantial differences in anatomical detail evident in these sculptures. A dense diversity of added clay and deeply scratched incisions, which must have been applied to the clay surface while

²¹⁶ Full descriptions and dimensions can be found in Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 114-133).

²¹⁷ Dates of "around AD500" (Maggs & Davison 1981: 28) for the **Lydenberg** heads was generally accepted until Gavin Whitelaw (1996: 82) more recently placed them at "probably the ninth or possibly the tenth century AD".

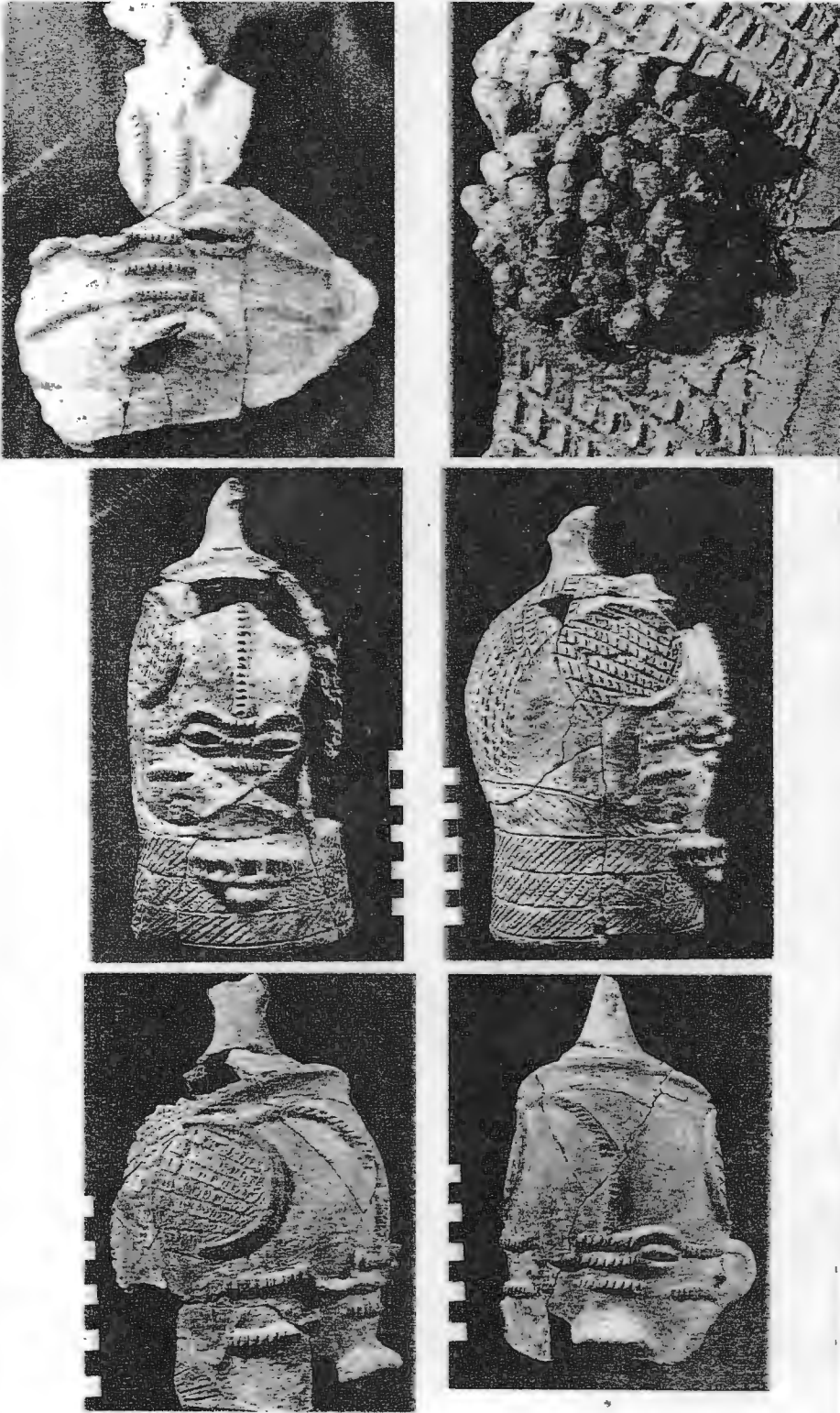


Fig 192(b): Lydenberg heads: numbers 2 [top], height not given; 5 [middle], height 210mm; and 6 [bottom], height not given (Inskeep & Maggs 1975: 124, 128, 129).

still quite damp, contribute to a sense of 'unreal' abstraction, a device that places distance between the viewer and these head shapes.

Expressive surface treatment of these images was enhanced by burnishing particular zones, and further intensified with additions of "glittering specularite ... and creamy white slip" in some areas (Maggs & Davison 1981: 29). These authors have also observed that "the disposition of colour on all the [Lydenberg] heads is similar", possibly indicating that one potter was responsible for creating the whole group of sculptures, or that imagery, style and colour application was strictly governed by convention. It may well be that the act of applying colour on these works was deeply significant, and that the colour itself carried particular meaning in subsequent usage. Certainly, in the words of Inskip & Maggs (1975: 135), "when new ... they must have been dramatic objects to behold".

There is no way in which surety regarding meanings that colour usage may have had for First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples can be arrived at. Yet, as an indicator of possibilities, it must be noted that, at least during the historic era, colour usage has carried substantial symbolic weight. Gitywa (1970: 56) has noted colour as a powerful mediator between the present and past, and that particularity white has been associated with transformative shamanism aimed at a greater good and curing of ills. Likewise, Gavin Whitelaw (1993: 67, citing Ngubane 1977) has observed that "today red is a significant colour for most Bantu-speaking people in South Africa. Amongst the Zulu it is a liminal colour, mediating between black with its associated dangers and the



Fig 193: **Kulubele** potsherds with red ochre applied to burnished areas (Photo: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

health of white”²¹⁸. Despite no hollow masks having yet been excavated at **Kulubele**, what appears to be red ochre was frequently smeared onto various vessels [fig 193], and it is probable that such colour application carried symbolic weight.

Structurally, both the **Lydenberg** and **Ndondondwane** heads seem to be based on a modified upside-down cylindrical vessel form, “transformed and inverted ... pots” (Whitelaw 1996: 82). Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 124) have commented that “the bases of the [**Lydenberg**] necks are finished rather like the rim of a pot ... in parts the rim is rounded but in places it presents a squarish facet not apparently the result of setting the wet vessel [down] on a hard surface”²¹⁹.

Regrettably the **Lydenberg** heads themselves are, strictly speaking, unprovenanced because Dr KI von Bezing picked up most of the sherds from surface scatters²²⁰. Thus they are difficult to place within a social activity area context, nor are there other specifically associated artefacts within a pit or midden, nor is it possible to suggest whether they appear to have been deliberately broken prior to deposition²²¹. Nonetheless their sheer physicality and potent imagery are immensely evocative.

²¹⁸ Extensive studies on historic era colour significances have been undertaken. For instance, Anita Jacobson-Widding (1979: 17) has found use of a white-red-black colour triad to be intimately intertwined with ritual symbolism and cognitive thought of peoples of the lower Democratic Republic of Congo, and that such usage expressed a “coherent system of values”.

²¹⁹ This may indicate that, like First-Millennium Agriculturist vessels, the vessel shapes for the **Lydenberg** heads were made from the base upwards.

²²⁰ For further information see Inskeep & von Bezing 1966, and Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 114).

²²¹ Intensive study of provenance details pertaining to deposition of sculptural works from KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, with a view towards possible explanatory value, may be a worthwhile addition to an already extensive discourse on the **Lydenberg** heads.



Fig 194: **Lydenberg** heads: two animal figurines from numbers 1 and 2 heads (Inskeep & Maggs 1975: 132).

It has been frankly asserted that "the purpose for which the **Lydenberg** heads were made can only be guessed at" (Inskeep & Maggs 1975: 135), an observation which remains true for First-Millennium Agriculturist sculpture as a whole. But, because guessing is an integral part of the story, small details become significant, and various researchers have chosen to focus on different aspects of conundrums presented by the era and lifestyle. With regard to these heads, for instance, it has been observed that numbers 4, 5 and 6 have small holes in the sides near the base. Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 135) have suggested that these holes "were probably to facilitate attachment to something else ... it might have been a framework to be worn over a person's head, or a post, or some part of a building or other construction". They added that "it would be a fair guess, however, that they were not subjected to violent movement ... for the holes are placed close to the edge, and sudden stress would probably result in breakage at this point"²²².

No mention of small holes near the base is made by Van Schalkwyk 1994 (a) and (b) regarding hollow head sculpture from **Wosi** or **Mamba 1**, nor is any indication of holes to be seen in Jannie Loubser's (1983) impression of a **Ndondondwane** head. Despite an absence of other characteristics such as notched ridges and hatched incisions, and dramatic differences in rendering of eyes and other features in the **Ndondondwane** sculpture assemblage, Loubser (1993:143) has pointed out similarity in noses and therianthropic "beaks" with head number 7. He also observed that, "like the **Lydenberg** heads [fig 194],

²²² A full account of speculated purposes and contextualisation associated with these **Lydenberg** heads at that time of writing can be found in Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 135, 136). It is interesting to note that these authors predicted that "comparable pieces may be found elsewhere", and that their predictions have been verified by subsequent discoveries at **Wosi**, **Mamba 1**, and **Ndondondwane**.

those from **Ndondondwane** were crowned with small clay models" (my fig inclusion).

Those **Lydenberg** heads not culminating in animals "terminate on top in a pinched up top-knot in the form of a short column of clay". This column of clay had been "flattened sagittally at the top and shaped to somewhat the form of an upside-down anchor, with an indentation at the centre point" (Inskeep & Maggs 1975: 132). The various crowning devices were probably carefully considered. They may have been of totemic significance, and thus embodied a visual means for channelling of energies appropriate to the occasion. Furthermore, it can be speculated that various facial features were positioned and shaped according to a specific cosmology that valorised symbolism rather than specific rendering of a known person.

Without dwelling too extensively on particular facial features it should be noted that they share not only a stylistic continuity, but the **Lydenberg** heads also have several traits in common, each possibly as significant as the next. For instance, a notched arc (not a stylised eyebrow) of clay has been added to the forehead of all seven heads. What this particular characteristic may have embodied within a First-Millennium Agriculturist context may actually be less important for present purposes than a fundamental recognition of intentionality at the time. It can, however, be added that Inskeep & Maggs (1975: 136) have suggested that "the notched ridges on the heads may represent scarification".

These authors note, however, that such an observation is impossible to verify despite records of such activities in the 'ethnographic present'. Yet, in this instance the presence of imagery that may be read as scarification on these heads could be

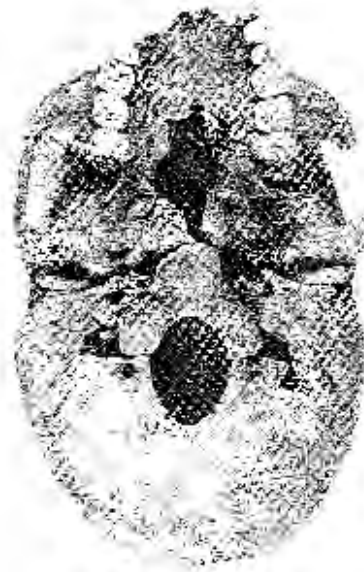


Fig 195; Nanda cranium from Trench 4 [above], facial and basal aspects showing deliberate dental evulsion; and Nanda cranium from Test Square 7 showing inferior oblique view of anterior dentition that displays signs of intentional dental evulsion and labial chipping (Morris: 1993: 87, 89).

sufficient evidence in itself to serve as confirmation of scarification practices by First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples. It can be argued that this is a spurious claim to make because it is impossible to contradict without finding several mummified post pubescent corpses to study, an unlikely prospect considering that such remains have yet to be discovered at all.

Yet, I suggest that deliberate scarification of all the **Lydenberg** heads by a potter, or potters working together, may have been based on a combination of symbolic elements [such as the crowning devices] and visual reinterpretation of some literal aspects of daily life. This opinion is based on evidence presented by consistent placement of human features in zones where they would be expected²²³. More specifically, there is remarkable physical (literal) congruence between missing front teeth in four of the **Lydenberg** heads that corresponds directly with an observation made by Alan Morris (2000:2) that "every cranium recovered from Early Iron Age [F-MA] contexts demonstrates some form of [dental] mutilation"²²⁴.

At the First-Millennium Agriculturist site of **Nanda** in KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, deliberate dental evulsion can be seen in the facial aspect of the adult cranium from Trench 4, Burial 1. Deliberate dental evulsion, and mutilation²²⁵ in the form of "chipping of lateral upper incisors", is also evidenced by **Nanda** cranial remains (Morris 2000:2) [fig 195]. In a comment on the

²²³ Neck, head, mouth, nose, two eyes, two cheeks, one forehead, two ear zones, and hair on the head.

²²⁴ For detailed accounts of First-Millennium Agriculturist and other crania that show signs of dental mutilation see, for instance, Alan Morris (1989: 132-134); (1993: 83, 84); and (1998:179-183); as well as Gavin Whitelaw (1993: 73).

²²⁵ Morris (2000: 2) specifically distinguished between evulsion proper and mutilation, the latter procedures resulting sometimes in complex combinations of, for instance, "squared chipping, v-shaped notches, and combinations of v-shaped chipping and incisor removal".

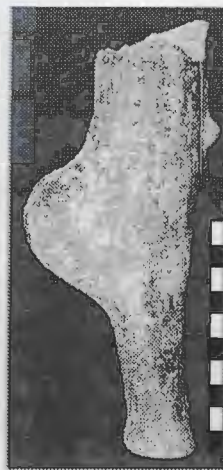
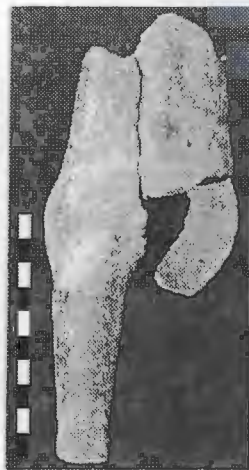


Fig 196: K2 human figurine fragments. The smaller fragment [left] is a usual palm size or less in size, while the other fragment [three views] may be from one of the largest solidly modelled Early Agriculturist human clay figurines yet documented. These joined fragments feature the right leg, buttocks, and abdomen with protruding navel of a female figurine. From toe to top the figurine measures 155mm (Hutten et al 2000; and Hutten & Steyn in press. Photos: Marius Loots).



0 10cm

Fig 197: Chivowa Hill female figurines (Graphics by R Cook and Z Martin, in Sinclair 1991: 40).

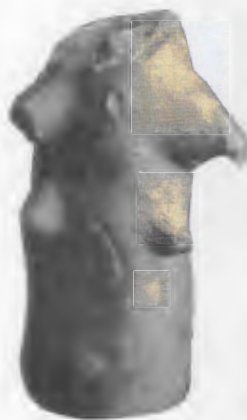


Fig 198: Mapungubwe figurines, size not given (Photos: Wayne Oosthuizen, 2000, in Weinek 2000: 1).

absence of some **Lydenberg** head central "clay peg" teeth, Morris (2000: 3) said that "in each case the prehistoric artists carefully left a gap in the dental midline exactly where the prehistoric crania demonstrate incisor removal"²²⁶.

Thus some of these heads may offer a rare glimpse of scarification and dental evulsion practices that more than likely were similar to those *enacted by flesh and blood people to mark time*, and assert group membership. Ceramic paraphernalia such as the heads and small figurines were an integral part of this process, but after all it must be remembered that it was real people and their community who were the focal point of occasions such as those marked by usage of these artefacts.

With regard to the **Lydenberg** heads, and similar sculptures from KwaZulu-Natal, Loubser (1993: 145, 148) has observed, "hollow clay heads ceased to be made about a thousand years ago". He attributed this disappearance of a genre of sculpture to a possible "change to perishable grass masks, rather than [as reflecting] a cessation of a tradition". Despite such adjustments there does not seem to have been an abrupt change in centrality afforded clay as medium of expression between First and Second-Millennium Agriculturist eras and communities. Clay figurines, for instance, have been reported from late First-Millennium sites such as **K2** [fig 196] (Hutten et al 2000; Hutten & Steyn in press) and **Chivowa Hill** [fig 197] (Sinclair 1991) in Northern Province and Zimbabwe respectively, and from **Mapungubwe** [fig 198], an

²²⁶ Explaining how it is possible to distinguish between intentional evulsion and accidental teeth loss Morris (2000: 3) indicated the latter occurrence as likely to leave "lingual microfractures where the tooth has been pushed into the mouth", whereas "intentional mutilation is usually more gentle with comparatively less damage done to the socket".



Fig 199: Female, height 160mm [left], and male [middle], height 190mm, ceramic figurines made by Sizeni MaNgubane Zuma of KwaZulu-Natal, 1989 (Photo: Mark Hunt, in Jolles 1998: 104.). Venda female ceramic figurine [right], with added graphite and red ochre, height 200mm, artist unknown (Harber 1998: 112).

early Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist site (Weinek 2000: 1)²²⁷ in Northern Province.

Of these, the human figurine fragments from **K2** (Hutten et al 2000, and Hutten & Steyn in press) are of particular interest for the purposes of this study because they are solidly modelled and feature cicatricial engravings. The engravings on the large **K2** figurine are described by Hutten et al (2000:1) as “incisions around the abdomen on the level of the navel, and incisions down the centre of the back onto the buttocks”. Furthermore, focus on the abdomen, and on abdominal hernia is also evident in the smaller **K2** figurine on the left, and is remarkably akin to several KwaZulu-Natal First-Millennium Agriculturist human figurine fragments in size, style, and centres of attention.

Such stylistic similarities possibly indicate some equivalencies in worldview and continuities of practice over a widespread area that bear further in depth investigation. Furthermore, the presence of historic records of clay figurine making and usage in KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province [fig 199], and elsewhere bodes well for such enquiries.

²²⁷ Gavin Whitelaw has drawn attention to other sites that feature solidly modelled figurines with an “EIA [F-MA] component as **Schroda** (Hanisch 1981) [and] **Leopard’s Kopje** (Huffman 1974(a))” in south western Zimbabwe. Precolonial Second-Millennium Agriculturist sites that feature concentrations of clay figurines include the **Great Enclosure at Great Zimbabwe** (Hall, RN. 1905: 267; Huffman 1984: 598); and **Soutpansberg** (Loubser 1988: 101, 136), dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries AD. Also of interest is the historical era, early twentieth century, site of **Davenham** in the Soutpansberg (Loubser 1988: 294) that features solidly modelled figurines in the ceramics assemblage.



Fig 200: **Kulubele** potsherds with entirely punctate [above], and unusual curvilinear engravings. I wonder about the stories behind potsherds such as these because such motifs are uncharacteristic of the overall assemblage (Photos: John Steele, 2001, courtesy of Albany Museum).

FINDINGS

Artefacts acquire varying meanings in discourse and action, depending on circumstances and points of view. Such meanings as have emerged in this study are tentative, and significances suggest unanswered questions [fig 200] rather than propose sweeping solutions. In this study it has been seen that First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics are meaningful as indicators of a passage of time, and these ceramics have also acquired import as focal points allowing examination of cultural concerns exhibited by writers of southern African prehistory.

Clay usage by First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples has drawn attention towards ways in which homestead and settlement layouts may have been influenced by (what is thought to be known of) worldviews in place at the time. Furthermore, ceramics of this early farming era have acquired meaning as a medium drawing attention to intimate domestic details associated with rhythms of daily doings and household usage. Likewise, meanings have arisen wherein ceramics usage has suggested intermittent community and intra-community activities.

Deliberately altered and then buried ceramics [fig 201, overleaf] have served to hint at a seamless intermeshing of regular and irregular utilitarian and symbolic meaning-in-the-making events. Acts of use value reconfiguration, and the presence of sculpted figurines and masks, intimate a cosmology wherein the past may have been honoured so as to secure the future. This way of thinking, evidenced also by human burial practices and associated ceramics, could have focussed on harnessing beneficial and appeasing detrimental energies conceptually linked with particular tangible objects in the environment.



Fig 201: **Nanda** vessel with post-firing drilled holes, buried intact. String, rather than glue, has been used to keep it from falling apart. Height 280 mm; diameter at lip 340mm; diameter at belly 410mm; thickness at lip 8mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).



Fig 202: **Msuluzi** era small undecorated bowl with rounded base and inturned lip from **KwaGandaganda** that was used for grinding specularite. This vessel was recovered in association with midden dung and metalworking debris. Height 90mm; diameter at lip 152mm; thickness at base 11mm (Photo: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

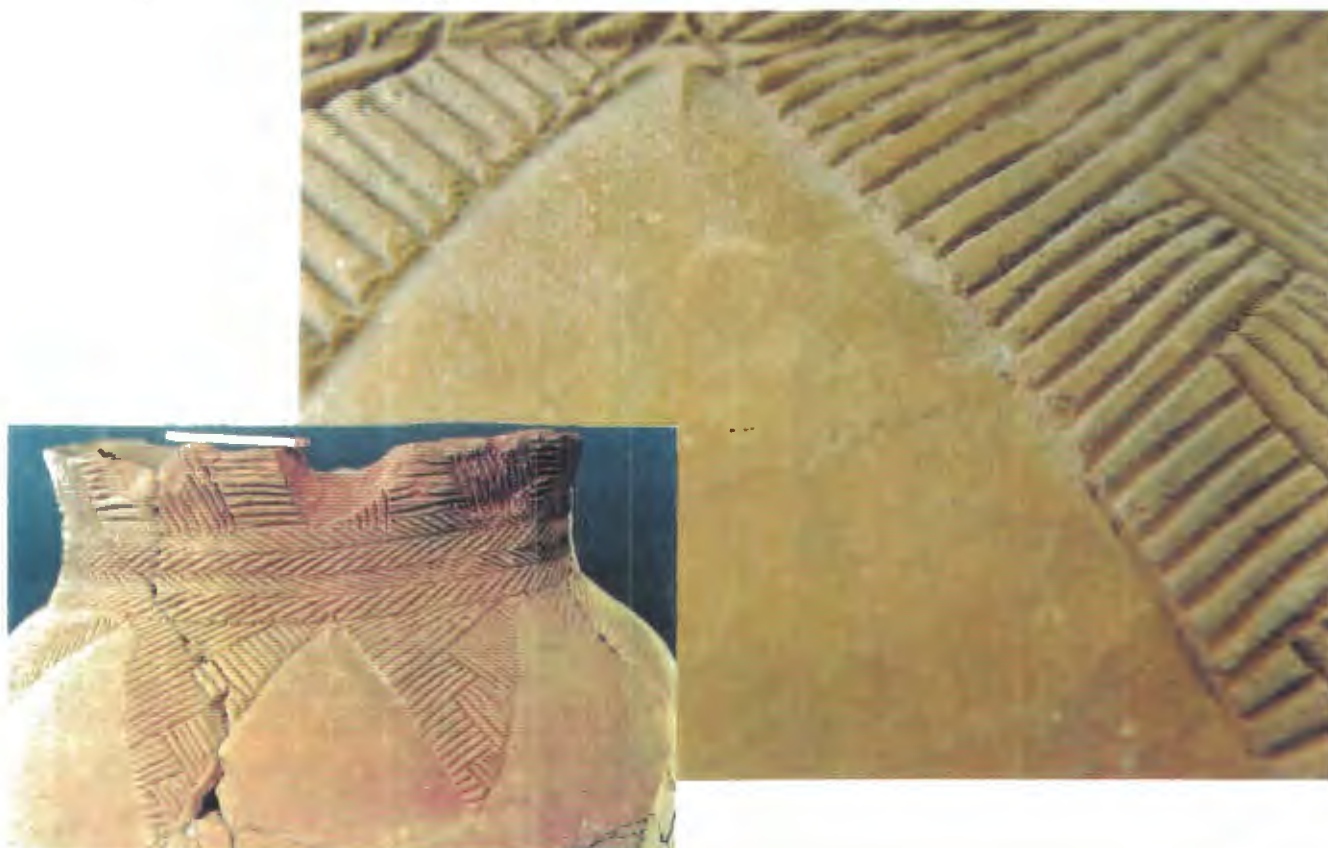


Fig 203: **Msuluzi** style vessel from **Ntshekane**, and close up of scraped clay surface and engraved section. Note the dramatic embossed effect achieved by scraping away clay from the unengraved areas where they intersect with the elaborately conceived incised pendant triangles. Height of vessel section 200mm; diameter at lip 178mm; diameter at belly 245mm; thickness at lip 9mm; thickness at belly 10mm (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

Underlying the foregoing has been a search for meanings that ceramic artefacts - combined with “language, myths, beliefs, traditions and [other] concrete objects” (Hirst 1990: 157) - may have had for people at moments of creation, use [fig 202] and discard. And, as observed by Ann Solomon (1999: 54), particular artefacts are not in themselves “fossilised ideas” because meaning is “instantiated in practise”.

Each ceramic vessel or fragment also indicates a momentary culmination of technical and social knowledge, revealing the presence and intentionality of “skilled and knowing hands” (Dobres in press: 1). The clay surfaces do indeed show imprints of those very hands, and of tools that they held [fig 203]. Furthermore, wiping striations [fig 204] left in the wake of handheld leaves or animal hide, long confident sweeping motions



Fig 204: Interior [left], and part of an exterior view of a **Kulubele** bowlsherd, revealing wiping striations created during the shaping process (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Albany Museum).



Fig 205: Long sweeping finger movements evident on the interior of a vessel [above], and detail of traces of a handheld tool as it was manipulated during the shaping process. Both examples from Nanda (Photos: John Steele, 2000, courtesy of Natal Museum).

of fingers, and swift criss-crossed movements of a flattish tool across the wet clay surface during the making process all become evident upon closer inspection [fig 205]. Thus, to return to the extended metaphor of Schrödinger's cat, my specific points of view have been towards celebrations of technical knowledge and of the intimately sensual experience of shaping and processing clay, and focus has been on those many social uses found for this medium by First-Millennium Agriculturist peoples.

It has also become evident that southern African prehistoric potters and ceramics deserve wider attention, and it is expected that First-Millennium Agriculturist and other meaningful ceramics will soon take a more prominent place in art historical discourse. Amongst a plethora of options for further research, one avenue would be in depth studies of existing indigenous knowledge systems embodied in the ceramics, clayworking practices, and worldviews of some extant rural potters [fig 206].



Fig 206: Thembaletu potters at their Nkonxeni homestead in the Tombo district, Eastern Cape. From left to right: Alice Nongebeze, Siphon Nongebeze, Ntombile Nongebeze, Nosinathi Mtuthi, Olona Nongebeze and her mother Nesiwe Nongebeze. Nkonxeni is situated about 20 km inland from Port St Johns, not very far from Ntsitsana (Photo: John Steele, 2001).

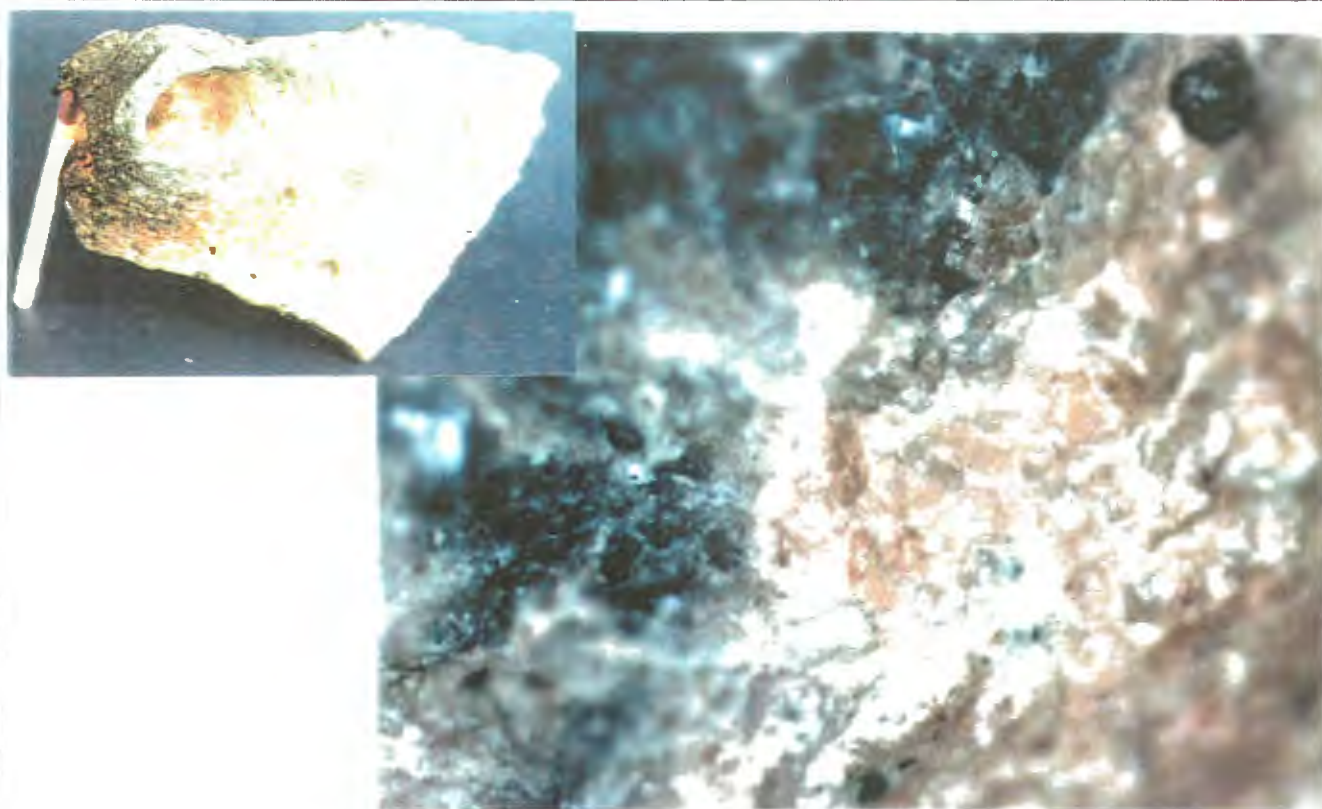


Fig 207: Lugherd [left], possibly of early Pastoralist origin, found by Carl Vernon of the East London Museum in the dunefields between the coastline and Alexandria, south of East London. Bonny Williamson used this lugherd for a demonstration of micro-residue analysis procedures. At x50 magnification the blackish ceramic surface contrasted strongly with the vitrified yellowish deposit (Photos: Left - John Steele, 2000. Right - Bonny Williamson, 2000).

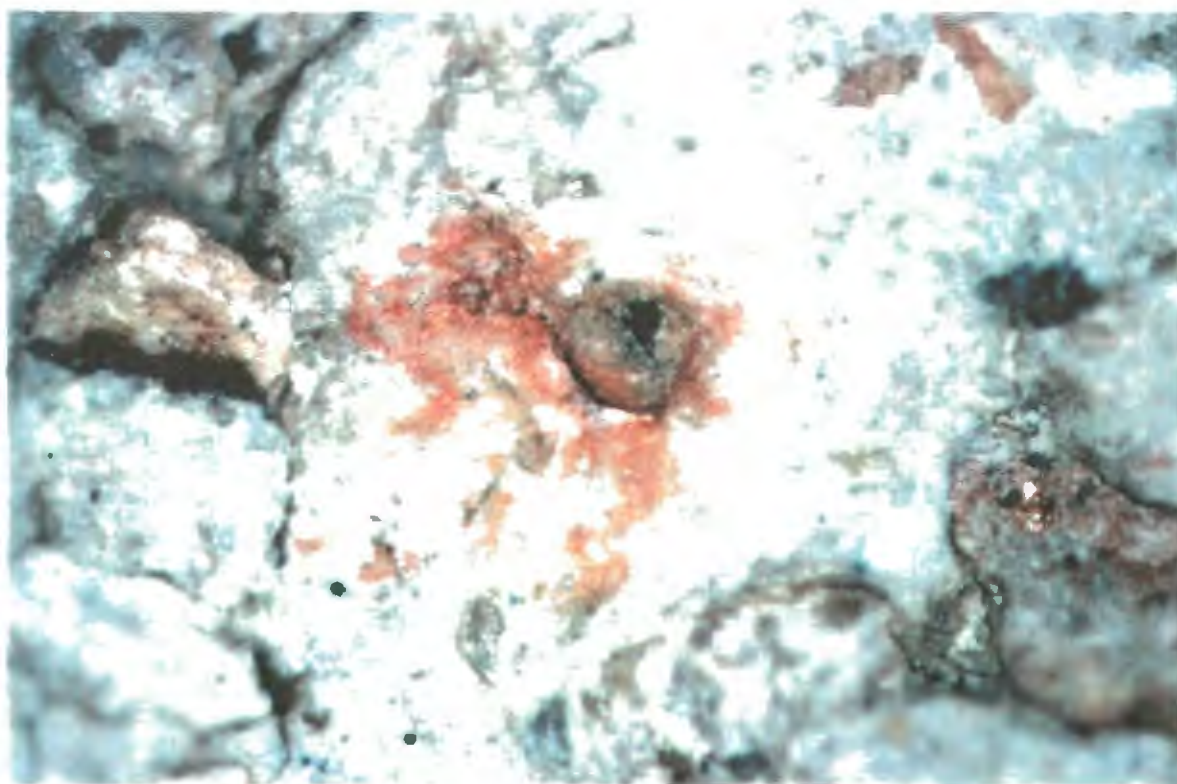


Fig 208: At x500 magnification groups of starch grains, and a core of reddish matter, possibly resin, indicated clearly that the vessel had frequently been used for cooking purposes (Photo: Bonny Williamson, 2000).

Such researches focussed on rural potters of the Eastern Cape have yet to enter southern African art historical discourse. Studies of this nature would serve to elucidate upon and establish present day conceptual frameworks that may provide glimpses helpful in interpretation of deep past clayworking practices, even though the extent of relevance of present to prehistoric actions and artefacts cannot reliably be measured.

Further layers of discourse concerning ways in which First-Millennium ceramic artefacts acquire meaning could result from a sustained program of micro-residue analysis [figs 207 and 208] of such artefacts. Jeff Leach (1998: 171) has observed that "researchers interested in prehistoric subsistence have turned to a variety of ... techniques to identify plant and animal residues ... absorbed into the walls of ceramic vessels". Bonny Williamson (1997: 464) has indicated that microscopy combined with "extraction and sequencing of the DNA preserved ... can [also] answer specific questions about daily diet". Intensive micro-residue analysis of southern African First-Millennium Agriculturist ceramics seems not yet to have been recorded, despite that analysis of such residues "can [and will] make a contribution to studies of material culture" (Williamson 1997: 458). Such researches may lead in turn to discoveries about aspects of artefacts and lifeways to be investigated that are as yet only beginning to be articulated.

One such aspect has been hinted at in Martin Hall's (1996(b): 131) observation that "underlying [a] ... multiplicity of meanings [generated by discourse] is the power of materiality, the power of the object itself". This suggestion that some meanings may be inherent to artefacts has been strongly countered by Patricia Davison (1996: 135), for instance. She responded that "the power of the object is not inherent in its materiality *per se* but in the

relationship between the object and the human subjects who invest it with meanings in particular contexts”.

Martin Hall's proposal is founded on a recognition that “humans navigate the world through a combination of sense impressions and verbalisation ... [and that] sensory perceptions operate on a ‘sub-verbal’ level and give objects meaning independent of words” (e-mail: 1/9/2001). This call to explore alternatives to meanings developed by valorising a subject/object relationship has also been made by Henri Lefebvre (1991: 16) in his assertion that “the priority-of-language thesis has certainly not been established”. He (1991: 286) blames “logic of visualisation” for current practise that favours the written and spoken word over other sensory experience, explaining that this ‘normal’ method of enquiry has arisen as a result of dependence on the written word and sight.

Thus, according to Lefebvre (1991: 286), “a part of the object and what it offers comes to be taken for the whole”, wherein any non-optical sensory impression “is no longer anything more than a symbolic form of, or a transitional step towards the visual”. He (1991: 211) acknowledges that “language possesses a practical function”, yet is insistent that language cannot “harbour knowledge without masking it”. Inadequate capacity to articulate sensory experience has meant that not much attention has been given to relationships between objects and the “*thing* [known] as the unconscious” (my emphasis) (1991: 37). Likewise, Lefebvre (1991: 22) suggests that the nature of interconnections between ‘things’ and terrestrial - as well as social - space, which “contains energy, contains forces, and proceeds from them”, have received inadequate attention.

In this light, Davison's (1996: 135) insistence on meaning "not [being] inherent in its materiality *per se*" requires revisiting. Her position is also problematic because it appears not to make allowances for possible conceptualisations by people of the deep past regarding existence and use of artefacts at that time. She categorically ascribes specific types of meaning to artefacts, and to existential relationships between human subject and object in this past, despite pitfalls associated with extrapolating from the present into prehistory.

This debate between Hall and Davison concerning meanings attributable to artefacts suggests that a reinvocation of Schrödinger's cat is called for, not as an extended metaphor on this occasion, but as an aid towards conceptualising some implications of quantum theory as they may be applied to ways in which artefacts acquire significance. In terms of quantum mechanics little distinction is drawn between materiality attributed to so-called animate and inanimate objects. John Gribbin (1988: 85, citing Lehninger 1982) has clearly stated that "living things are composed of lifeless molecules. When these molecules are isolated and examined individually, they conform to all the physical and chemical laws that describe the behaviour of inanimate matter". Davison's (1996: 135) assertion is further problematised by Gribbin and Lehninger's denial of primacy to animate over inanimate matter.

The idea of inanimate matter as solid and separate from animate matter is suggested by Gary Zukav (2000: 103) as having been based on a notion wherein

"according to Western thought, the world has only two essential aspects, one of which is matter-like and the other of which is idea-like. The matter-like aspect is associated with the external world, most of which is conceived to be

made of inanimate stuff that is hard and unresponsive, like rocks, pavement, metal, etc. The idea-like aspect is our subjective experience”.

Furthermore, notions of the nature of matter based on solid/idea-like dichotomies are questionable because of recent observations that solid matter is very largely ‘empty space’. According to Gribbin (1991: 260), “even a solid object like my desk, or this book, is actually almost empty space. The proportion of matter to space is smaller even than the proportions of a grain of sand compared with the Albert Hall. The one thing quantum theory does seem to tell us about this neglected 99.99999... percent of the universe is that it is seething with activity, a maelstrom of virtual particles.” This conceptualisation of the environment corresponds with that of Lefebvre’s (1991: 22) assessment of terrestrial and social space.

Laws governing behaviour of matter are “rooted in quantum physics” (Gribbin 1988: 285), and such laws suggest ways of thinking about meaning and materiality which are very different from a Newtonian approach that postulated the universe as “governed by laws that are susceptible to rational understanding” (Zukav 2000: 53). Astonishing as it may seem, Zukav (2000: 101) recommends a suspension of disbelief, and a re-examination of reality: “Our experience tells us that the physical world is solid, real, and independent of us. Quantum mechanics says, simply, that this is not so”. Thus, people and surroundings are probably more intimately interlinked, through shared space and being subject to the same quantum mechanics, than commonly conceded.

Accordingly, ideas of reality should take into account a “dual wave/particle ... nature of matter ... and disturbance of the

system being observed by the observer”²²⁸ (my footnote) (Gribbin 1991: 85, 121). Furthermore, “it is not only that the system becomes disturbed by the observer, but also that the observer becomes disturbed by the system” (Richard Steele e-mail: 20/8/2001). I have previously been drawn to conceptions of ceramics as a medium (matter) that foregrounds solidity and seeming stability of shape and clay composition characteristics which are, according to my learnt way of looking, so typical of potsherds. Now, it is startling to think of meanings emerging as a result of a ceramic artefact having a dual wave/particle nature, as being largely empty space, as being open to disturbance by my observing of presence, and of me being influenced, in turn, by this presence.

Such disturbance is conceptualised as being intrinsic to looking, or not looking, whatever the case may be. A useful point of departure for investigation into some implications of these observations is to return to clay, the basic medium manipulated by potters. Lyall Watson (1992: 23), for instance, has characterised clay as “the fabric of earth itself”, being composed of crystals²²⁹ that “replicate themselves in a stable manner”. Furthermore, he (192: 23-24) claims that crystals in clay are

lifelike, arranging themselves into complex layered structures which have the capacity to evolve ... their crystals are tiny ‘naked genes’ which are being churned out constantly by the earth ... and sorted into arrays with very different functions.

I am inclined to accept this conceptualisation of clay, and suggest that these lifelike qualities are transformed without being nullified in a potter’s hands. If one considers the quantum

²²⁸ An implication of quantum mechanics is that an act of looking influences what is found, thus “the observer interferes with and is a part of the system that is being observed” (Gribbin 1991: 175).

²²⁹ “Crystals act as transducers, transforming and transmuting energy from one form to another” (Watson 1992: 37).

position wherein an observer creates a disturbance of the system being observed, then surely actions upon a system (such as at times of removing clay from its resting place in the earth, shaping, firing, use and discard) have vast ramifications²³⁰.

It seems not to be a very large conceptual step to conceive of thought²³¹ and action influences as meaningful energy that may be stored/transformed/transferred when different human and other actors engage with raw materials and/or artefacts. Such a conceptual step is facilitated if artefacts are considered in terms of energy. In this regard Zukav (2000: 177) has observed: "The energy contained in a piece of matter is equal to the mass of the matter multiplied by ... the speed of light squared. This means that even the tiniest particle of matter has within it a tremendous amount of concentrated energy".

Furthermore, Watson (1992: 66) has gone so far as to state unequivocally that because of interactive energy fields "we do ... leave our mark on the 'stuff of the world', giving matter some unsuspected capabilities". Thus Martin Hall's (1996(b): 129) call to theorise ideas of materiality and possible meanings appears to carry substantial weight, and I am disinclined to dismiss this suggestion out of hand as was done by Patricia Davison.

²³⁰ Such consequences would also be influenced by kinds of thinkings (observances) associated with these various actions. Despite being difficult to quantify, there does seem to be a likely difference in thoughts that may accompany related but divergent activities. Even in present time, for instance, thoughts that may accompany work on clay mined *en-masse* by bulldozer will probably differ from thoughts that may accompany present day use of a particular source of clay, revealed in a dream, that is intermittently mined using hand tools [see Steele (2001: 7-9) for a brief consideration of contemporary rural clayworking practices of Alice Nongebeze, Tombo district, Eastern Cape]. Possibilities of differences in thoughts accompanying clay mining and working actions are not being posed here as better/worse dichotomies, but rather as diverging, and thus probably contributing to variation in meanings inherent to whatever ceramic artefacts may emerge from such thought and action combinations.

²³¹ As per "the disturbance of the system being observed by the observer" (Gribbin 1991: 121).

Nonetheless, Davison's (1996: 135) assertion that significances arise "in the relationship between the object and the human subjects who invest it with meanings in particular contexts" reflects prevailing conceptions of ways in which artefacts acquire significance, and consequently also carries substantial weight.

Some keys to unlocking this dichotomy created by an unwillingness to grant meaning as being inherent in an object's "materiality *per se*" have been intimated by Lefebvre²³², and lie near the core of both Hall's suggestion and Davison's position. Lefebvre has theorised that there are grounds for acknowledging a greater role for sensory experience in determining meaning. Hall's call was couched in acknowledgement of multiplicity of meanings as having emerged in subject/object discourse, yet Davison's response foregrounded denial of alternatives by using the word "not". Nonetheless there seems to be more agreement than disagreement between Hall and Davison because of a presence acknowledged by both parties as "power".

This presence seems to roughly correspond with ideas arising from Lefebvre's (1991: 22) conceptualisation of space and energy; with Gribbin's (1991: 260) explanation of matter as seething with activity; with Zukav's (2000: 177) concentrated energy observation; and with Watson's (1992: 66) comment that actors do leave a mark on the stuff of the world. Consequently, it appears that a way forward lies in embracing ideas that meaning arises in action, and of meaningfulness as being inherent to an artefact *per se*, without denying value in subject/object discourse.

²³² See also Jay (1993: 587, 590) who has commented that because "the hermeneutic circle of sight" has been granted a "privileged vantage point ... the concomitant denigration of other senses brings with it certain cultural losses that warrant redress".



Fig 209: **Kulubele** rimsherd, exterior and interior views. Height 24mm; width 17mm; thickness 7mm (Photos: John Steele, 2001).

Recognition of such complementarity should encourage research into how meanings inherent to an artefact may be explored, and enrich conceptualisations and discourse focused on ways in which artefacts acquire meaning. This approach is aptly symbolised by an engraved **Kulubele** potsherd [fig 209]. Herein the respective incisions could be read as drawing attention to thinkings that may be different yet are complementary parts of a whole, thus suggesting reciprocal inherence of meaning to both artefact, and research (discourse) action. Such an approach opens opportunities for reflections upon intimate relationships with self and environments whereby past and present individuals and communities find meaning and are influenced by, and exert influence on, matter according to their respective ideas of continuities in time and place.

Appendix 1

THE INVOCATION OF SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT

"Schrödinger's mythical cat was invoked to make the difference between the quantum world and the everyday world clear. In the world of quantum mechanics, the laws of physics that are familiar from the everyday world no longer work. Instead, events are governed by probabilities. A radioactive atom, for example, might decay, emitting an electron, say; or it might not. It is possible to set up an experiment in such a way that there is a precise fifty-fifty chance that one of the atoms in a lump of radioactive material will decay in a certain time and that a detector will register the decay if it does happen.

Schrödinger...tried to show the absurdity of those implications by imagining such an experiment set up in a closed room, or box, which also contains a live cat and a phial of poison, so arranged that if the radioactive decay does occur then the poison container is broken and the cat dies. In the everyday world, there is a fifty-fifty chance that the cat will be killed, and without looking inside the box we can say, quite happily, that the cat inside is either dead or alive. But now we encounter the strangeness of the quantum world. According to the theory, *neither* of the two possibilities open to the radioactive material, and therefore the cat, has any reality unless it is observed. The atomic decay has neither happened nor not happened, the cat has neither been killed nor not killed, until we look inside the box to see what has happened. Theorists who accept the pure version of quantum mechanics say that the cat exists in some indeterminate state, neither dead nor alive, until an observer looks into the box to see how things are getting on."(Gribbin 1991: 2,3)

stated, a sufficient authority to provide a starting point for what follows. The Bible represents Noah as having three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Japheth appears to have been the oldest and the progenitor of the European races, Shem being the second, and Ham the youngest son. The sons of Ham are placed in the following order: Kush, Mitsraim, Phut, Canaan, but in the *Rozit ul Suffa (Asiatic Miscellany, p.48, Calmet's Bible Dict.)* it is written that God gave Ham nine sons, viz., Hind, Sind, Zenj, Nuba, Canaan, Kush, Kopt, Berber, Hebesh, and that on account of their children multiplying marvellously, they were made to speak different languages, and for that reason they were forced to separate, and to form independent communities. There is some doubt as to the identity of the racial descendants of several of these sons of Ham, but the majority may be fairly easily traced. It is stated that—

1. Hind was the progenitor of the Hindoos of India.
2. Sind was the progenitor of the races on both banks of the Indus.
3. Zenj was the progenitor probably of the races along the Zanzibar Coast.
4. Nuba was the progenitor of the Nubians.
5. Canaan was the progenitor of races as stated in the Bible.
6. Kush (?)
7. Kopt was the progenitor of the Egyptians.
8. Berber was the progenitor of the Berbers in North Africa.
9. Hebesh was the progenitor of the Abyssinians.

Notwithstanding that the inheritance of Ham was to be Africa, yet Hind, Sind, Kush, and certain sections of Canaan remained in Asia, the land of their birth. This helps to confirm our knowledge of the existence, at the present day, of powerful Hamitic tribes in Asia. These did not enter into their African heritage. Then again, Asia was appointed as the inheritance of Shem, yet we find Shemites occupying the northern coast of Africa on the sea-board of the Mediterranean and Northern Atlantic.

As regards Canaan, when we study *Genesis, ix, 25*, we note that the Hebrews believed that it was Canaan who exposed his father's condition to Ham, and Noah having found this out cursed Canaan. Others think that Ham was the offender, and Noah believed that by cursing Canaan, the favourite son of Ham, he would the more surely make Ham suffer. Following up a little further the subject of Ham's descendants, we learn that Canaan's eldest son, Sidon, was the progenitor of the Sidonians, otherwise the Phoenicians. Ten sons of Canaan became the progenitors of ten tribes, the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgasites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Zemarites, and Hamites. The greater portion of all these tribes remained and multiplied in Palestine and Syria, but did not take possession of their African inheritance; that is to say, they remained in Asia.

The Canaanites multiplied greatly, but on account of their wickedness came under Divine displeasure, and God handed over their land to the Israelites, in the time of Joshua (*Calmet, Bible Dict.*)

Before allowing the Israelites to enter into Palestine, Joshua attacked the Canaanites and destroyed great numbers of them, scattering the remnants. Certain sections of

these fled through Asia Minor to Greece, others were driven into North Africa. We see, then, that the first occupation of Africa *by* the Hamites took place during the time of Joshua's leadership of the Israelites, before they crossed over Jordan and entered Palestine, 1446 B.C. 15.C. (Calmet): 1607 B.C. (Hales).

Now, the tribes which entered into North Africa in the time of Joshua were descendants of Canaan, and from them in the process of time issued the Bantu race
..."

Appendix 3

MATOLA: MZONJZNI CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Maggs 1980(c): 76-86).

This section will be concerned mainly with the EIA pottery ... The context of the sample is not ideal since much of it was collected on the surface after the top soil had been scraped away. However, the relative uniformity of the EIA material and the close resemblance between excavated and surface material indicates that it is a valid assemblage.

The description broadly follows the approach adopted previously for EIA material from Natal (Maggs & Michael, 1976). However, recent experience has shown the need to separate bowls from pots in the analysis, while most of the attributes have had to be changed because of the different nature of the Mzonjani assemblage.

A total of 89 pots and 43 bowls was included in the analysis, the criterion for the selection of pots being that they should at least be preserved down to the body/neck junction so as to show all the attributes of shape that were required, as well as neck decoration. Unfortunately, because body decoration in this assemblage is often discontinuous and widely spaced, many of the examples included were inadequate to record this attribute. Body decoration is therefore under-represented in the analysis displayed in the matrix and a separate list of decorated body sherds is given to compensate. Because of the soft fabric and the structural weakness of the body/neck junction, most vessels are broken at this point and except for the excavated vessels, relatively few could be restored.

The Mzonjani assemblage is by far the largest yet available from Natal for the period around AD 300, which represents the earliest expression of the EIA in this region. For this reason it is described in some detail and illustrated extensively below, before its relationship with other sites is considered. As far as possible pottery from the dated feature 16 has been selected for illustration.

Characteristics of the pots

Shape

1. Pot with relatively straight, everted neck and well defined point of inflection. The angle between body and neck is usually well marked (Fig. 4).
2. Pot with curved everted neck and less defined point of inflection. There is only one example in the assemblage (Fig. 6.7).
3. Lip profile rounded.
4. Lip profile flattened in a single plane.
5. Lip profile tapered.

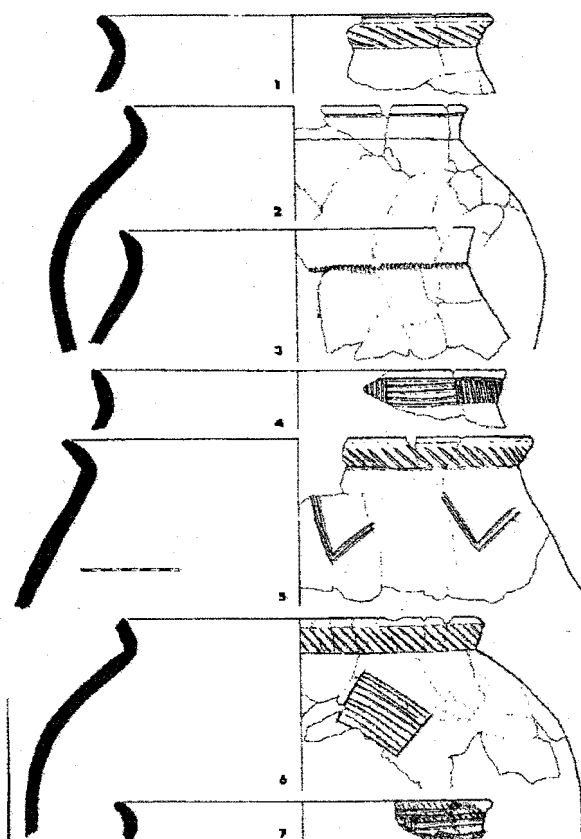


Fig. 3. Early Iron Age pots from Feature 16; 7 from surface collection.

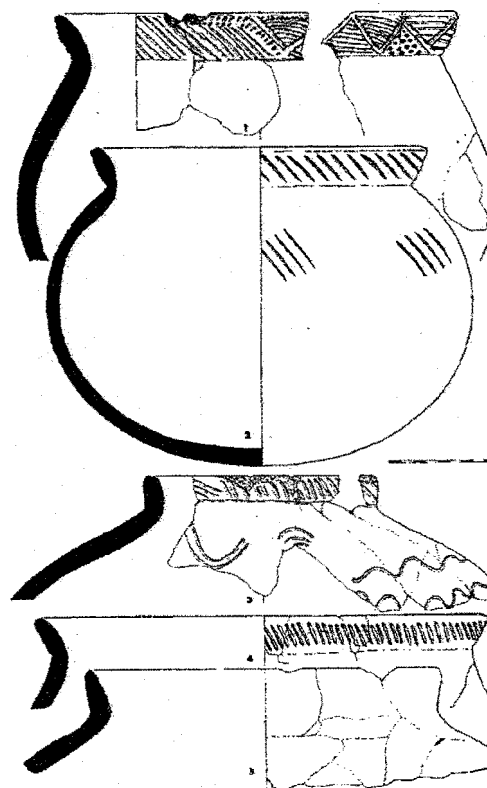


Fig. 4. Early Iron Age pots from Feature 16; 2 from north of Feature 2.

6. Lip profile with two or more bevels (Fig. 6.10).
7. Groove on lip. This may be found on any of Nos 3-6 above.
8. Whole of neck.
9. Upper neck.
10. Body/neck junction.
11. Just below (attached to) body/neck junction.
12. On body (not attached to body/neck junction).

Decoration motifs—continuous

13. Single horizontal groove (Fig. 3.2).
14. Band of several horizontal grooves (Fig. 6.8).
15. Band of oblique hatching (Fig. 3.1).
16. Two or more bands of oblique hatching. There is only one example in the assemblage (Fig. 5.3).
17. Band of horizontal and oblique cross-hatching (Fig. 6.3).
18. Horizontal row or rows of individual impressions (Fig. 3.3).
19. Band of interlocking triangles, hatched (Fig. 4.1).
20. Band of alternate (pendant) triangles, hatched (Fig. 6.2).
21. Band of interlocking rectangles, hatched alternately vertically and horizontally (Fig. 3.4).
22. Band of alternate rectangles, with vertical and horizontal cross-hatching (Fig. 6.6).

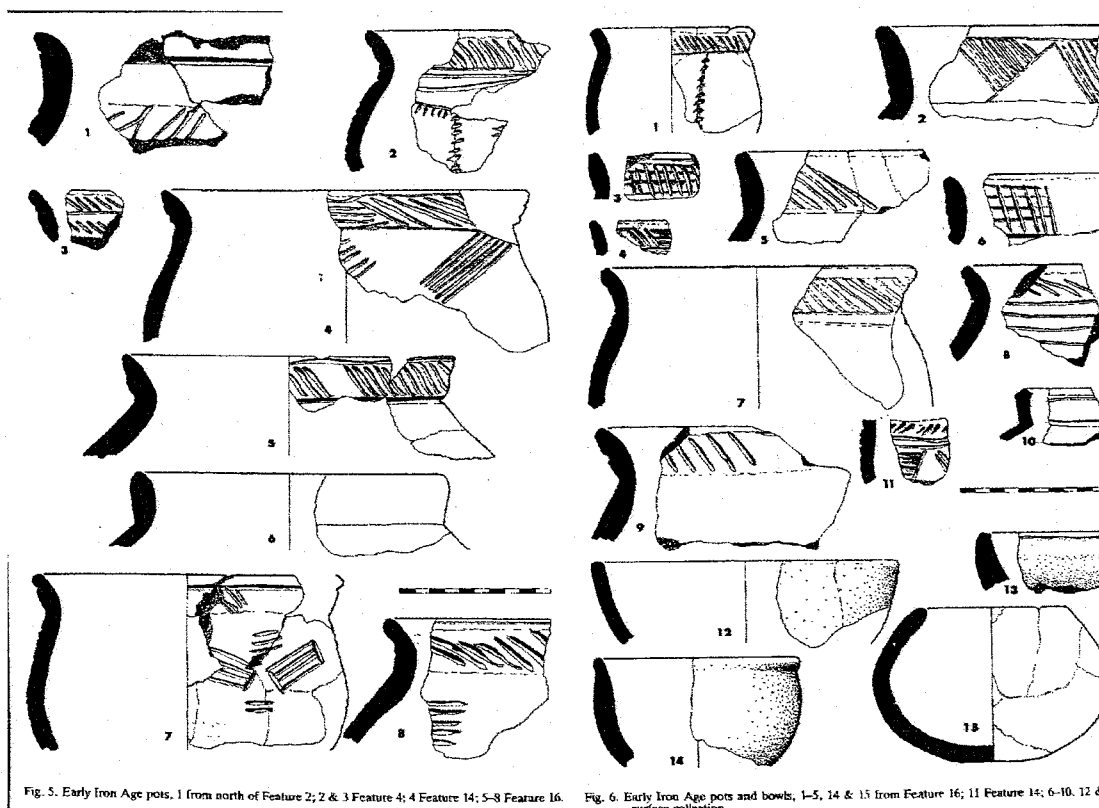


Fig. 5. Early Iron Age pots, 1 from north of Feature 2; 2 & 3 Feature 4; 4 Feature 14; 5-8 Feature 16.

Fig. 6. Early Iron Age pots and bowls, 1-5, 14 & 15 from Feature 16; 11 Feature 14; 6-10, 12 & surface collection.

- 23. Band of interlocking parallelograms, hatched. (Fig. 5.4).
- 24. Band of alternate parallelograms, hatched (Fig. 6.5).

Decorative motifs—discontinuous

- 25. Horizontal quadrilaterals, hatched (Fig. 5.8).
- 26. Oblique quadrilaterals, hatched (Fig. 4.2).
- 27. Short horizontal row or rows of impressions, usually along a groove. Unlike No. 18 above these do not extend around the vessel.
- 28. Short, vertical row or rows of impressions, usually along a groove (Fig. 6.1).
- 29. Wavy lines. These include any curvilinear motifs (Fig. 4.3).
- 30. Misc. decoration. This includes other, rare motifs as well as an example where the sherd was too small to determine the body decoration (Fig. 4.1).

With one noticeable exception (Fig. 6.7) the pots all have fairly straight, everted necks varying from 1,5 to 4,8 cm high. Bodies are spherical to subspherical in shape sometimes with rather straight or even slightly concave shoulders making them somewhat bag-shaped. Most lip profiles are rounded or flattened with a single bevel; however, five have more than one bevel (Fig. 6.10). A single groove quite commonly occurs on the lip.

Most pots are decorated, only 11 of the 88 being plain. Decoration, if present, always occurs on the neck of the pot and may also occur on the body. The great majority of neck decoration is made up of two motifs, a single groove just below the lip (13) or a band of oblique hatching (15). The other continuous motifs (14 and 16-24) are relatively uncommon but of interest in providing links with other assemblages separated from Mzonjani in time and space.

TABLE 1.

Matrix of characteristics of the pots.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1																														
2																														
3	44	1																												
4	38																													
5	1																													
6	5																													
7	10		6	1		3																								
8	59	1	31	26		3	5																							
9	17		8	6	1	2	4																							
10	11	1	6	5		1	2	8	3																					
11	7		7			1	5	2																						
12	9		6	3		1	9		1	1																				
13	35	1	21	12	1	2	4	20	16	11	2	3																		
14	5		3	2		1	4	1	1	2	1																			
15	39	1	15	22		3	6	39	1	4	4	7	9	3																
16	1		1					1																						
17	3		2	1				3						1																
18	1		1				1			1																				
19	1		1					1								1														
20	1		1					1		1				1																
21	2		2					2						2																
22	1		1					1		1				1																
23	7		6	1				7		1	1	1	4																	
24	4		2	2				4		1				3																
25	2		2			1		2				2		1		1														
26	8		5	2		1		7		1		2	5	4																
27	2		1	1				2		1	1	1	1			1														
28	3		3					3		3	1	1			1	2														
29	1		1					1		1	1	1			1															
30	4		2	2				3	1	1	1	2	3		2															
Totals	88	1	45	38	1	5	10	60	17	12	7	9	36	5	40	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	7	4	2	8	2	3	1	4

Body decoration is less frequent than neck decoration but not as rare as the matrix (Table 1) suggests. It is often discontinuous but may form a complete band around the vessel. It may be attached to the body/neck junction or it may be lower on the body, the latter position being the more common. Hatched quadrilaterals are the most common motif, and they are more often set obliquely than horizontally (Fig. 5.4 & 5.8). Other discontinuous motifs include short rows of impressions and wavy lines (Figs. 5.2 & 4.3) as well as a single example of V's (Fig. 3.5) and combinations of quadrilaterals (Fig. 5.7) placed under 'misc. decoration' because of their rarity. The list of motifs on decorated body sherds not included in the matrix because they lacked necks is as follows;

Motif No.	Frequency	Fig.
14 Band of several horizontal grooves	12	6.8
15 Band of oblique hatching	1	5.1
20 Band of alternate triangles, hatched	4	6.11
25 Horizontal quadrilaterals, hatched	11	5.8
26 Oblique quadrilaterals, hatched	14	3.6
27 Horizontal row or rows of impressions	10	5.2
28 Vertical row or rows of impressions	4	6.1
29 Wavy lines	4	4.3
— Chevron	8	
— V's	5	3.5

This list presents a picture of the body decoration rather different from that implied by the matrix. While the hatched quadrilaterals (Nos 25 & 26) still dominate, other motifs (Nos 14, 20, 27, 28 as well as chevrons and V's) appear in some numbers and sometimes in combination with one another. For example there are several cases where a row of alternate hatched triangles or a chevron occur immediately below a band of horizontal grooves (Fig. 6.11). Another interesting feature is that while most of the decoration that is not attached to the body/neck junction is discontinuous, there

is one example of a continuous band of decoration around the body of the pot. Both features are more characteristic of sites such as Msuluzi Confluence (Maggs, 1980) which are two or three centuries later than Mzonjani.

Bowls represent about one-third of the assemblage and although they are simpler than the pots they are fairly distinctive. Since most of their attributes are different from those of the pots, a separate matrix with different characteristics was drawn up (Table 2).

Characteristics of the bowls

Shape

1. Subcarinated, thickened. The outer wall of the bowl curves sharply inwards a little distance below the lip. Since the inner wall curves more gradually the wall at the 'carination' is thicker (Fig. 7.5).
2. Subcarinated, not thickened. There is only one example (Fig. 7.3).
3. Hemispherical, widemouthed (Fig. 6.12).
4. Subspherical (Fig. 6.15).
5. Lip profile rounded.

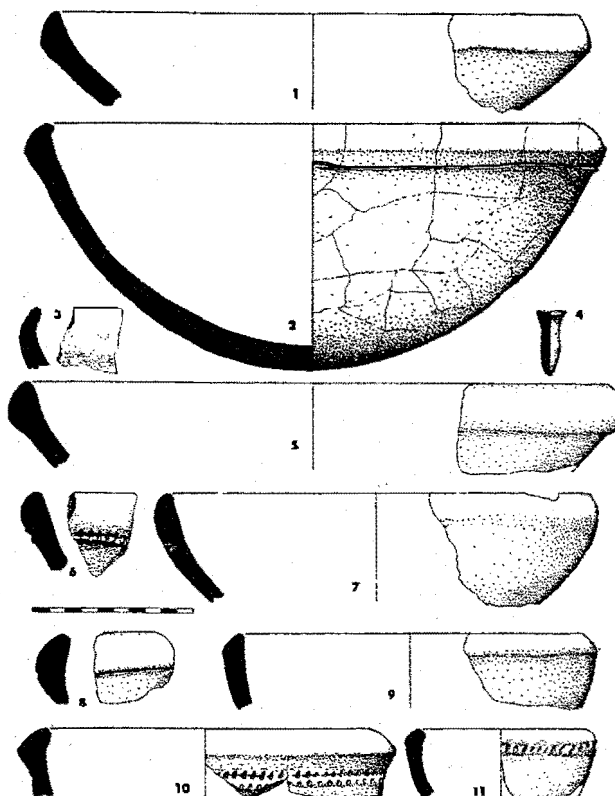


Fig. 7. Early Iron Age bowls. 1 & 2 from north of Feature 2; 3 Feature 4; 5 Feature 13; 4 'golf tee' & 6-8 Feature 16; 9-11 surface collection.

6. Lip profile flattened in a single plane.
7. Lip profile tapered.
8. Groove or flute on lip.

Decoration

9. Horizontal groove below 'carination' (Fig. 7.2).
10. Horizontal row or rows of individual impressions, usually along a groove (Fig. 7.10& 7.11).

TABLE 2.
Matrix of characteristics of the bowls.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1										
2										
3										
4										
5	16	2	8	1						
6	5		5							
7	6									
8	3		1			1				
9	9		1		4	3	2			
10	4				2		1		3	
Totals	28	1	13	1	25	9	6	4	9	4

The 'subcarinated, thickened' bowls dominate as is the case on comparable third- to fourth-century EIA sites. However, other shapes, notably hemispherical, are also found. Decoration, limited to two motifs occurring just below the 'carination', is found on about one-third of the subcarinated bowls and not on the other shapes. Lip profiles are mainly rounded and occasionally there is a slight groove on the lip. However, none has multiple bevels or fluting.

Wherever possible the diameters of both pots and bowls were recorded. The measurements in centimetres, taken at the outside of the lip, are as follows:

	Smallest	Mean	Largest	Standard deviation
Pots	10	26,8	46	10,2
Bowls	10	25,7	44	10

The two types of vessel are remarkably similar in size and on average larger than in some EIA assemblages such as Ntshekane of the ninth century from Natal (Maggs & Michael, 1976).

Other characteristics of the EIA assemblage as a whole relate to surface finish and fabric. The absence of burnish or any additional surface colouring is noticeable. Vessels were smoothed off but, it seems, never polished to a shiny lustre. They were made from material which consists largely of fine sand with relatively little clay and a fair amount of organic material. Firing was to a low temperature for carbonised material has discoloured the core of most sherds from just beneath their outer surfaces and many have dark grey or black surfaces as well. The fabric has a rather poor refractory quality, being both friable on the surface and often fissile—tending to shatter along planes of weakness. A sample fired in an electric kiln to about 900° C changed from black to orange, with combustion of organic content, and became very fissile. It therefore seems that the low firing was optimal for this rather poor material.

The fine sand element suggests a local origin in the aeolian Berea Red Sand Formation; the organic content suggests a poorly drained valley-bottom source.

In summary the EIA assemblage is characterised by rather soft, friable and low-fired ware without burnish. Pots have markedly everted, straight necks with sharply defined points of inflection. Most necks are decorated, the most common motifs being a horizontal groove just below the lip and a band of oblique hatching. Body decoration is less common, the most frequent motif being hatched quadrilaterals. There is a considerable variety of other decoration, both on necks and bodies, most of which consists of relatively bold grooving. The distinctive bowls are subcarinated and relatively open in shape, sometimes with a single horizontal groove or row of impressions just below the 'carination'.

Appendix 4

MSULUZI CONFLUENCE CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Maggs 1980(b): 122-131).

The Msuluzi Confluence assemblage is of particular interest since it is the first in Natal to be dated within the period AD 400-800. Moreover, it is the first excavated site that corresponds with Schofield's ceramic class Natal Coast 3 (NC 3), a classification which, however, is now obsolete since this pottery clearly belongs within the EIA (Maggs, 1980a).

Although some of the vessels included in this description are from the surface features, there is a high degree of internal typological consistency. Moreover, the nature of the site, as already described, is indicative of a single Iron Age occupation. The method followed here is essentially similar to that used for other EIA sites of the present project (Maggs & Michael, 1976; Maggs, 1980b) in order to facilitate comparisons. In the list of ceramic characteristics the numbers used in the Mzonjani report (Maggs, 1980b) have been retained where they are present. New characteristics, not found at Mzonjani, have been given new numbers.

Only 45 pots are sufficiently complete for inclusion, and even among these some do not preserve the whole of their body motifs (e.g. Fig. 8.6). The sample is therefore relatively small and probably does not cover the full range of attribute combinations. However, it is adequate to describe the main characteristics of shape and decoration.

Characteristics of the pots

Shape

- 2. Pot with curved, everted neck.
- 3. Lip profile rounded.
- 4. Lip profile flattened.
- 5. Lip profile tapered.
- 7. Groove on lip.
- 31. Notches on lip (Fig. 8.3).

Position of decoration

- 8. Whole of neck (Fig. 9.1).
- 9. Upper neck (Fig. 10.2).
- 32. Lower neck (Fig. 8.4).
- 33. Plain band between decorated bands on neck. Sometimes this is divided by a horizontal groove (Fig. 8.6).
- 10. Body/neck junction.
- 11. Just below (attached to) body/neck junction.
- 12. On body (not attached to body/neck junction).

Decoration motifs—continuous

- 14. Band of several horizontal grooves (Fig. 8.5).
- 15. Band of oblique hatching (Fig. 12.1).
- 16. Two or more bands of oblique hatching (Fig. 9.3).

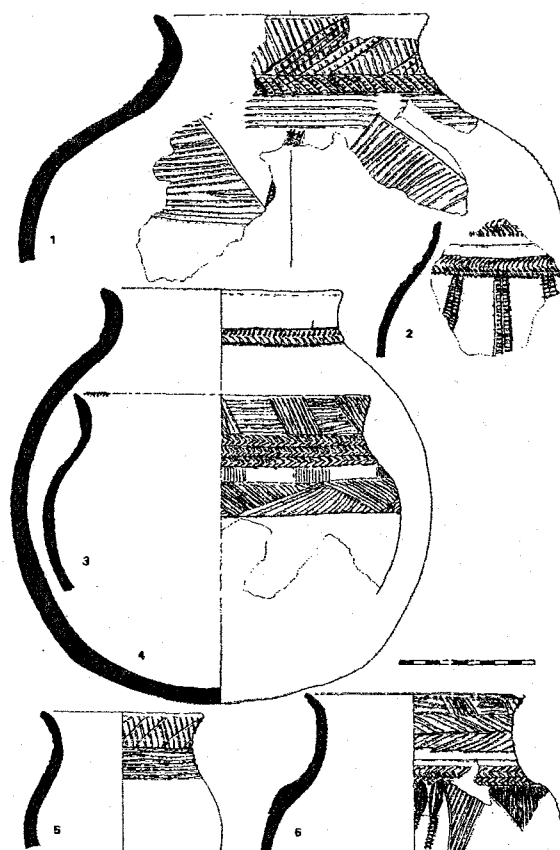


Fig 8. Pots from Grid 1. 1 from B6, 2 from Feature 32, 3 from C4, D4 and E4, 4 & 6 from C1, 5 from C6.

- 34. Band or bands of even cross-hatching (Fig. 9.1).
- 35. Band or bands of uneven cross-hatching, where the one series of lines is more than twice the distance apart than the other (Fig. 8.5).
- 17. Band of horizontal and oblique or vertical cross-hatching (Fig. 11.3; Fig. 11.2).
- 23. Band of interlocking parallelograms, hatched (Fig. 11.2).
- 36. Band of interlocking parallelograms alternately hatched (Fig. 10.1).
- 21. Band of interlocking rectangles, hatched.
- 19. Band of interlocking triangles, hatched (Fig. 8.3).
- 20. Band of alternate (pendant) triangles, hatched (Fig. 8.6).
- 37. Bands of opposed hatching without intervening groove. Two or more horizontal bands of oblique hatching where the direction of the hatching alternates from band to band. Two such bands form a herringbone pattern (Fig. 10.5).
- 38. Bands of opposed hatching with intervening groove (Fig. 11.4).
- 39. Cord effect, where a band is thickened to stand out in relief (Fig. 9.2).

Decorative motifs—discontinuous

25. Horizontal quadrilaterals, hatched (Fig. 8.1).

26. Oblique quadrilaterals, hatched.

40. Vertical quadrilaterals (ladder) hatched or cross-hatched (Fig. 8.2).

27. Short horizontal row or rows of impressions (Fig. 9.4).

29. Curvilinear motifs (Fig. 9.4).

41. Applied decoration, bosses or strips (Fig. 8.6).

30. Misc. decoration. Other rare motifs or sherds too small to demonstrate the whole of a motif.

TABLE 1

Matrix of pot characteristics

The column and row numbers refer to the list of characteristics.
The numbers at the end of each row is the total for each characteristic.

	2	3	4	5	7	31	8	9	32	33	10	11	12	14	15	16	34	35	17	23	36	21	19	20	37	38	39	25	26	40	27	29	Totals	
2																																	45	
3	24																																24	
4	16																																15	
5	1																																1	
7	1	1																															1	
31	1	1																															1	
8	36	20	12	1	1																												36	
9	1	1					1																										1	
32	3	1	2																														3	
33	3	1	1			1																											3	
10	2	2				1		1																									2	
11	8	3	4			1		5		1	4																						8	
12	2	1	1					2					1																				2	
14	2	2						2																									2	
15	6	1	2					3		1																							4	
16	2	2						2																									2	
34	10	5	5					10				3	2		1																		10	
35	17	10	4	1		1	16	1			1	1		2		1	1																17	
17	2	1	1				1				1																						2	
23	9	5	3			1		8		2		3					1	2	1														9	
36	5	2	2				5				1	1				1	2																5	
21	1	1					1										1																1	
19	4	4				1	4				1	3					1				2												4	
20	3		3				1				1	3					1				1												3	
37	11	5	5			1	7	1	1	3	1	5		2		1	3	1		3	1		3	1									11	
38	7	4	3			1	4		2	2	3					1	1		1	2			1		1	2	1						7	
39	1	1					1				1						1				1			1									1	
25	2	1					2				2						1				1			1									2	
26	1		1				1				1						1							1									1	
40	4		3				1			2							1				1				1	3	1		1	1			4	
27	1	1					1				1		1				1																1	
29	1	1					1				1		1				1																1	
41	2	1	1				1			1			1				1								1	1	1				1	1	1	2
30	3	2	1				1	1	1	1		1	1				2			1					1	1	1						3	

There is little variation in pot shapes (Table 1), all falling within the category of curved, everted necks, where the point of inflection between neck and body is not defined by a significant change in angle but very often coincides with the bottom of the banded neck decoration. Bodies are spherical to subspherical in shape. Rare examples have somewhat more upright necks (Fig. 11.4) but not sufficiently so as to warrant another category.

Lip profiles are not very distinctive, rounded ones being more common than flattened, and there are no multiple bevels. Rare examples have a groove or row of notches on the lip.

Virtually all pots are decorated, only 2 of the 45 being plain. Decoration consists of one or more horizontal bands usually occupying the whole of the neck, and sometimes there are additional motifs on the body. Occasionally there is a plain band below, between or above the decorated neck bands (Fig. 11.3 & 4), the latter heralding the positioning that had become dominant by the ninth century (Maggs & Michael, 1976).

Decoration is by relatively bold U- or V-shaped grooving in the form of parallel horizontal lines, oblique hatching and cross-hatching. The most common band motifs are even and uneven cross-hatching (motif numbers 34 & 35), interlocking parallelograms hatched or cross-hatched (23 & 36) and opposed hatching with or without intervening grooves (37 & 38). Most vessels have two or more bands, some as many as five (Fig. 9.3). Particular band motifs may have preferred positions on the neck, for example the interlocking parallelograms are usually at the top whereas the opposed hatching is usually lower down (Fig. 8.3). The sample is too small to give a clear indication of preferred combinations of motifs.

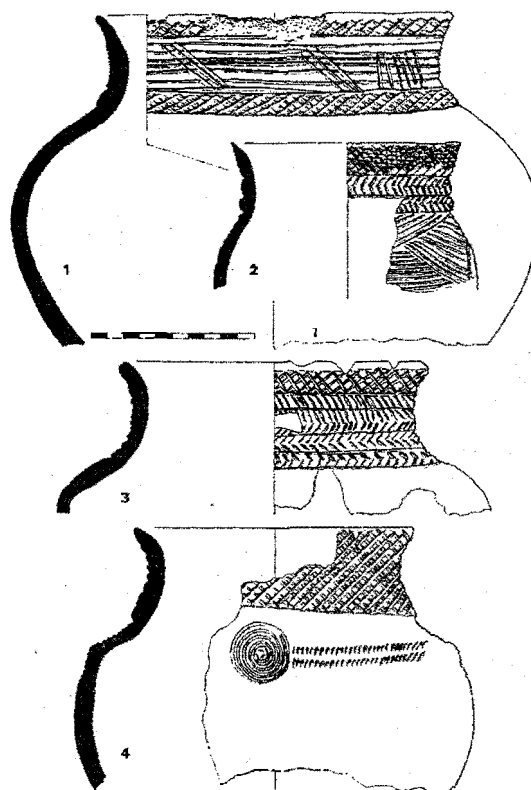


Fig. 9. Pots from Grid 1. 1 from pit at E3, 2 from C7, 3 from 04. 4 from D2.

Body decoration usually takes the form of triangles or rectangles pendant from the body/neck junction. Occasionally it occurs lower down on the body (Fig. 8.1) and it may take the form of a continuous horizontal band (Fig. 10.4). It is less common than neck decoration and more variable. Rare examples include applied strips with grooving (Fig. 8.6) and a pushed out boss with spiral motif (Fig. 9.4)

Bowls are described separately from the pots as the two types of vessel have few attributes in common. A total of 45 are included, however, this does not reflect the actual proportions of the two types. Pots seem to be appreciably more common but, because of their relative complexity, a larger portion of these vessels need to be preserved in order to be included in the analysis. Most bowls are undecorated and, though the shapes are usually rather simple, there is more variety than among the pots.

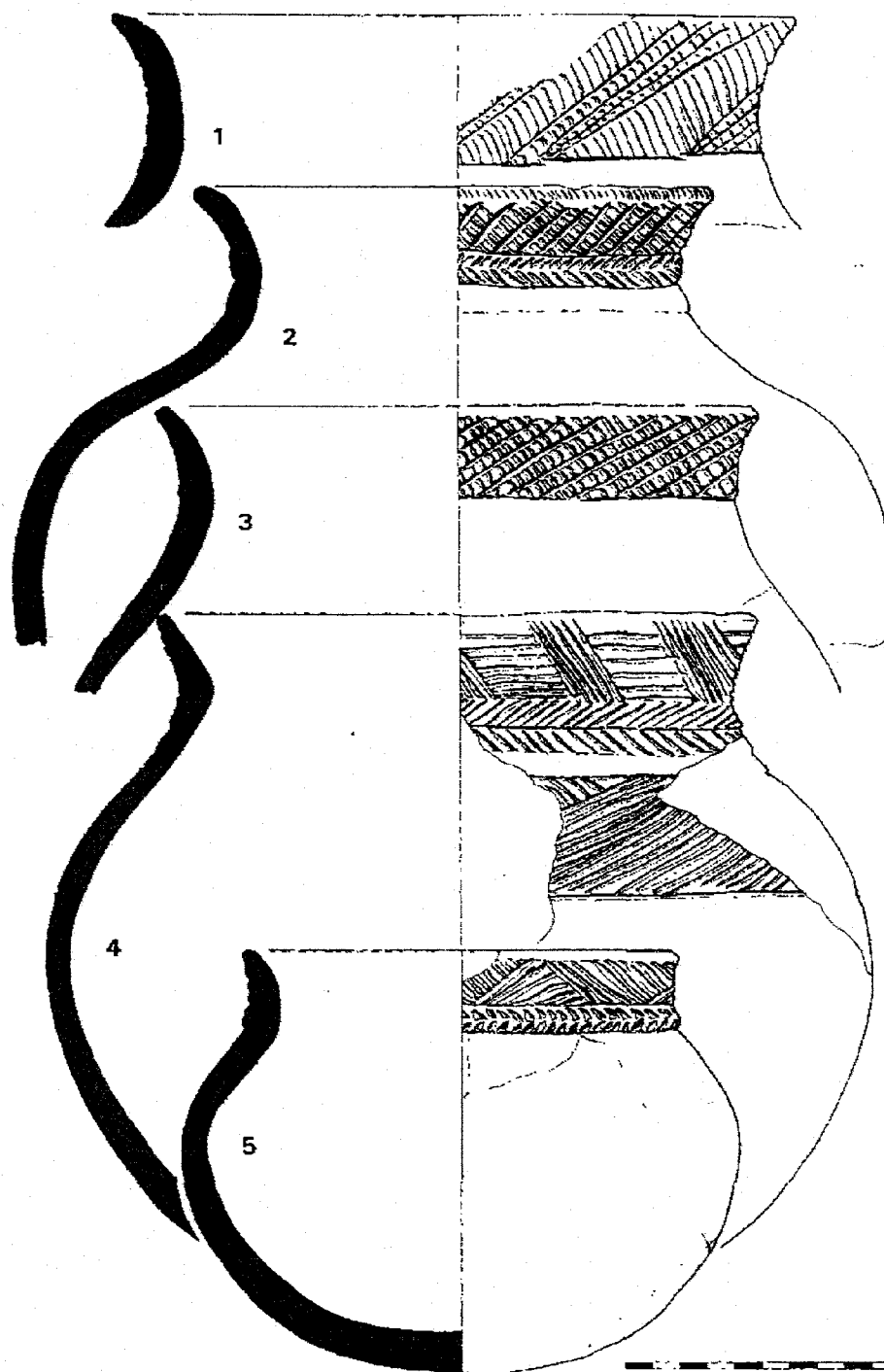


Fig. 10. Pots from Grid 1. 1 from U5. 2-5 from D7 pit.

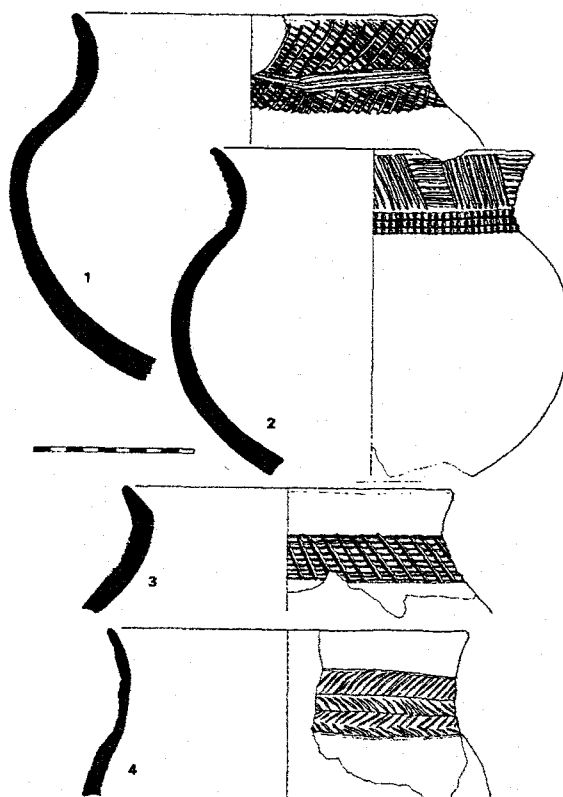


Fig. 11. Pots. 1 from Feature 30, 2 from Grid 1 E4 pit, 3 & 4 from Feature 23.

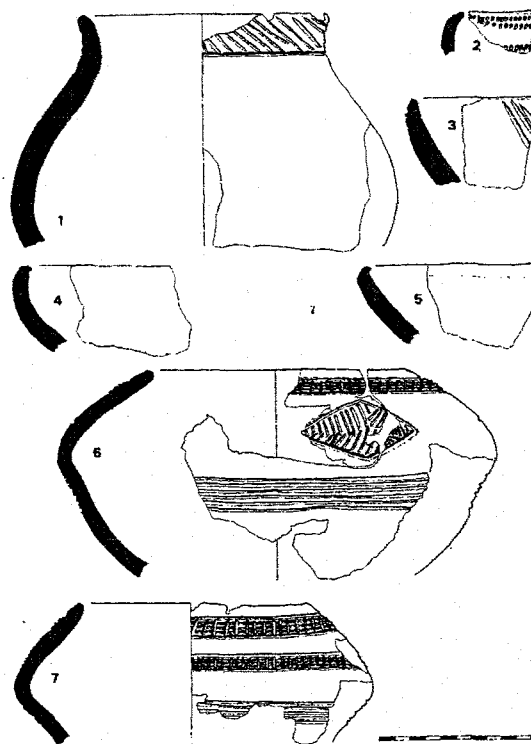


Fig. 12. Bowls and one pot. 1 from Feature 23, 2 from Grid 1 B7, 3 from C1, 4 from C6, 5 & 7 from D4, 6 from C4 and D4. 6 and 7 are Msuluzi Bowls.

Characteristics of the bowls

Shape

1. Subcarinated, thickened. The outer wall of the bowl curves sharply inwards a little distance below the lip. Since the inner wall curves more gradually, the wall at the 'carination' is thicker (Fig. 13.3).
11. Subcarinated just below lip, the angle of the 'carination' being 12 mm or less below the lip (Fig. 12.5).
12. Msuluzi Bowl. This has a very distinctive shape including a deep carination and a constriction towards the base (Fig. 12.6 & 7).
3. Hemispherical, widemouthed (Fig. 13.1, 4 & 5).
5. Lip profile rounded.
6. Lip profile flattened.
7. Lip profile tapered.

Decoration

13. Row of impressions on lip (Fig. 13.6).
10. Row or rows of individual impressions (Fig. 12.2).
14. Band of grooves, hatching or cross-hatching.
15. Two or more bands of grooves, hatching or cross-hatching (Fig. 12.6 & 7).
16. Panels infilled with hatching, cross-hatching or other grooved motif (Fig. 12.3 & 6).
17. Burnish including red or black.

The group is dominated by hemispherical, widemouthed bowls which, however, are not very distinctive and are seldom decorated (Table 2) (Fig. 13.1, 4 & 5). More distinctive are the two subcarinated categories. The single thickened example is essentially the same as third/fourth-century bowls from Mzonjani (Maggs, 1980b), while those subcarinated just below the lip are still reminiscent of this type but show a change towards less emphasis on the carination, which has become little more than a kink at the rim (Fig. 12.5). It is only this kink that separates the group from the hemispherical category.

	1	11	12	3	5	6	7	13	10	14	15	16	17	Totals
1														1
11														6
12														2
3														2
5			2		18									20
6	1	3	2		14									20
7				3										3
13				2	2									4
10		1		2	2			1						3
14				1	1									2
15			2			2								1
16			1			2					1			2
17		1	2		1	2					2	1		3

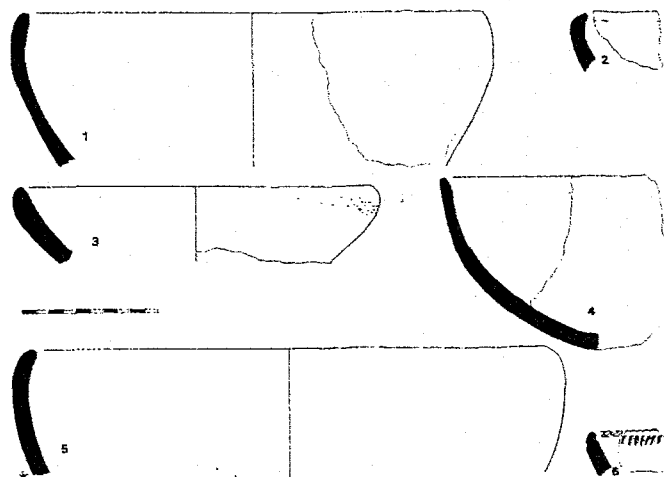


Fig. 13. Bowls. 1 from D7 pit, 2-5 from E4, 6 from Feature 17. Rim diameters of both pots and bowls

Of most interest are the two 'Msuluzi Bowls' (Fig. 12.6 & 7), a name we feel justified in giving because of the very distinctive combination of shape, decoration and burnish. They have a constricted and decorated band near their bases as well as one or two decorated bands plus panels or 'medallions' above the subcarination. They are the only coloured and burnished vessels in the assemblage, with the exception of one other bowl. Only one other example, described by Schofield (1948: 152) as an inverted gourd-shape, has been published previously. Their distinctiveness and relative rarity suggests that they served a special purpose.

The few other decorated bowls have relatively simple motifs, usually one or more rows of impressions on or below the lip (Fig. 12.2), while one has a panel of oblique grooves (Fig. 12.3).

Rim diameters of both pots and bowls were measured in centimetres as follows

	Smallest	Mean	Largest	Standard Deviation	N
Pots	12	20,5	36	4,6	35
Bowls	15	24	38	6,6	35

Pots are appreciably smaller, and both types of vessel show a smaller size range than the Mzonjani assemblage (Maggs, 1980b).

Characteristics of surface finish, fabric and firing relate to the assemblage as a whole. The virtual absence of burnishing, except on the Msuluzi Bowls, has already been mentioned. Most other vessels have a well-smoothed, even, but matt outer surface. The inner surface is often noticeably rougher as if the pots had often been scoured during use.

Firing was generally in a sufficiently oxidising atmosphere and of sufficient temperature and duration to burn out all visible carbon, leaving the ware a buff to orange colour throughout. A few vessels, however, do have grey surface patches or a grey, unoxidised core. The fabric is a rather dense clay matrix with a large addition of filler—mainly angular quartz grains of various sizes. The result is a relatively hard ware.

Appendix 5

NDONDONDWANE CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Loubser 1993: 124-135).

Together, Maggs and I retrieved 192 reconstructable vessels. I classified these by combining vessel shape with decoration motif and decoration placement (Huffman 1980). According to my classification there are 31 classes at Ndondondwane:

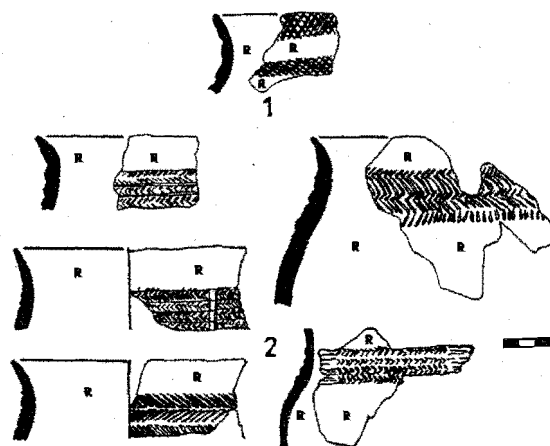


Fig. 12. Ceramic classes 1 and 2 (For this and following ceramic illustrations the scale is in centimeters; R = red ochre burnish; B = black burnish).

Class Description

- 1 Jar with an everted neck. A crosshatched band on the rim and another on the shoulder. Ochre burnish on the exterior and interior (Fig. 12).
- 2 Jar with an everted neck. Multiple bands of herringbone in the neck. Ochre burnish on the exterior and interior (Fig. 12).
- 3 Jar with an everted neck. A single hatched band in the neck. Ochre burnish on the exterior and interior (Fig. 13).
- 4 Jar with an everted neck. Diagonal incisions on the lip, a double band of herringbone in the neck and pendant ladders on the shoulder (Fig. 13).
- 5 Jar with an everted neck. Multiple bands of cross-hatching and herringbone on the rim and neck, and pendant triangles on the shoulder (Fig. 13).
- 6 Jar with an everted neck. Horizontal incisions in the neck and pendant triangles on shoulder and body (Fig. 14).
- 7 Jar with an everted neck. Horizontal bands of herringbone in the neck and pendant triangles on the shoulder only (Fig. 14).
- 8 Jar with an everted neck. A band with horizontal, hatched or herringbone incision in neck and pendant ladders on shoulder (Fig. 14).
- 9 Jar with an everted neck. A hatched band on the rim and a band with herringbone or counter hatched triangles in the neck (Fig. 15).
- 10 Jar with an everted neck. A band of cross hatching on the rim (Fig. 16).

- 11 Jar with an everted neck. Multiple bands of herringbone and spaced appliqué bosses in neck (Fig. 17).
- 12 Jar with an everted neck. Herringbone or hatched band in neck (Figs 17-20).
- 13 Jar with an everted neck with no decoration (Fig. 20).
- 14 Jar with straight neck. Horizontal or crosshatched bands in neck (Fig. 21).
- 15 Globular jar with a hatched band on neck (Fig. 21).
- 16 Globular jar with no decoration (Fig. 21).
- 17 Inturned carinated bowl. Incised loops on the neck and horizontal incisions on the lower body. Ochre and black burnish on the exterior (Fig. 22).
- 18 Inturned carinated bowl. A band of hatching on the neck and pendant Quadrilaterals on the shoulder. Ochre burnish on the exterior (Fig. 22).
- 19 Inturned carinated bowl with diagonal incisions on the shoulder. Ochre burnish on the exterior and the top half of the interior (Fig. 22).
- 20 Inturned carinated bowl with ochre or black burnish on the exterior and interior (Fig. 22).
- 21 Inturned carinated bowl with incisions on the shoulder (Fig. 22).
- 22 Inturned carinated bowl with no decoration (Fig. 22).
- 23 Inturned bowl with ochre or black burnish on the exterior and top quarter of the interior (Fig. 22).
- 24 Inturned bowl with horizontal incised lines on the shoulder (Fig. 23).
- 25 Inturned bowl with no decoration (Fig. 23).
- 26 Globular bowl with lip incisions and pendant quadrilaterals on the neck and shoulder. Ochre burnish on the exterior (Fig. 23).
- 27 Globular bowl with incised band on the neck and ochre burnish on the exterior (Fig. 23).
- 28 Globular bowl with incised band on the neck (Fig. 23).
- 29 Globular bowl with ladders on the shoulder (Fig. 23).
- 30 Open sub-carinated bowl without decoration (Fig. 23).
- 31 Open bowl without decoration (Fig. 24). The distribution of the ceramic classes within the site shows that all of them, except for class 26, occur in the mound area (Figs 25-28). Classes 3, 6, 11, 12, 13, 23, 25, 26, 28 & 31 occur in the dung area (Fig. 29). The hut area yielded plain bowls only. The distribution of the pottery classes shows that the Ndondondwane ceramics belong to a single style.

(FIGS OVERLEAF)

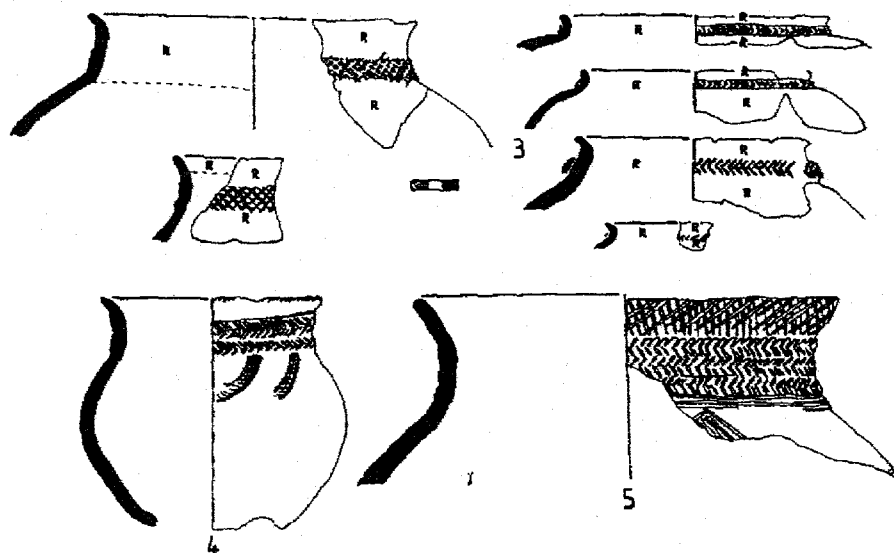


Fig. 13. Ceramic classes 3, 4 and 5.

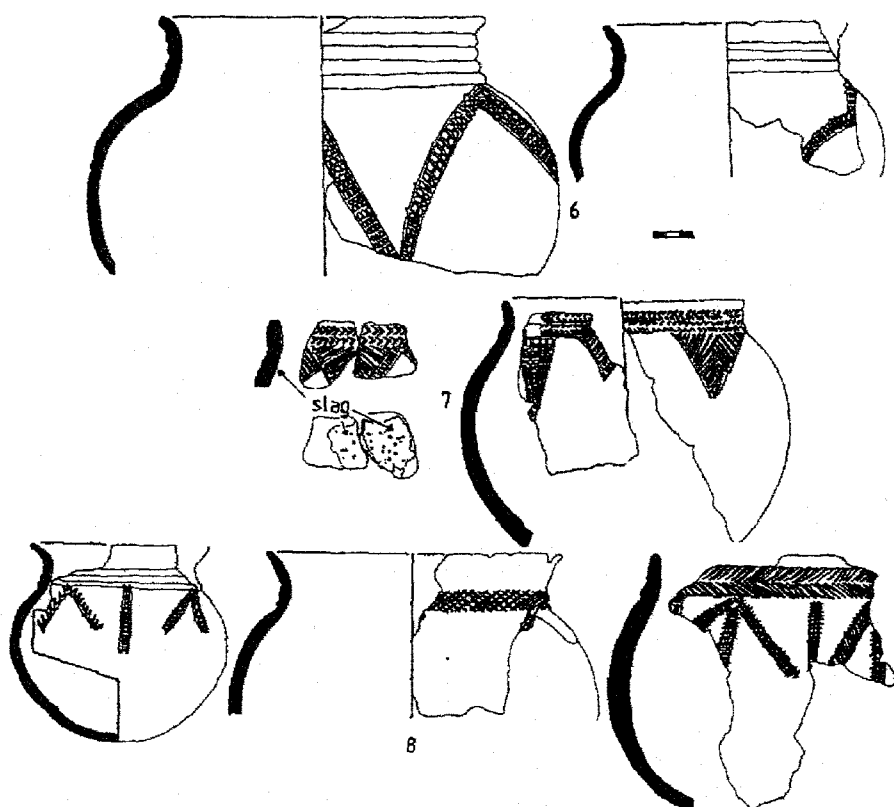


Fig. 14. Ceramic classes 6, 7 and 8 (note slag lining in one vessel in class 7).

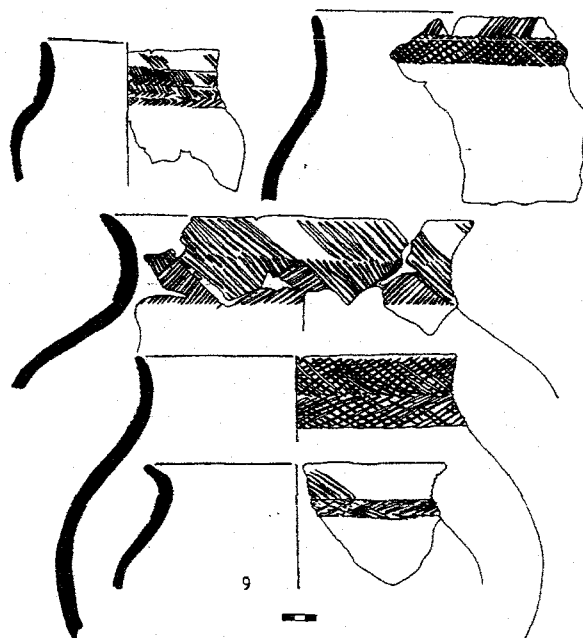


Fig. 15. Ceramic class 9.

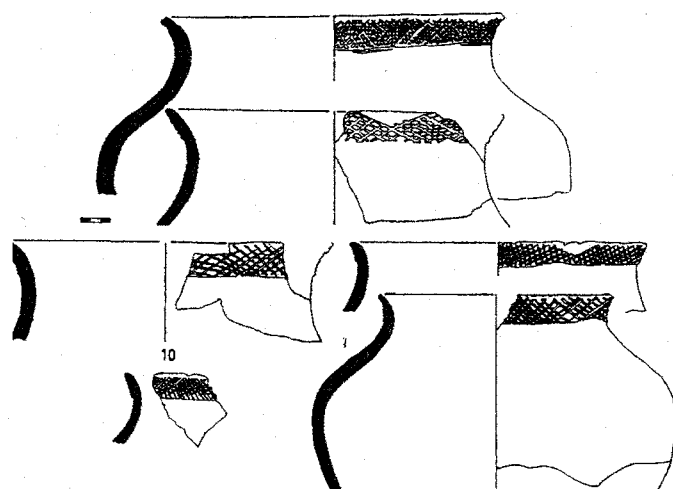


Fig. 16. Ceramic class 10.

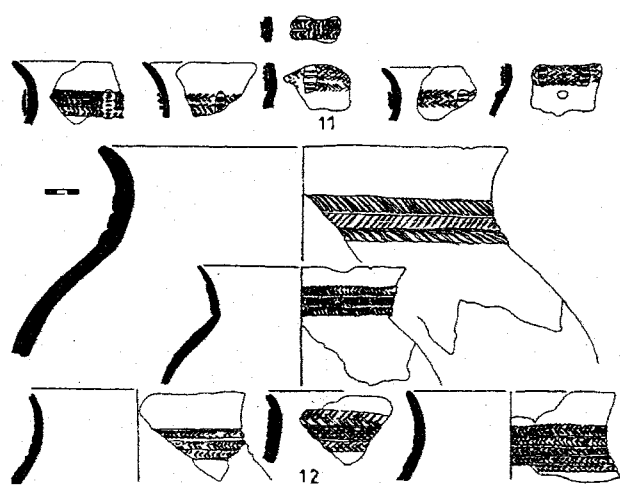


Fig. 17. Ceramic classes 11 and 12.

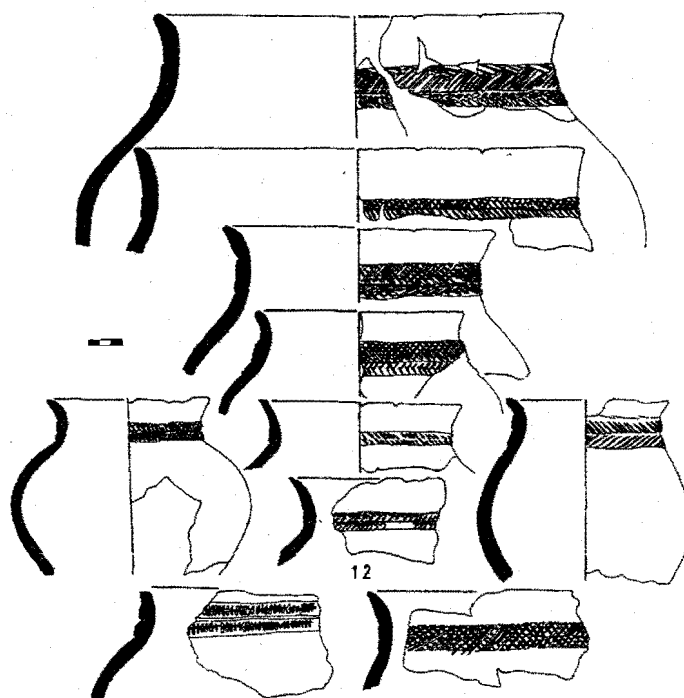


Fig. 18. Ceramic class 12.



Fig. 19. Ceramic class 12.

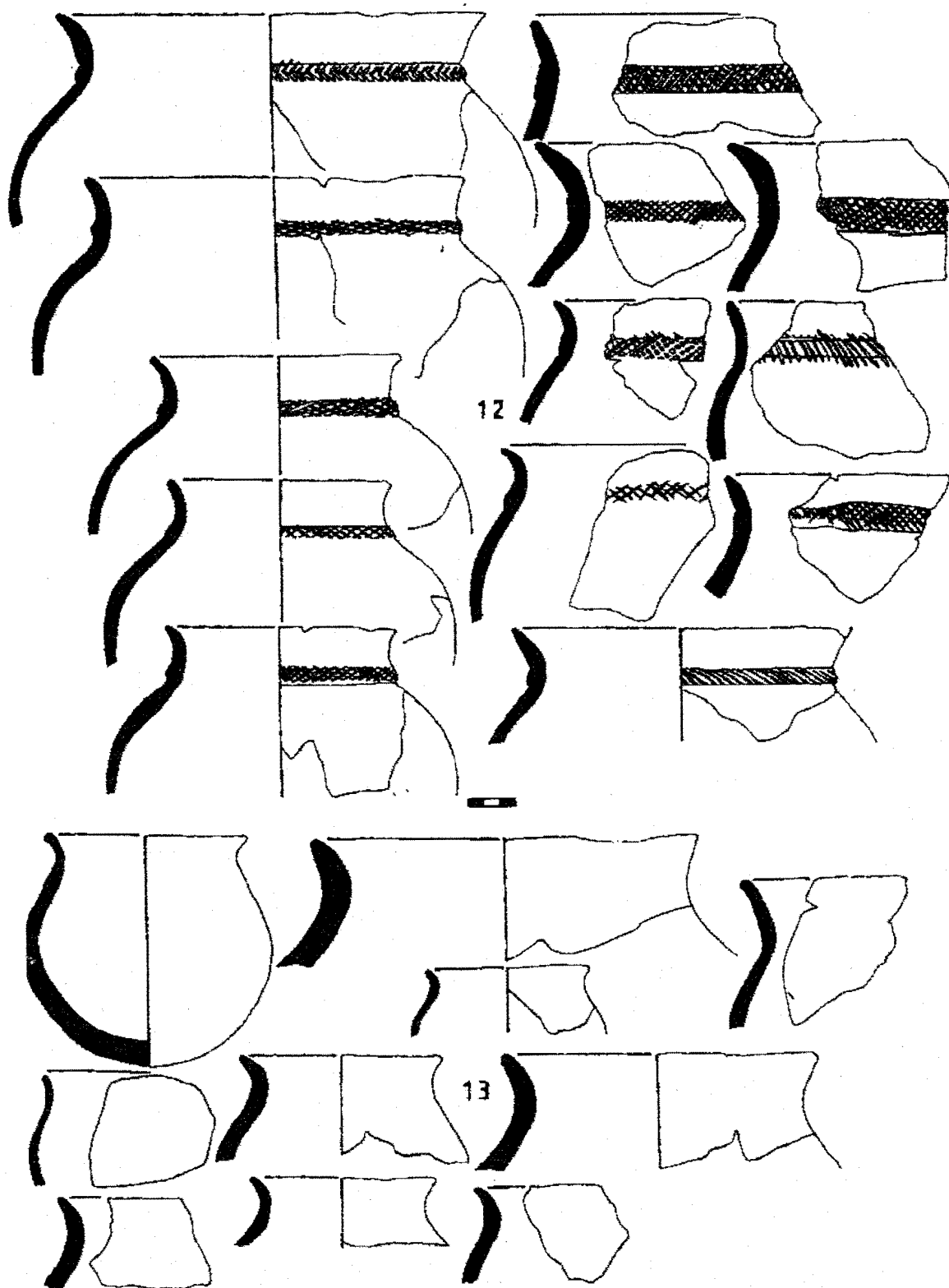


Fig. 20. Ceramic classes 12 and 13.

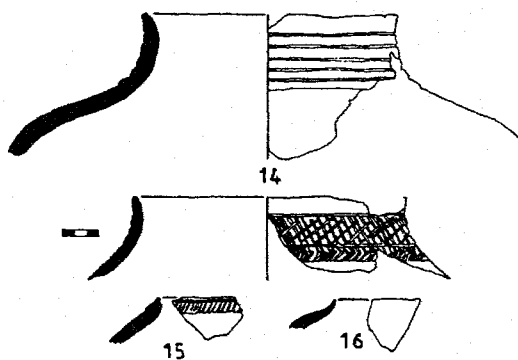


Fig. 21. Ceramic classes 14, 15 and 16.

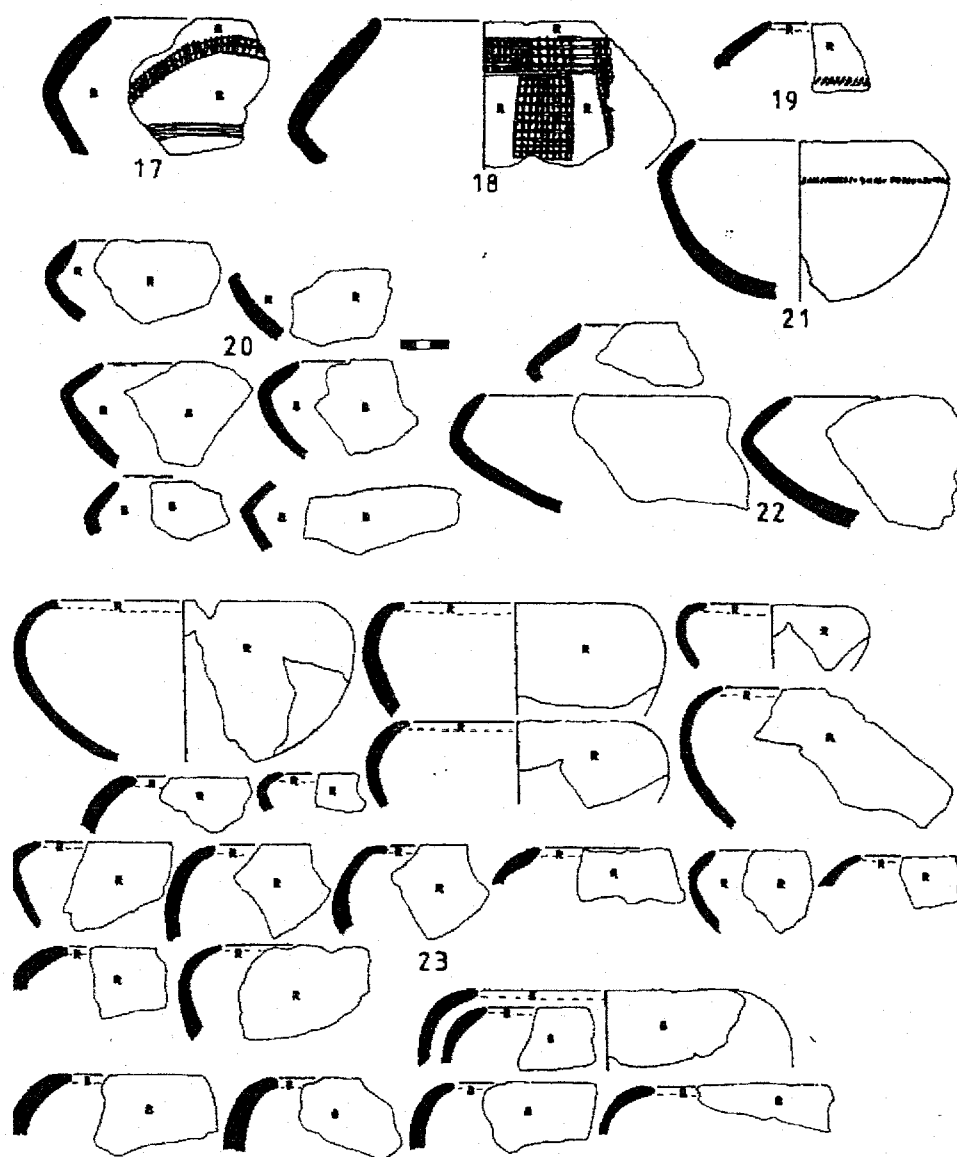


Fig. 22. Ceramic classes 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23.

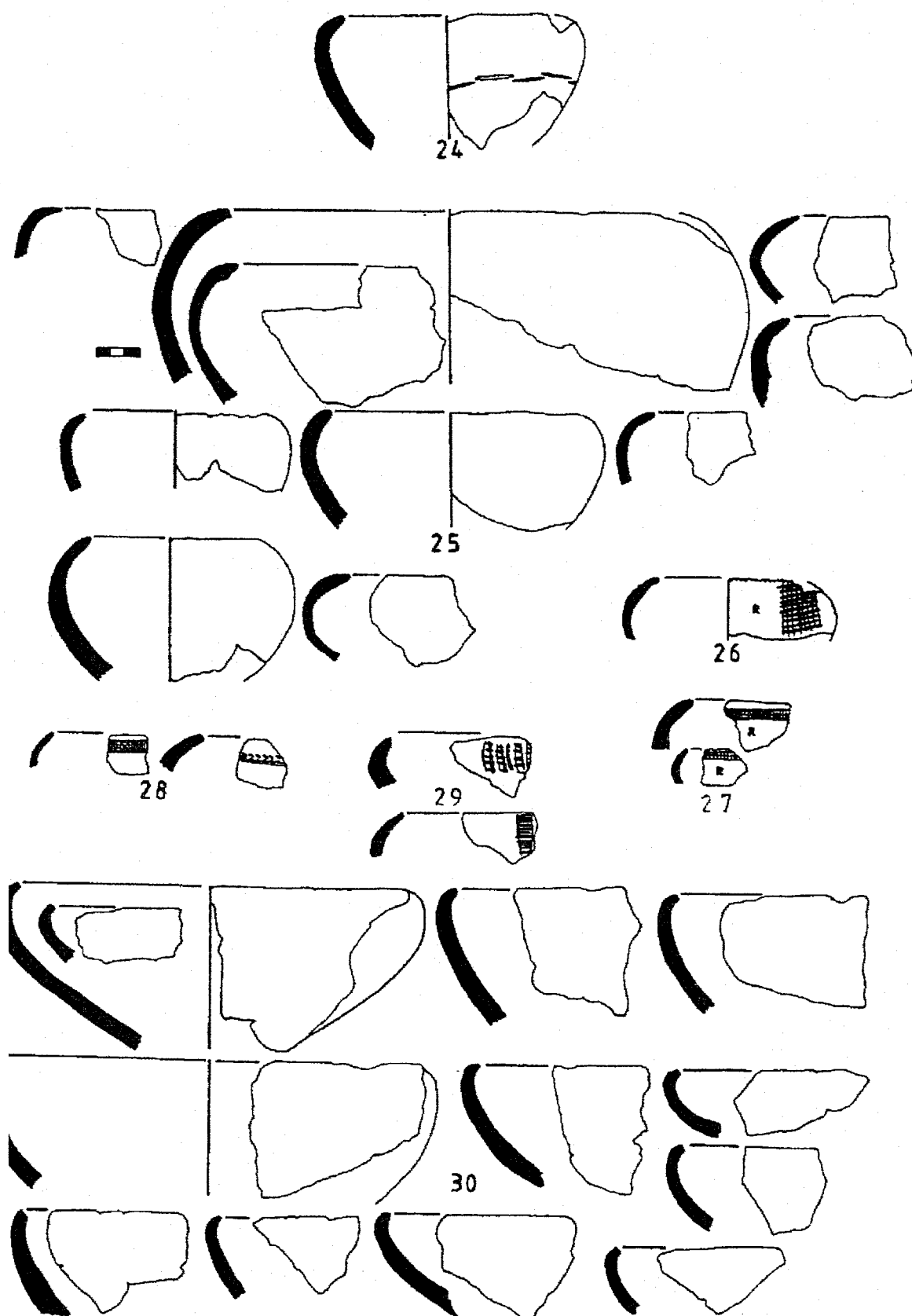


Fig. 23. Ceramic classes 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30.

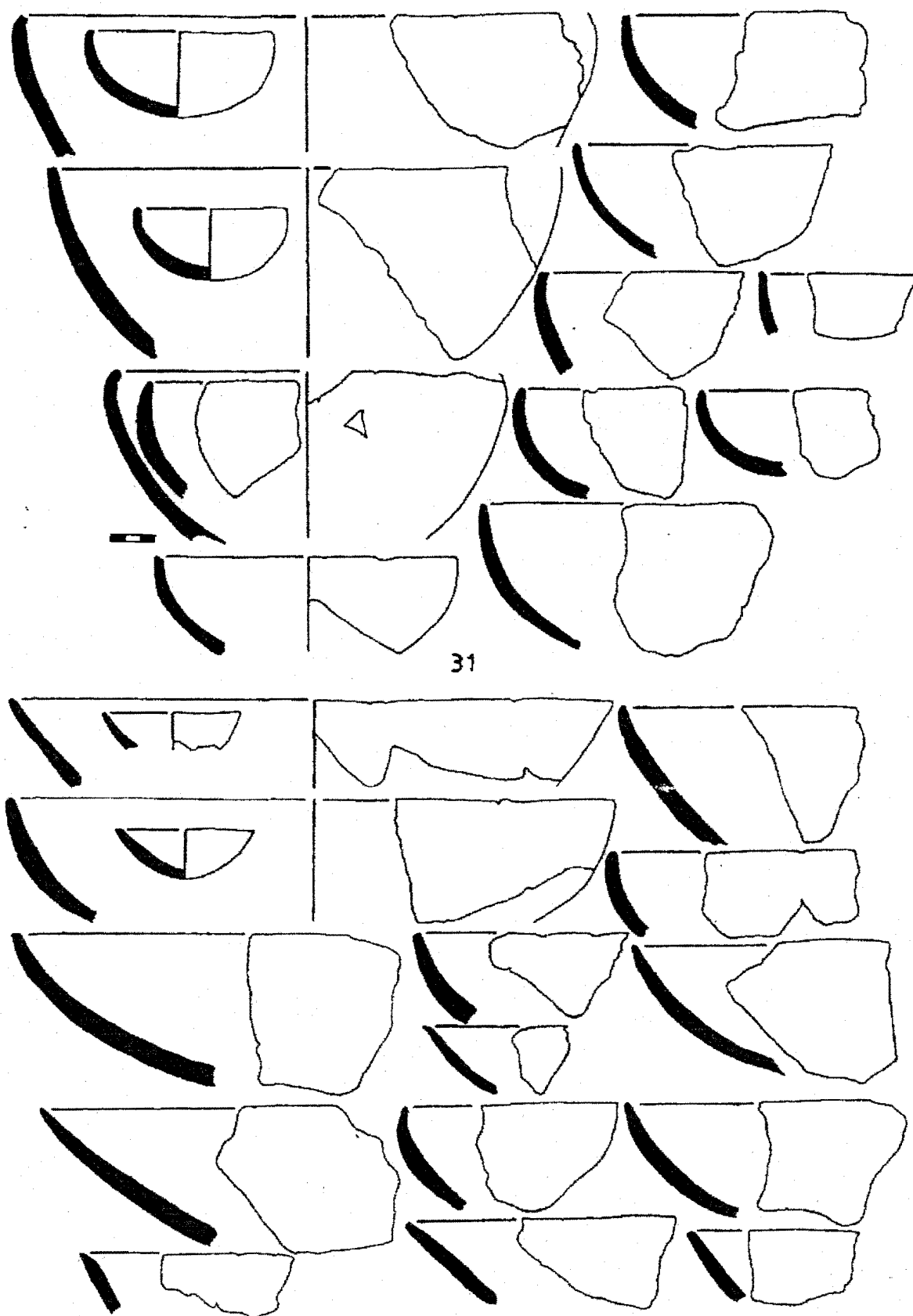


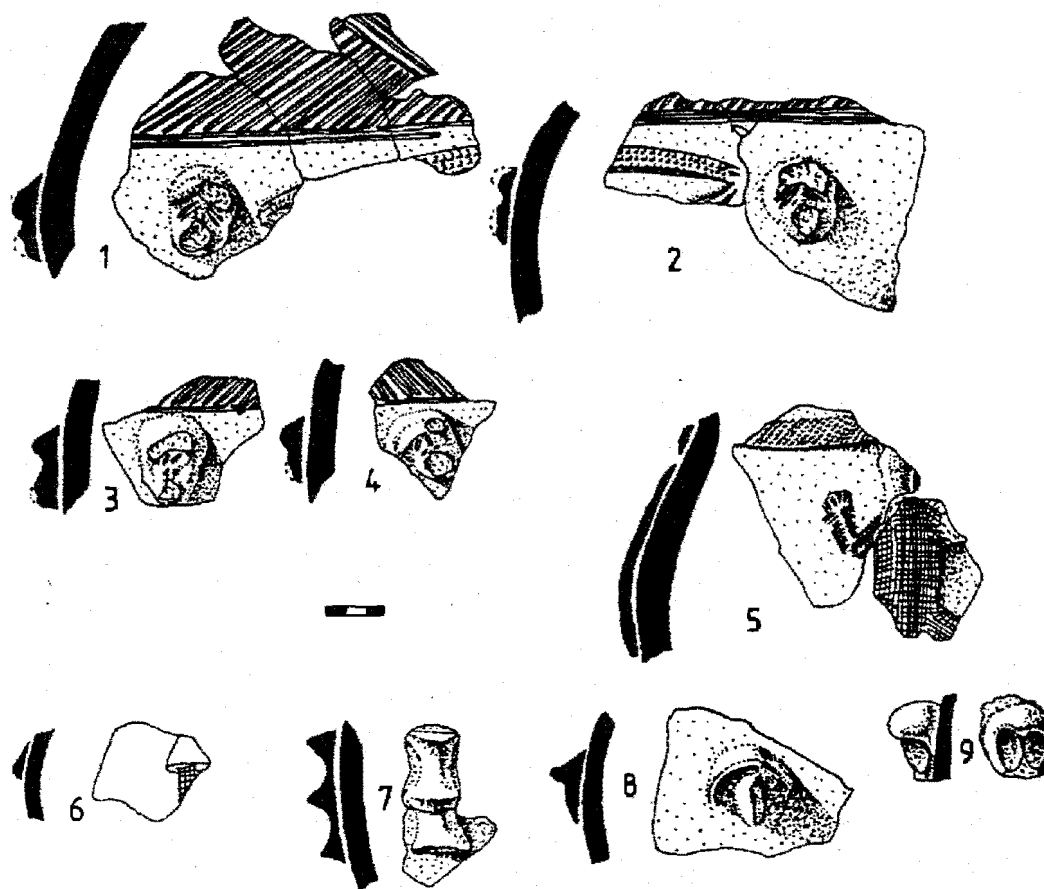
Fig. 24. Ceramic class 31.

Pottery fragments with appliqués

Four sherds with appliqué heads (Figs 30,1-4) were excavated next to a class 5 jar (Fig. 13,5) in the furnace rubble. Although these sherds did not fit the jar, their temper, surface colour, thickness and curvature suggest that they may all have been part of it. All four heads belong to the body of the jar, just below a band of counter hatched triangles on the vessel's shoulder. An oblong ladder-like motif occurs between two of the heads. Each head has incisions on the face. Although the moulded eyebrows and mouths of all the heads are damaged, they share similar 'ape-like' features.

Apart from the sherds with ape-like heads, the furnace rubble yielded a necked jar with a creature moulded on its shoulder. The motif occurs just below an incised cord-like band moulded on the vessel's neck. Although the tail and three legs of the creature are missing, the shape of its head, body and intact leg are lizard-like (Fig. 30,5). The back and legs of this reptilian creature have been meticulously incised into squares.

Other, less figurative, appliqués occur on vessels of unknown shape. These include a triangular appliqué with a ladder pendant (Fig. 30,6), three linked triangular appliqués (Fig. 30,7), a mushroom-like appliqué (Fig. 30,8) and an appliqué with nostril-like impressions (Fig. 30,9).



Figs 30,1-9. Pottery fragments with appliqués.

Appendix 6

NTSHEKANE CERAMICS ASSEMBLAGE
ANALYSIS

(Maggs & Michael 1976: 712-730, and descriptions of the figures 738-740).

Because it is derived mainly from buried features the pottery is in relatively good condition, not excessively fragmented and even where broken often permitting a considerable amount of reconstruction. It has therefore been possible to base this description on a vessel-by-vessel rather than a sherd-by-sherd analysis. Only large sherds and nearly complete vessels have been included where virtually all the attributes included in the analysis could be obtained. A total of 156 vessels are included and care was taken that none should be represented more than once. However, many smaller sherds including decorated examples were excluded, even though some would have represented additional vessels. A few sherds which show exceptional features are illustrated (fig. 20) but were not included within the analysis because they were too incomplete or because they were unassociated surface finds.

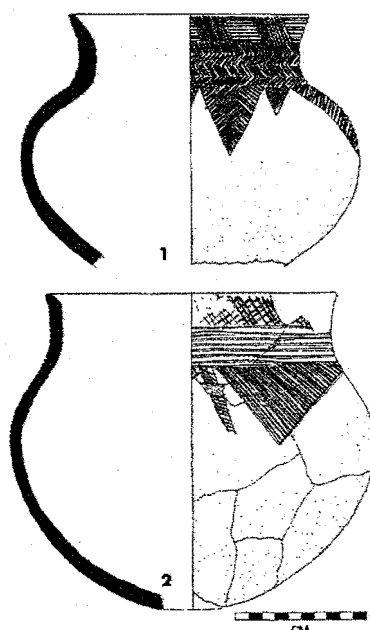


Fig. 5. Everted neck vessels with boldly grooved decoration.

1. Everted necked vessel with the position of the body/neck junction shown by a change in the decoration. This consists of bold hatching in a band of interlocking parallelograms, in bands of opposed hatching and pendant triangles on the body of the pot. The ware is coarse and orange with a smooth matt finish. Feature nr. Bt.
2. Everted necked vessel with bold decoration of uneven cross-hatching above a band of horizontal grooves and, pendant on to the body, triangles and ladder-like panels. The ware is coarse and is orange/buff in colour. From B.

The description which follows is fairly detailed since the sample is the first excavated from the Early Iron Age in Natal. There is clearly a close resemblance between it and Schofield's (1935 & 1937) NC3 pottery. However, there are also some important differences between the bulk of the Ntshekane material and most of that described by Schofield. The relationship is brought out in the analysis and will be discussed below. The description is based on a list of 38 characteristics whose incidences and interrelationships are shown in the matrix diagram (Table 1), as well as a more general discussion.

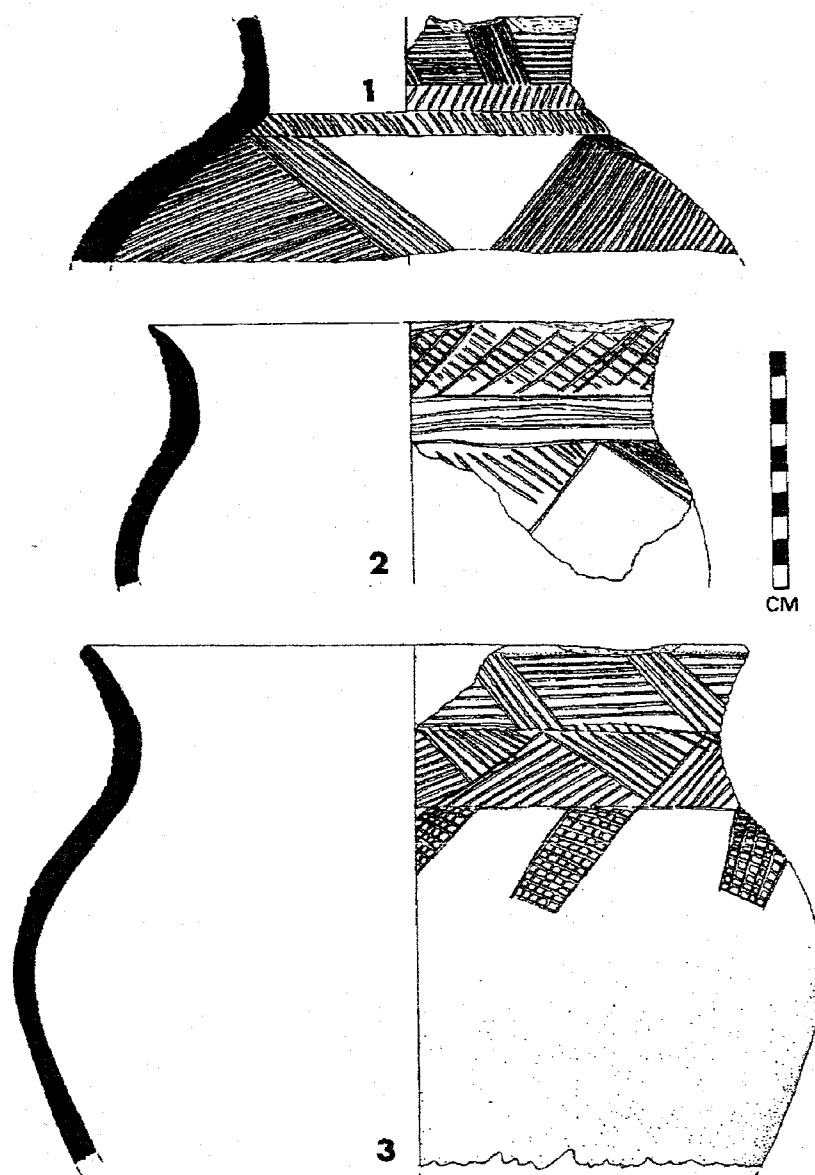


Fig. 6. Everted necked vessels with boldly grooved decoration, from B.

1. Everted necked vessel with pronounced body/neck junction marked by a groove. The bold decoration includes a band of interlocking parallelograms below the lip and two opposed bands of hatching, while the upper part of the body is covered with hatched panels leaving undecorated triangles pendant from the neck. The ware is reddish buff and fairly fine with a few grit inclusions.
2. Everted necked vessel with uneven cross-hatched decoration below the lip and a band of horizontal grooves, the lowest of which marks the body/neck junction. Triangles are pendant from this on to the body. The ware is grey with fine grits.
- 3- Everted necked vessel with bands of interlocking parallelograms and triangles. The bottom line marks the body/neck junction. Pendant panels are suspended from this. The ware is reddish buff.

Shape

- 1 *Inward sloping neck* (Lawton 1967), the neck being narrowest at the lip, the profile is usually straight or slightly concave (fig. 8).
- 2 *Everted neck*, the neck being narrowest around its middle and wide at lip and body junction, the profile being markedly concave (fig. 5).
- 3 *Upright neck*, the neck being narrowest towards the lip, its lower part is inward sloping but the upper part is nearly vertical, profile slightly concave (fig. 19, 3).
- 4 *Other necks* (none recorded).
- 5 *Neck-body junction*, the junction being indicated by a horizontal groove, change in wall thickness or change in texture on the inside surface (fig. 7, I).
- 6 *Open-mouthed bowl* (Lawton 1967).
- 7 *Incurved bowl* (ibid.).
- 8 *Lip profile rounded*.
- 9 *Lip profile flattened*, there being only one flattened plane. No multiple bevels were found in the assemblage.
- 10 *Lip profile grooved*, there being a single slight groove making the profile of the lip concave. Fluting and multiple grooves on lips are absent.
- 11 *Other lip profile*.
- 12 *Internal lip emphasis*, a thickening of the vessel wall at the lip protruding inwards.
- 13 *External lip emphasis*, as above but protruding outwards (fig. 8).

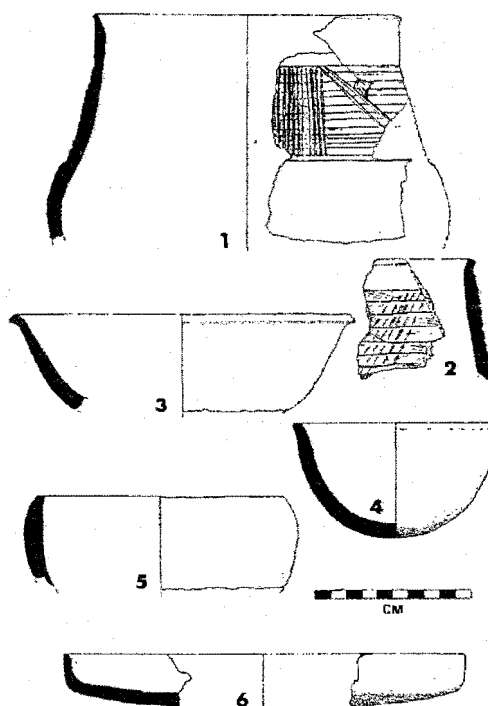


Fig. 7. Various vessels.

1. Inward sloping necked vessel with body/neck junction marked by a groove. The main decorative element is a band of horizontal grooves which is interrupted by groups of vertical and oblique grooves. External lip emphasis. The ware is buff and matt on the outside but black inside. From B).
2. Sherd from a vessel similar to (1) with bands of opposed hatching separated by deep grooves, interrupted by a group of six oblique grooves. The ware is also very like (3). From B1.
3. Open-mouthed bowl with flared out lip, black in colour and rather roughly finished- From B1.
4. Hemispherical bowl roughly finished and orange/buff in colour. From 4 m SE of B2.
5. A slightly incurved bowl of rather coarse ware orange in colour, well finished. From a feature near B1.
6. A sherd from a rather large flat dish with short upright sides. From B.

Surface treatment

14 *Matt*.

15 *Burnished*, a shiny surface without the addition of colouring.

16 *Ochre*, burnished with red ochre added.

17 *Graphite*, burnished with graphite.

18 *Black*, burnished with black colouring added.

19 *Fire blackened*, discoloured and soot-encrusted from use on a fire. 20

Undecorated, the presence of a single groove at the body-neck junction alone was not regarded as decoration.

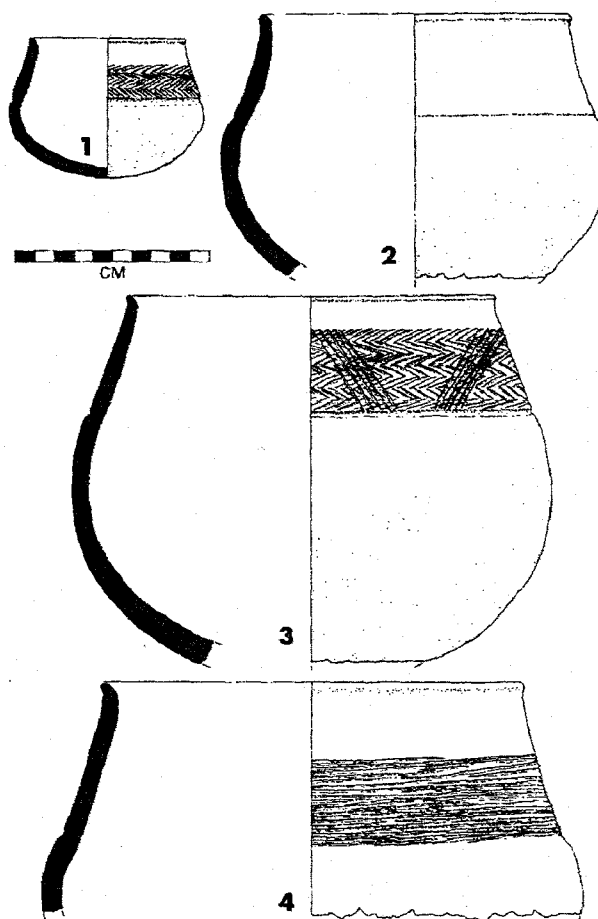


Fig. 8. Typical vessels with inward sloping necks, from I.

1. A particularly small example of the inward sloping neck (compare 3 on this plate), with bands of opposed hatching and body/neck junction marked by a deep groove. External lip emphasis. This fine vessel is nearly black in colour and well burnished.

2. Inward sloping necked vessel without decoration but with body/neck junction well marked by a groove and the change in direction. External lip emphasis. This vessel is rather roughly finished and is fire blackened.

3. Inward sloping necked vessel with well-defined body/neck junction, marked by a groove, and a broad band of decoration consisting of bands of opposed hatching interrupted by oblique grooves. External lip emphasis. This vessel is well finished and partially burnished, with a mottled appearance partly due to fire blackening.

4. Inward sloping necked vessel with a band of horizontal grooves round the neck, the bottom of which marks the body/neck junction. External lip emphasis. This vessel is dark with a matt finish but no definite fire blackening.

Decoration

- 21 *Bands of opposed hatching without intervening grooves*, two or more horizontal bands consisting of oblique hatching where the direction of the hatching alternates from band to band. Two such bands form a herringbone pattern (fig. 8, 1 & 3).
- 22 *Bands of opposed hatching with intervening grooves*, as above but with a horizontal groove between bands (fig. 11, 1 & 3).
- 23 *Band or bands of hatching, not opposed*, one or more bands of oblique hatching in the same direction (fig. 19, 4).
- 24 *Cord effect*, where one or more bands of hatching is thickened in profile to produce a rounded section protruding from the vessel wall (fig. 19, 3 & 4).
- 25 *Band or bands of even cross-hatching*, one or more horizontal bands of cross-hatching where the two series of lines are approximately equally spaced (fig. 10, 1 & 3).
- 26 *Band or bands of uneven cross-hatching*, as above but where one series of lines is more than twice the distance apart than the other (fig. 6, 2).
- 27 *Band of horizontal grooves* (fig. 8, 4).
- 28 *Band of interlocking triangles*, a horizontal band consisting of hatched triangles with their apices pointing alternately up and down (fig. 6, 3).
- 29 *Band of interlocking parallelograms*, a horizontal band of parallelograms with alternately horizontal and oblique hatching (fig. 6, 1 & 3).
- 30 *Pendant triangles* filled with hatching (fig. 5, 1 & 2).
- 31 *Pendant panels* filled with hatching (fig. 6, 3).
- 32 *Row or rows of individual impressions* (fig. 20, 3).
- 33 *Applied decoration*, including bands, bosses and pellets (fig. 20, 5 & 6).
- 34 *Lip decoration*, including notching or impressions (fig. 16, 5).
- 35 *Interruption by vertical grooves*, groups of vertical grooves cutting across horizontal bands of decoration (fig. 17, 1).
- 36 *Interruption by oblique grooves*, as above but with oblique grooves (fig. 8, 3).
- 37 *Interruption by vertical rows of impressions*, as above but with vertical rows of impressions (fig. 11, 2).
- 38 *Interruption by oblique rows of impressions*, as above but with oblique rows (fig. 18, 4).

Description

The sample can be subdivided under two main headings: necked vessels that make up 69 % and bowls which make up 31 %. Necks are a prominent feature of the pottery not only because they are common but also because of their characteristic shapes and size. At the point where neck meets body there are usually clear signs of the junction. Some vessels have a well-defined point of inflection (Lawton 1967) and most have a slight groove that frequently delineates the bottom of the decoration. There is often a change in wall thickness and, on the inside surface, a change in texture as well as signs that the clay of the neck has been smeared down over that of the body. These

characteristics indicate that the potters regarded the neck as being rather distinct from the body and it seems likely that the neck was sometimes added after the body had been made.

TABLE 1
MATRIX OF POTTERY CHARACTERISTICS
The column and row numbers refer to the list of characteristics.
The number at the end of each row is the total for each characteristic.

	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	
1	95																																					
2		8																																				
3			4																																			
5		59	8	4	71																																	
6						41																																
7							7																															
8		23	3	4	21	25	3	58																														
9		24	1		11	10	2		37																													
10		4			2	3				7																												
11		3	2		4	2	1				8																											
12						2					1	3																										
13		32	2		19	10	1	21	11	5	2	44																										
14		52	8	2	43	36	5	35	28	5	6	3	29	103																								
15		27		1	18	4	1	13	5	2	2	10	1	33																								
16		6			5	1						3																										
17		8		1	5							1				9																						
18							1	1	2	1		3				1																						
19		10		1	10	5						4	9		3																							
20		13				40		36	15	4	3	2	15	49	9	2																						
21		27	1	2	23			4	4	2		7	13	8	2	3																						
22		14	3		13			4	4		1		2	8	7	1																						
23		6		1	5			1	2			1	6																									
24		3		1	3			3	5			1	5																									
25		13						9				5	7		4	1	1																					
26			3					1				1																										
27		21	3		17	1		7	6	1	1	1	9	21	3																							
28		1										2																										
29		4						2	1			1																										
30		4						2				1																										
31			3					2				1																										
32		6						2	1			1																										
33		2			2							1																										
34		1						1				1																										
35		8			7			1	1		2	3	4	3	3	1																						
36		15			8			3	4		1	6	4	6	2	2																						
37		2			2			1				1		1		1																						
38		2			2							2		1	2																							

Necks are fairly tall and they are an important aesthetic element of the vessels. The great majority (90%) are inward sloping (fig. 12) although there is considerable variety within this classification. The angle of slope varies and the neck profile is usually straight or slightly concave, rarely convex (fig. 20, 2). The everted necks are more markedly concave and not as tall although still prominent (fig. 13). Upright necks are rare and they are not completely vertical since their lower portions slope inwards (fig. 14). They are relatively tall and concave in profile. The bodies of these vessels are spherical or sub-spherical in shape. Their bases, like virtually all of the assemblage, are rounded. Only one hollow base (fig. 9, 5) was found and there were no flat bases. A surface find of what appears to have been a foot ring is not considered to be sufficient evidence of this feature.

The bowls show a greater variety of shapes than the necked vessels, varying from a very shallow, open example (fig. 7, 6) to a deeper example with sharply incurved lip (fig. 9, 2) and two vessels which are almost as deep as they are wide at the lip (fig. 9, 3 & 4). However, only seven are incurved (Lawton 1967), the majority (41) are open-mouthed and this group shows much greater standardization. They are shallow and wide-mouthed to hemispherical, their widths being twice to thrice their depths (e.g. fig. 7, 3 & 4; fig. 16, 1-4). In some cases the lip flares outward (fig. 7, 3; fig. 16, 4).

In terms of size the necked vessels and bowls are much the same. The absolute range of diameters, from 8 to 40 cm, is identical, while the mean and standard deviation for

the bowls falls between the lip and body measurements for the necked vessels as is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

<i>Diameters in centimetres</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Bowl lips	8	14,7	22,3	30,0	40
Necked vessel lips	8	14,3	19,5	24,7	36
Necked vessel bodies	8	16,7	24,8	32,9	40

The fabric although variable tends to be rather coarse with grit tempering, including some surprisingly large pieces up to 1,35 cm. However, this has not significantly affected the appearance of the finished ware which is hard-fired and has predominantly a smooth matt surface. Most of the pottery is around 1 cm thick and reddish-brown to dark grey in colour.

One-third of the vessels, mainly those with necks, have burnished surfaces. In most cases no colouring matter was added but there are a few cases of red ochre, graphite and black burnishes and sometimes these are combined (Table 1). A few vessels have been blackened from use on a fire—the proportions for necked vessels and bowls being similar.

Decoration is found on a high proportion of vessels (62 %) but only in one instance on a bowl (fig. 9, 2). This is the most distinguishing feature of the assemblage. The decoration mostly takes the form of continuous bands around the neck but it is sometimes pendant on to the body as well. The great majority is made up of parallel grooves or hatching incised into fairly wet clay. The width, depth and cross-section of grooving varies within well-defined limits. The finer work, for example from Feature P, may well have been done with a multiple pointed object such as a fine comb. Rows of individual impressions and applied decoration occur relatively rarely (fig. 20, 5 & 6) and even then are usually a secondary motif used along the body/neck junction or as an interruption, in combination with a grooved motif. Only one vessel had impressed decoration on its lip (fig. 16, 5). Other rare decorative motifs are illustrated in fig. 18, 8 and fig. 20.

From a close examination of the matrix (Table 1) it is clear that the sample is not homogenous. This is best demonstrated by the three types of neck, each of which is associated with a particular set of characteristics. Moreover, the vessels with the different types of neck are derived from different pits; those with upright necks are all from Features N and W, while those with everted necks are all from the features around B. The chronological implications will be discussed later, but first we need to examine the combinations of characteristics associated with each.

Vessels with inward sloping necks greatly predominate in the assemblage. Examples are included in the analysis from Features D, F, G, I, O, P, Q, V, AA, EE and FF, and they provide 95 out of the total 107 necked vessels. External lip emphasis is common

and there is a relatively high incidence of the various burnishes as well as fire blackening. Most are decorated, the preferred motifs being numbers 21, 22, 23, 25, 27 and to a lesser extent 32, 33 and 34. Of these numbers 25, 33 and 34 are exclusive to this group of vessels. The grooving and hatching tends to be finer although there is variation, as shown particularly well in fig. 15. The better vessels of this type are the most refined of the assemblage (e.g. figs 10, 11 & 15).

Another decorative feature exclusive to the inward sloping necks is the occurrence of vertical or oblique lines cutting across horizontal bands of decoration—a characteristic to which we have given the name 'interruption'. The lines may consist of grooves or rows of individual impressions, and sometimes the two are combined (fig. 11, 2; fig. 20, 2). The interruptions consist of one or several parallel lines placed at intervals around the neck.

Decoration is usually confined to the lower two-thirds of the inward sloping necks, but sometimes occurs higher up as well, especially among the vessels from Feature V (fig. 18). It does not occur on the bodies.

There are only eight vessels with everted necks but despite the small sample they show a sufficiently distinct clustering of characteristics to set them apart as a group. Furthermore all of them come from the features immediately around B. They are orange-brown in colour and have matt surfaces. Their decoration, while related to that of the vessels with inward sloping necks, is distinct. Motifs 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 are preferred, and of these 26, 29, 30 and 31 are exclusive to the group (figs 5 & 6). These include the bands of interlocking triangles and parallelograms (fig. 5, 1; fig. 6, 1 & 3) as well as the pendant triangles and pendant panels which occur on all the illustrated examples and represent the only type of body decoration in the assemblage. Grooving is particularly bold and two or more motifs are usually found on each vessel.

Interruptions were not found on this group; however, the uneven cross-hatching (fig. 6, 2), which is exclusive to the group, could have been the prototype from which interruptions developed.

The four vessels with upright necks seem to be separate from those with inward sloping necks. However, they are less distinct than the everted necks and could be an idiosyncratic variation, perhaps the work of a single potter, rather than a definite entity on their own. Three are from Feature W and one is from Feature N (fig. 19, 3 & 4). The three decorated examples have oblique hatching on thickened bands producing a cord-like effect. The evidence is insufficient to set them apart from the bulk of the assemblage.

Examples of each of the three types of necked vessels are shown in figs 12-14. The finer vessels of the assemblage demonstrate very proficient craftsmanship as well as considerable aesthetic appeal. This suggests a greater degree of specialization among potters than is usual among Iron Age societies in southern Africa.

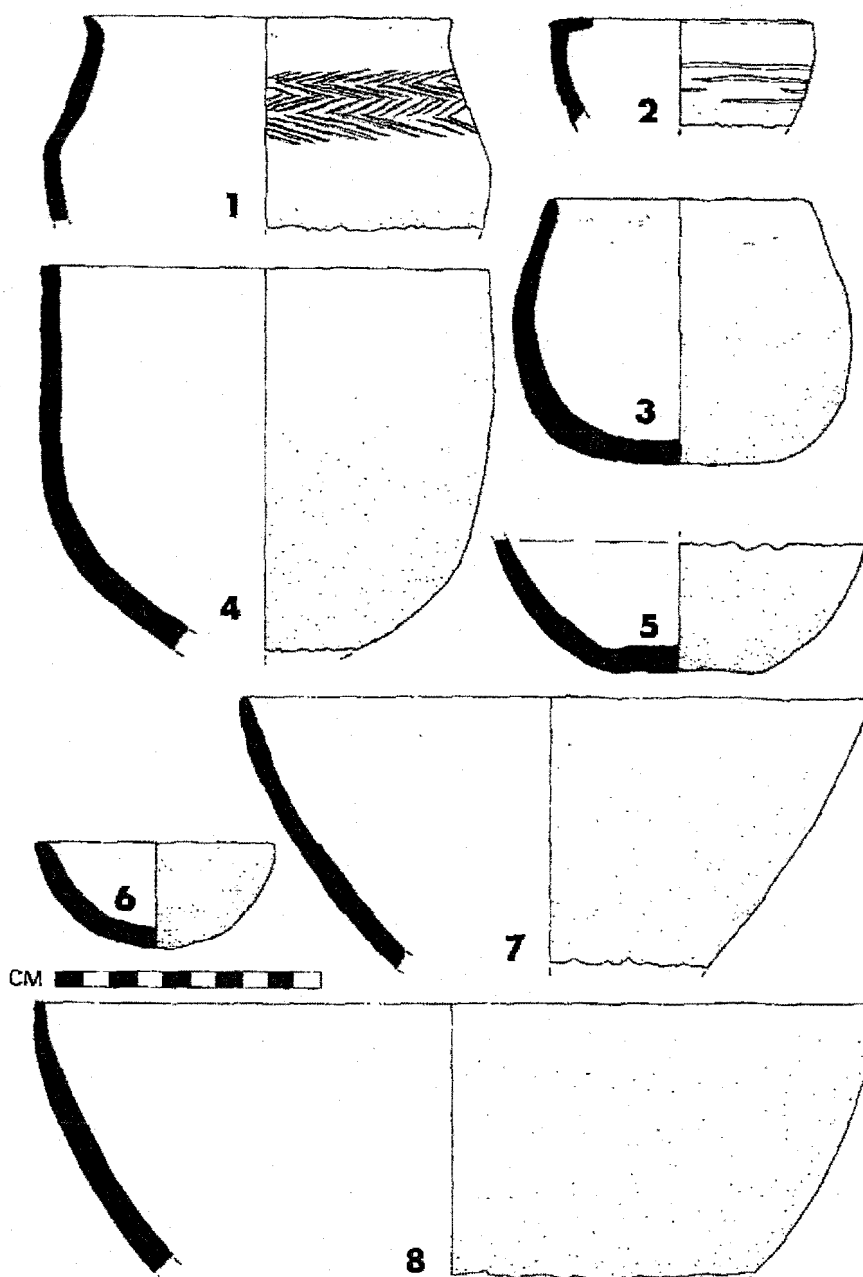


Fig. 9. Various vessels and a hollow base, from I.

1. Inward sloping necked vessel with bands of opposed hatching. This pot is unusual in having a grooved lip. It is burnished above the decoration with ochre and on the body of the pot with black.
2. Small bowl with very much flattened inturned lip and with decoration in the form of horizontal grooves, making it exceptional in both respects. Crudely finished and rather mottled appearance.
3. Rather crudely finished bag-shaped vessel intermediate between pot and bowl. Poorly fired with mottled colouring.
4. Deep, straight sided bowl with rather thick walls slightly inward sloping. Dark, nearly black in places and roughly burnished.
5. Hollow base, the only example found. It is poorly fired, black inside and only slightly reddened on the outside, which is matt. No evidence for the type of vessel from which it came.
6. Small open-mouthed bowl rather crudely made.
7. Open-mouthed bowl with rather straight sides. Roughly finished and dark in colour.
8. Large open-mouthed bowl with flattened rim. Rather roughly finished, with lines from manufacture. Reddish-buff on the outside but black over most of the inside.

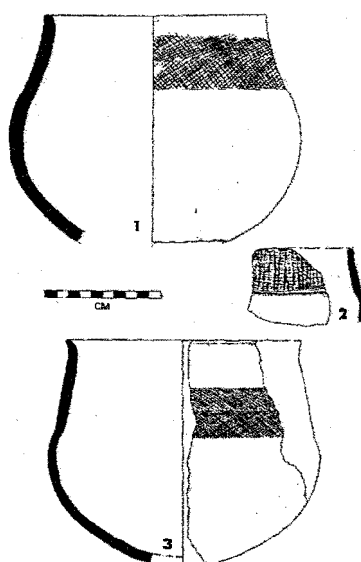


Fig. 10. Crosshatched decoration on typical inward sloping necked vessels.

1. Inward sloping necked vessel with body/neck junction shown by change in direction and faint grooving. The band of crosshatched decoration is rather roughly carried out. The surface is matt and fire blackened towards the base. Colour ranging from grey/buff to black. From 0.
2. Sherd from an inward sloping necked vessel with the body/neck junction emphasized by a groove and also evident in the difference of thickness between the walls of body and neck. This pot has decoration which can only be categorized as cross-hatching, but is unlike the usual form of this. The vessel is dark, black in part. From 0, 80-90 cm.
3. Fine inward sloping necked vessel with body/neck junction marked by a slight groove, and with hands of fine crosshatched decoration. The surface of the pot is dark buff and shows traces of burnish. Although well finished, the ware of this vessel includes large grits and is quite coarse. From P.

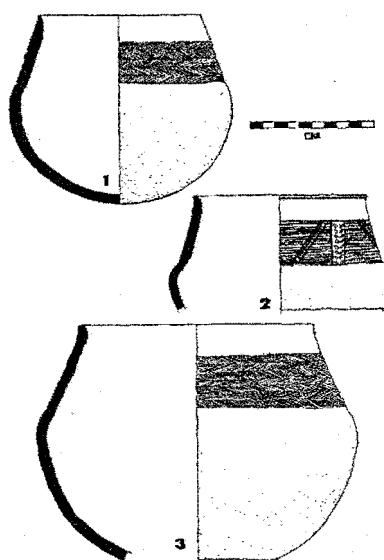
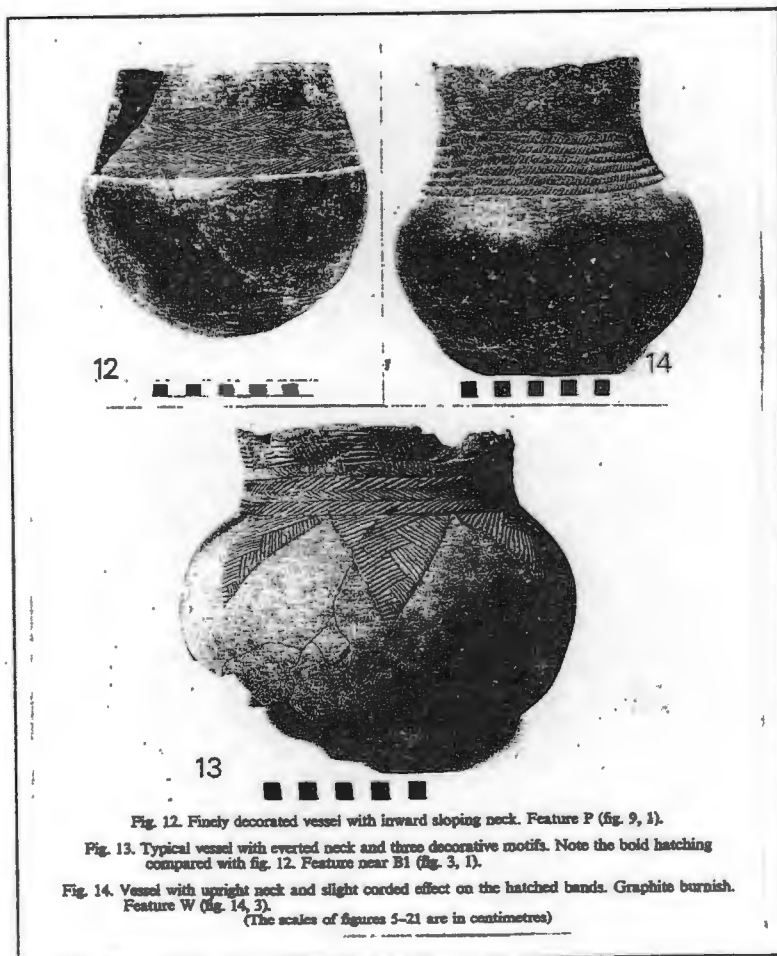


Fig. 11. Vessels with inward sloping necks and fine decoration from P.

1. Inward sloping necked vessel with the body/neck junction shown by a groove at the bottom of the band of decoration, which consists of bands of opposed hatching each slightly rounded giving the effect of a cord wrapped around the neck. Dark and well burnished.
2. Small inward sloping necked vessel with body/neck junction sharply defined and with a band of horizontal grooves crossed by both diagonal and vertical interruptions—the latter a combination of lines and impressions—Dark and neatly burnished.
3. Typical inward sloping necked vessel with body/neck junction indicated by the bottom of the band of decoration which consists of bands of opposed hatching. Dark and burnished.



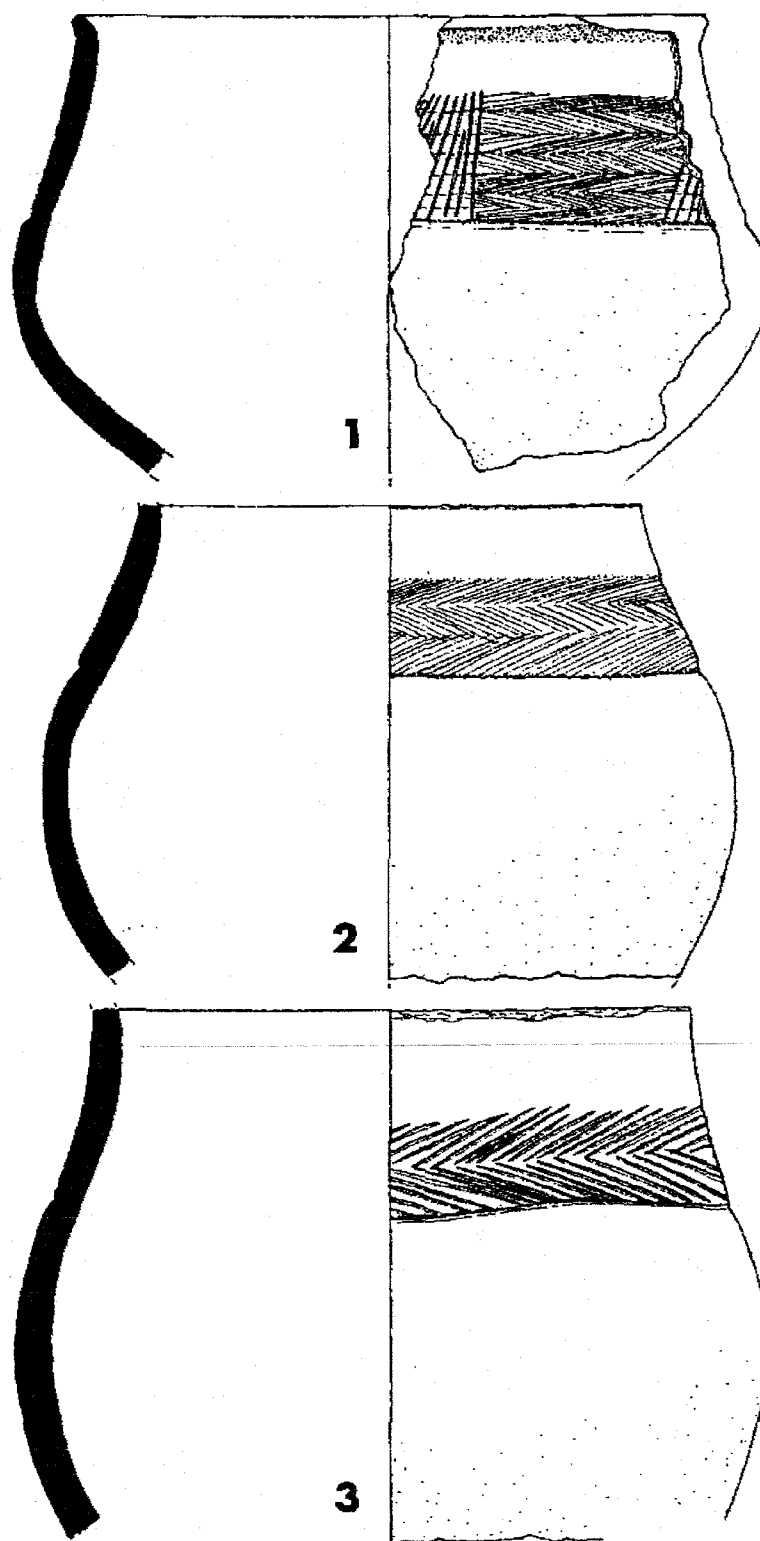


Fig. 15. Typical vessels with inward sloping necks and bands of opposed hatching.

1. Vessel with sharply marked body/neck junction and external lip emphasis. The bands of opposed hatching are interrupted by grooves. The body is darker than the rest of the pot and burnished as is the neck above the decoration-
2. Vessel with a groove marking the body/neck junction, and finely incised opposed hatching. A functional pot with a matt surface finish.
3. Crudely made vessel with an irregular groove marking the body/neck junction, and rough opposed hatching. This pot has thick walls and is fire blackened.

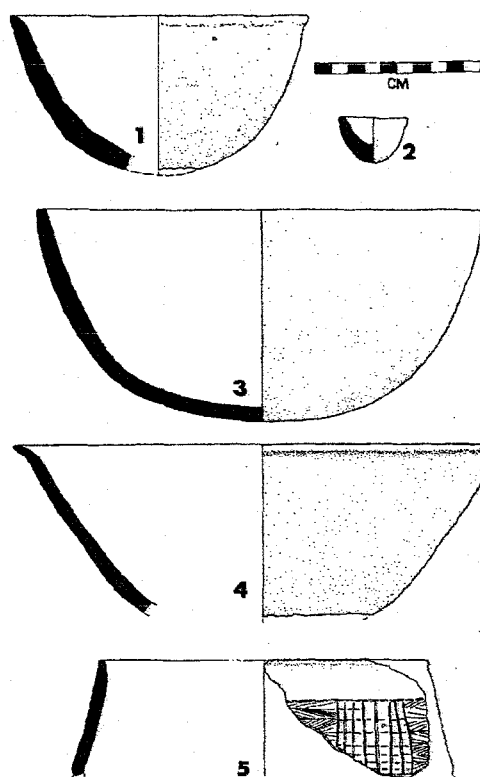


Fig. 16. Typical bowls, from P, and an inward sloping neck, from QI.

1. Open-mouthed bowl, rather roughly made with a slightly out-turned lip.
2. Miniature bowl, very roughly finished, perhaps a toy.
3. Well made, hemispherical bowl, dark in colour and slightly burnished.
4. Similar bowl to 3 but with flared lip and grey to buff in colour.
5. Sherd from inward sloping neck broken off at body/neck junction, with typical bands of opposed hatching, grooves between rows and interruption by vertical grooves. The top of the band is formed by a row of impressions and the lip is also decorated. Dark grey with a matt surface.

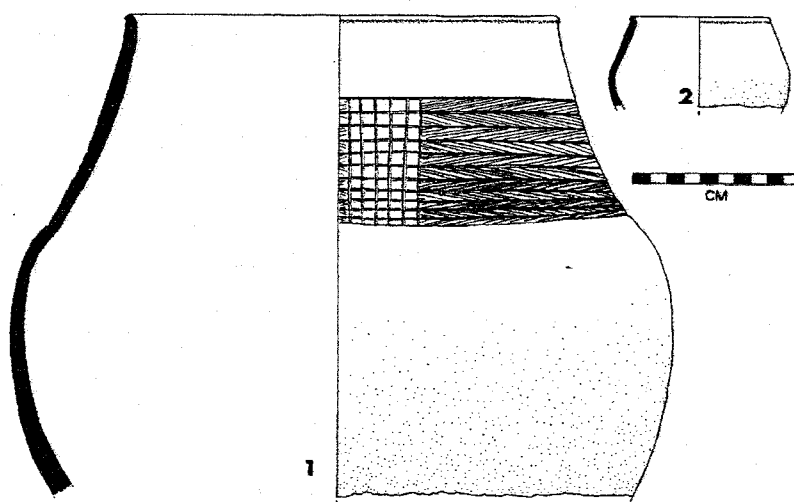


Fig. 17. Vessels from QI including the largest found.

1. Large inward sloping necked vessel with groove marking body/neck junction, and bands of opposed hatching divided by grooves, interrupted by vertical grooves. Mottled' orange and grey/buff and burnished. Compare with fig. 8, 1 to show the extreme size range among this group of Vessels.
2. Small inward sloping necked vessel with poorly defined body/neck Junction. Undecorated but burnished.

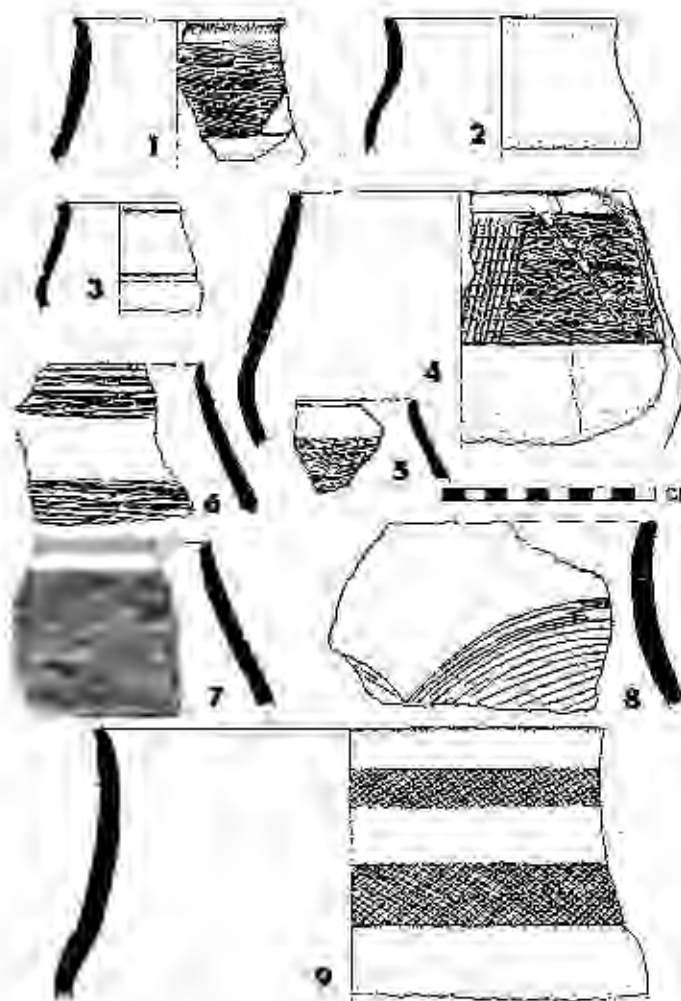


Fig. 13. A variety of necked vessels, from I.

1. Small inward sloping neck with sharp angles at body/neck junction, carination, and external lip emphasis. The band of roughly executed horizontal grooves ends where it meets a diagonal groove. The exact nature of this break is uncertain. Buff to grey with a matt finish. From V, 70-120 cm.
2. Small vessel with neck sloping inwards slightly but curving out again at lip. Well finished, dark and burnished. From V, surface.
3. Very small inward sloping necked vessel, undecorated and with matt finish except in the groove marking the body/neck junction where it is burnished. Lip sharply emphasised. From V, 170 cm.
4. Handsomely decorated inward sloping necked vessel with groove marking the body/neck junction. Bands of opposed hatching interrupted by parallel grooves plus a double row of impressions. This covers most of the neck, coming close to the tip. Orange on the neck with ochre and black burnish. From V, 170 cm.
5. Sherd from a small inward sloping neck with graphitic burnish above the band of opposed hatching, interrupted by a number of parallel grooves. From V, below 170 cm.
6. Sherd from an inward sloping neck broken at the body/neck junction, with two bands of horizontal grooves round the neck. Dark, with the area between the two bands of decoration burnished. From V, 120-170 cm.
7. Sherd from an inward sloping neck broken at the body/neck junction. Bands of opposed hatching with intervening grooves covering most of the neck apart from a strip above the decoration which is burnished. From V, 70-120 cm.
8. Sherd from a large inward sloping neck broken at the body/neck junction. Matt grey surface with arcades of parallel grooves. From V, below 170 cm.
9. Large vessel with rather upright, inward sloping neck and well defined body/neck junction. Decorated with bands of cross hatching and burnished on the undecorated areas. Black to buff. From V, 120-170 cm.

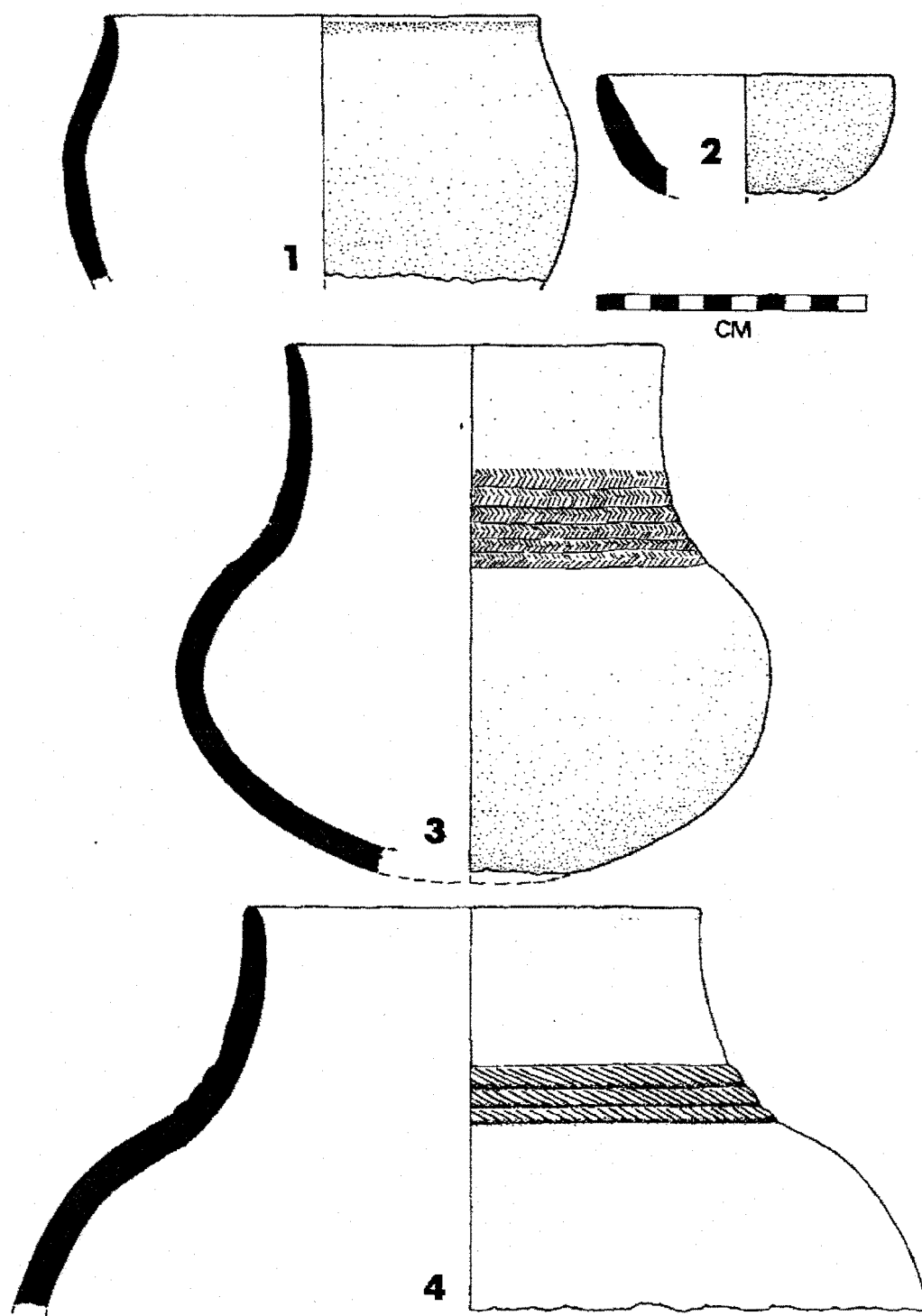


Fig. 19. Plain vessels from V and vessels with upright necks from W.

1. Inturned bowl with upright lip. An example of a vessel on the border line between pot and bowl. Matt finish and fire blackened. From V, below 170 cm.
2. Small, hemispherical bowl, orange inside buff outside. From V, 120-170 cm.
3. Upright necked vessel with body/neck junction marked by bottom line of decoration and with graphite burnish. The decoration is opposed cross-hatching with grooves between pairs of bands which are slightly shaped to give a cord effect. From W.
4. Large upright necked vessel with a band of decoration round the body/neck junction consisting of rows of hatching, not opposed but thickened to give a corded effect. Orange/buff with a matt surface finish. From W.

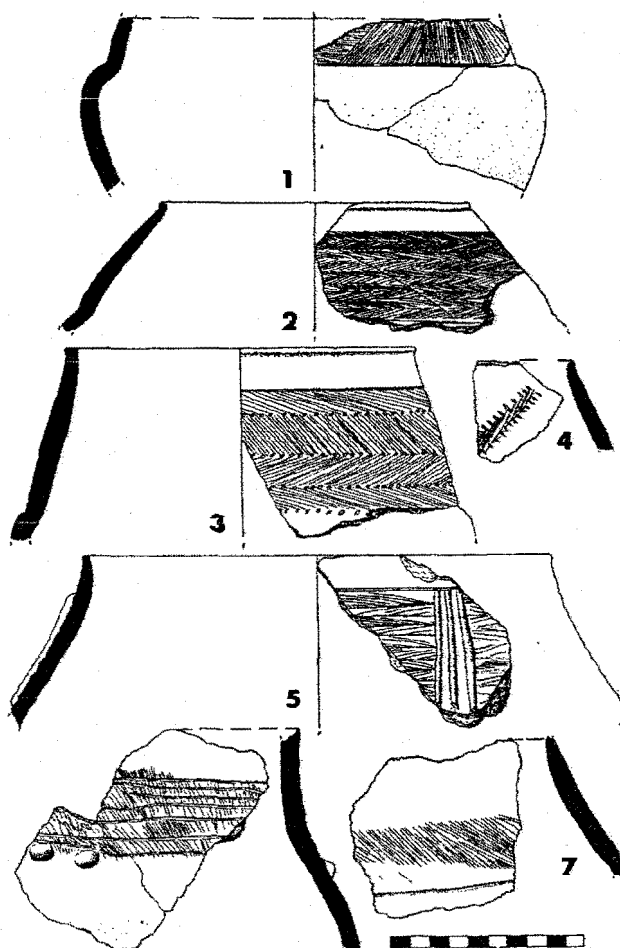


Fig. 20. Atypical shapes and decoration.

1. Inward sloping necked vessel with shoulder of body sharply curved and neck slightly convex. The sharp angle at the body/neck junction is emphasized by grooving. The exact nature of the decoration is not clear but consists of irregular areas of hatching in different directions. The body has graphite burnish. From EE.
2. Sherd from an inward sloping necked vessel with a convex neck and a groove marking the body/neck junction. The rich band of decoration covers most of the neck apart from a narrow strip below the rim with ochre burnish, which also occurs on the body. The bands of opposed hatching are particularly fine and they are interrupted by a diagonal groove with a row of impressions along its length, giving a stitched effect. The ware contains sand. From the surface.
3. Rather upright example of an inward sloping neck with bands of opposed hatching separated by lines of impressions, the lowest of which emphasizes the body/neck junction. External lip emphasis. Dark ware. From the surface.
4. Sherd from an inward sloping neck with an oblique motif of grooves and impressions very like those used as interruptions. From I, below 90 cm.
5. Inward sloping neck decorated with bands of opposed hatching with intervening grooves and an interruption made by three applied vertical bands. This was the only example of applied decoration used as an interruption. From the surface.
6. Sherd from inward sloping neck with roughly executed decoration of horizontal grooves crossed by less strongly marked diagonal incisions; a sort of cross hatching. Two applied bosses just below. The ware is dark and rather coarse. From I, 0-70 cm.
7. Sherd from a crude inward sloping neck with the body/neck junction marked by a groove and change of angle. Roughly executed oblique hatching forms an irregular band round the neck. From V, below 1,70 cm.

Appendix 7

KWAGANDAGANDA CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Whitelaw 1994(b): 8-18).

STRATIGRAPHY, CERAMICS AND CHRONOLOGY

The natural stratigraphy was 10 to 30 cm of brown topsoil over a red-brown subsoil. On the northern and eastern edges of the site the soil was sandier and redder in colour with poor distinction between the upper and lower horizons. Between the two natural horizons was the cultural horizon which varied in texture, colour, thickness and depth. In some places it was complex, consisting of two or more layers. In the richer midden areas, ploughing had carried artefacts upwards into the topsoil, but elsewhere it was archaeologically sterile. Where necessary, I provide more detailed descriptions of the stratigraphy below.

Soon after the start of the excavation it became apparent that KwaGandaganda had been occupied for more than one phase of the EIA. Pottery similar to that found on the name sites of Msuluzi Confluence, Ndondondwane and Ntshekane was recovered, indicating either a single long-term occupation, or a series of occupations between the sixth and tenth centuries AD. In addition, there was evidence of a LIA or recent occupation.

I used the ceramics to place the various features on KwaGandaganda in their temporal context. I identified five profile modes, ten layout modes and six decoration modes in the EIA assemblage (cf. Huffman 1980). These modes intersect to create 300 possible classes of which 16 are represented. To these I added four undecorated classes. Thirteen of the KwaGandaganda classes occurred at Nanda and for these I have retained the Nanda class numbers (Whitelaw 1993). The KwaGandaganda classes (Figs 6-12) are:

2. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim, followed by a band or bands of decoration on the neck, and pendant motifs or a band on the shoulder.
3. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim followed by a band or bands of decoration on the neck, and a band of decoration on the lower shoulder.
4. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim followed by a band or bands of decoration on the neck.
5. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim and on the upper shoulder.
6. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim and pendant motifs on the shoulder.
7. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim.
16. pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the neck, followed by pendant motifs on the upper shoulder and a band on the lower shoulder.
9. pot with an everted neck with a band or bands of decoration on the neck, and pendant motifs on the shoulder.

10. pot with an everted or upright neck with a band or bands of decoration on the neck.
11. plain pot with an everted neck (not illustrated).
17. pot with an inward sloping neck with a band or bands of decoration on the lower neck.
18. pot with an inward sloping neck with a band or bands of decoration on the lower neck, followed by pendant motifs on the shoulder.
19. plain pot with an inward sloping neck (not illustrated).
12. open bowl.
20. open bowl with a band of decoration below the lip.
13. inturned bowl.
14. inturned bowl with a band of decoration below the lip.
21. inturned, carinated bowl with a band below the lip, followed by pendant motifs on the upper body and a band below the subcarination (Fig. 12.9). This is a typical Msuluzi bowl (cf. Maggs 1950b). Another sherd (Fig. 12.10) is a fragment of a similar vessel, but is not sufficiently well preserved to classify.
22. inturned bowl with pendant motifs below the lip.
23. gourd-shaped vessel with a band in the waist.

In addition to analysing vessel classes, I analysed the sherds from each feature using a multidimensional list (cf. Huffman 1980). This was necessary because many features yielded too few sherds or too fragmentary a collection to allow an analysis of vessel classes. Although multidimensional lists do not fully characterise ceramic style, Huffman (1980) has shown that they correctly separate assemblages when based on vessel shape, decoration concepts and decoration position. For comparative purposes, I chose similar attributes to those used by other researchers in Natal for classifying EIA pottery (e.g. Hall 1980, Maggs 1980fc 1980c 1984c, Maggs & Ward 1984 1986, Van Schalkwyk 1991).

I analysed the sherds in assemblages assigned to different EIA phases on the basis of vessel class, namely those from Squares 12 and 14 (Ntshekane), 22 (Ndondondwane) and 25 (Msuluzi). This provided a set of data against which the collections from other features could be compared. Sherds could be assigned to different phases on the following grounds:

1. Sherds of Ntshekane pots were relatively easy to identify because the characteristic profile was recognisable on relatively small sherds as, on each rim sherd, a proportionately greater part of the lip was preserved. By contrast, accurate profiles could not be determined from small pot rims of the two earlier phases. They were, nevertheless, quite distinct from Ntshekane sherds. Msuluzi and Ndondondwane bowl rims were impossible to distinguish from one another, but readily separable from Ntshekane bowls. Many Ntshekane bowls were not as easily identified because their open-mouthed shape (Fig. 11.5-6) meant they were confused with pot rims of earlier phases.
2. Msuluzi and Ndondondwane sherds are difficult to separate because all Ndondondwane vessel classes occur in Msuluzi. At a sherd level the two phases can be distinguished by the presence or absence of incised decoration on the pot rims. Decoration in this position decreases from around 80 % in the Msuluzi phase to about 20 % in the Ndondondwane phase (Maggs 1980ft 1984c). However, this is

not a reliable indicator when there are few sherds. On a more subjective level I found that the lips of Ndondondwane pots were often rounded whereas Msuluzi pots had a higher proportion of flat lips.

3. Bands of decoration in the later phases tend to be narrower. Consequently, the attribute 'multiple bands' is registered more frequently. For the same reason individual motifs are identified more readily in the later phases because more of the decoration is visible on small sherds. Even a simple motif such as a hatched band can be difficult to recognise in Msuluzi assemblages. Thus there are more 'adiagnostic' decorated sherds amongst the Msuluzi assemblages.
4. Msuluzi motifs are more complex than those of later phases and there is a greater variety of them. The four most common band motifs are hatching, cross-hatching, herringbone and alternating blocks or triangles. In the Ndondondwane phase hatched and cross-hatched bands are the dominant motifs. Alternating triangles and blocks are rare. Shoulder and body decoration occurs less frequently and where it does occur large pendant triangles tend to be replaced by ladder motifs. In the Ntshekane phase hatching dominates, followed by cross-hatching. Sherds could also be assigned to the Ntshekane phase on the basis of characteristic motifs; in particular, the interrupted bands and the 'bands of opposed hatching without intervening grooves', as identified by Maggs & Michael (1976: 716).

Two important points emerged from the ceramic analysis. Firstly, two features, the Grid 2 midden and Pit 4 in Grid 6, yielded typical Ndondondwane vessels as well as pots like those found in Features N and W at Ntshekane (Fig. 10.2-3, Maggs & Michael 1976: figs 14, 19.3^t). Maggs and Michael suggested that the Ntshekane pots may have been the idiosyncratic work of a single potter, but this possibility appears to be ruled out by the recovery of similar vessels from KwaGandaganda. It is more probable that they represent an intermediate stage in the evolution of ceramic style from the Ndondondwane to the Ntshekane phase. Their presence on the site suggests that KwaGandaganda was occupied continuously between the Ndondondwane and Ntshekane phases.

Secondly, the sherd analysis revealed the presence of Ndondondwane pottery in the upper levels of predominantly Msuluzi middens, suggesting not only that the site had been occupied continuously between these two phases, but that space on the site was used in the same way for at least part of each phase. KwaGandaganda, therefore, appears to have been occupied continuously between the Msuluzi and Ntshekane phases, rather than abandoned and reoccupied. I discuss the significance of this below.

I submitted charcoal from three features assigned to each of the EIA phases for dating to the Schonland Research Centre, University of the Witwatersrand. The results are as follows:

Square 25 (Msuluzi)	Wits 1918	1395 ±60 (AD 555)
	Wits 1938	1315 ±60 (AD 635)
Square 22 (Ndondondwane)	Wits 1919	1245 ± 60 (AD 705)
	Wits 1937	1260 ± 60 (AD 690)
Square 14 (Ntshekane)	Wits 1920	1080 ±60 (AD 870)

When calibrated on the Stuiver & Pearson (1986) curve, these dates fall within a range from the beginning of the seventh century to the early eleventh century AD.

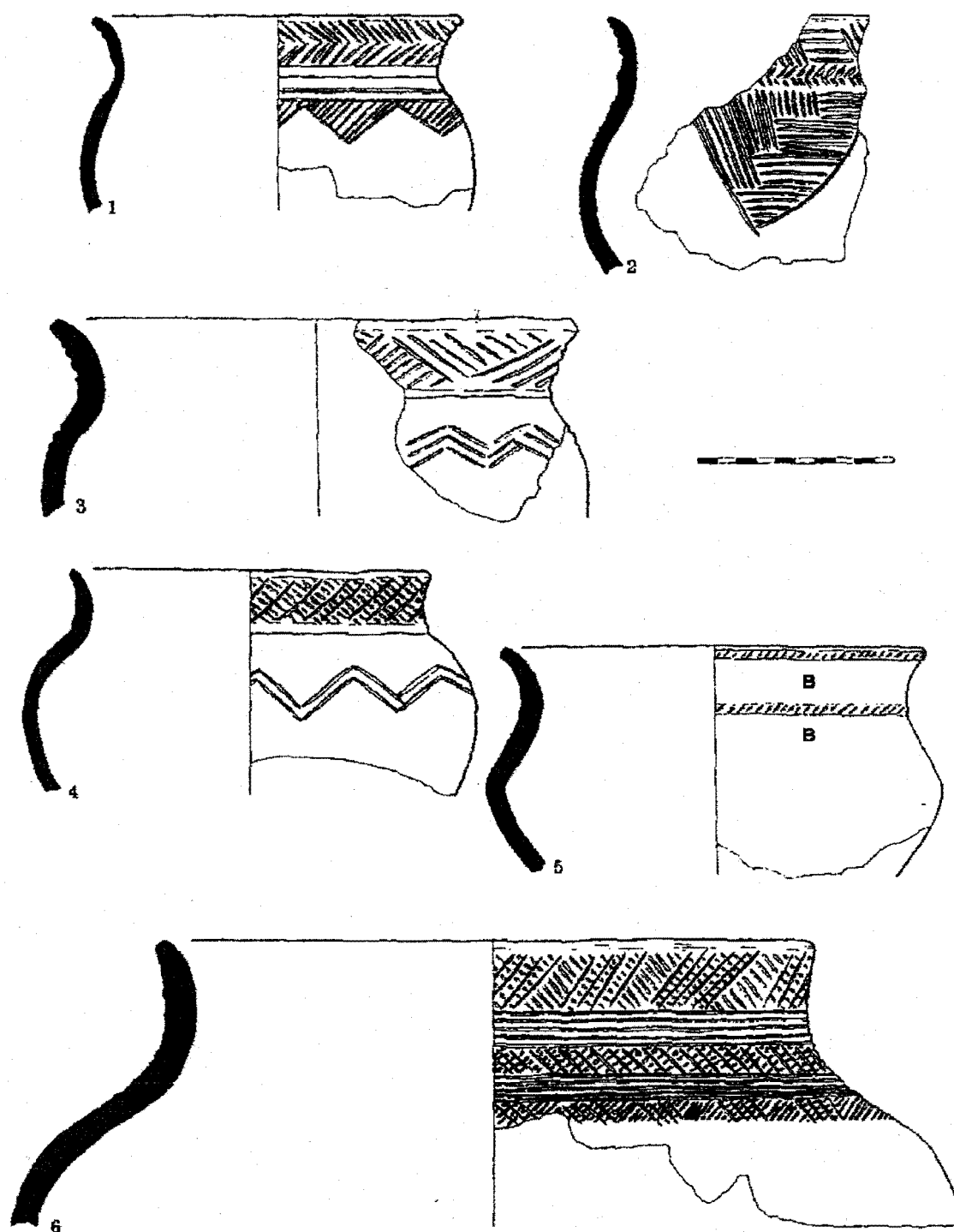


Fig. 6. Ceramic class 2: 1 2; class 3: 3 4; class 4: 5 6. Provenance I 3 & 4: Square 25; 2: Grid 1; 5: SVP110; 6: Grid 6. B indicates plain burnish.

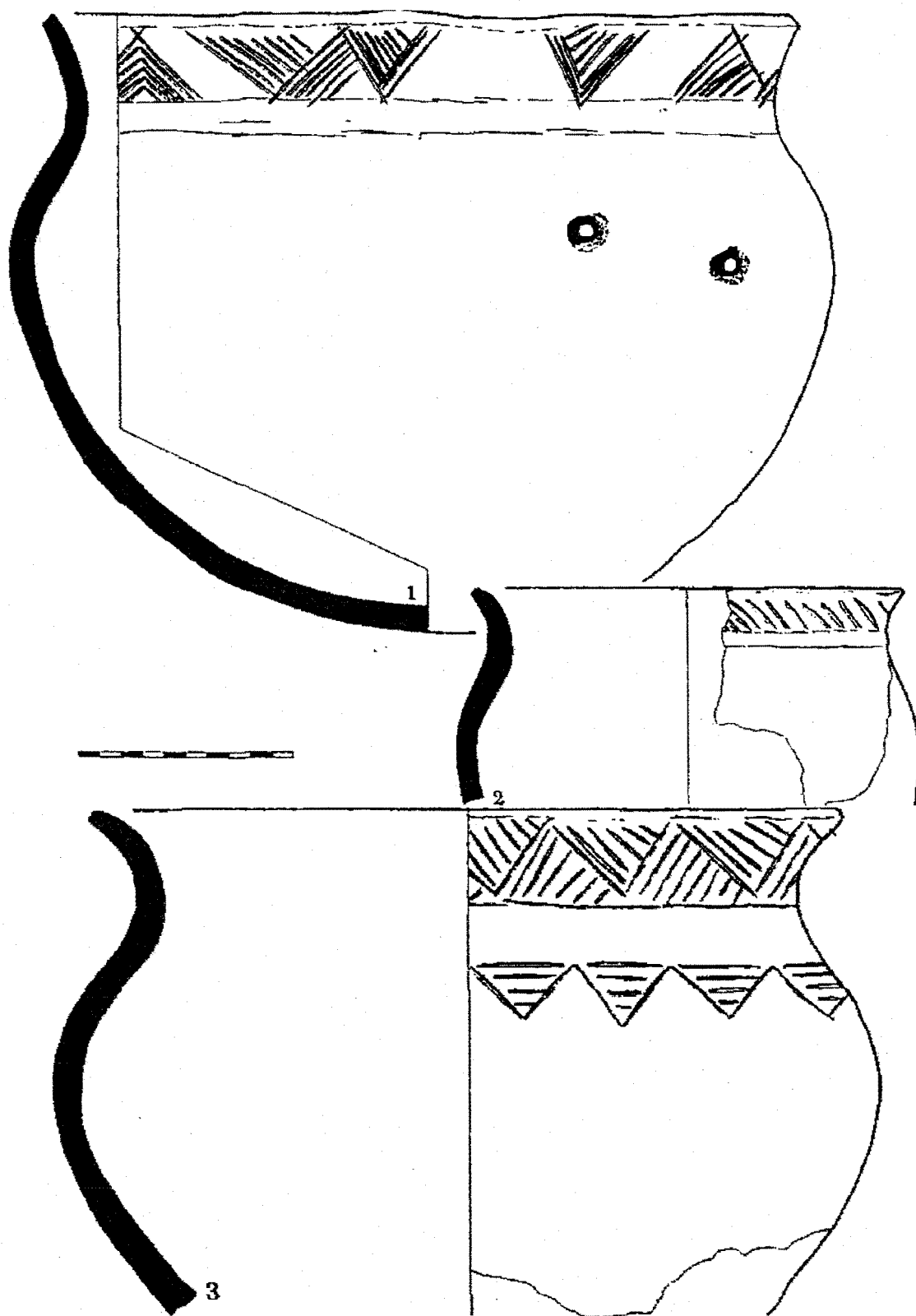


Fig. 7. Ceramic class 4: 1 2; class 5: 3. Provenance I: SVP80/81; 2: Square 25; 3: TS51.

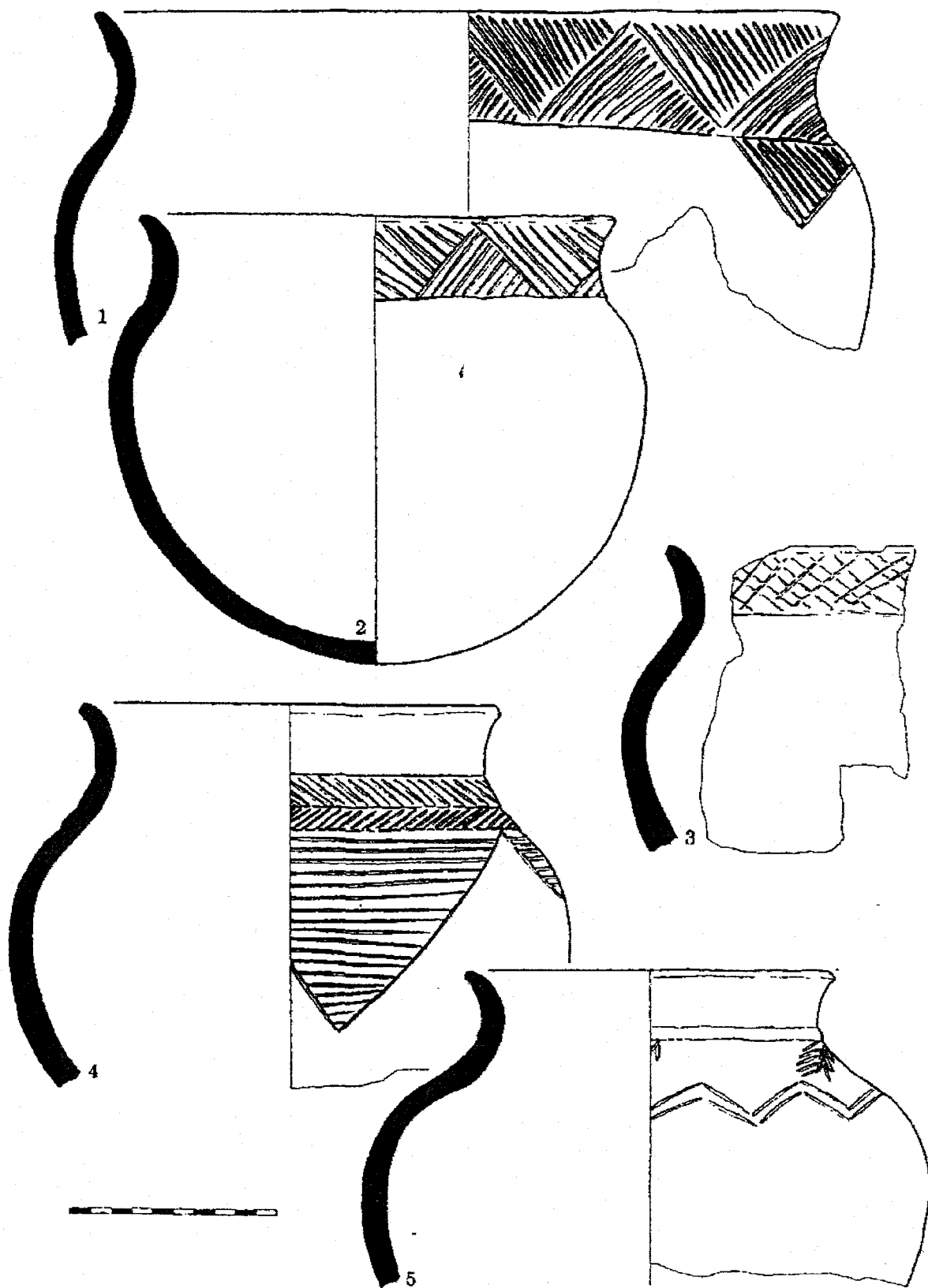


Fig. 8, Ceramic class 6: 1; class 7: 2 3; class 9: 4; class 16: 5. Provenance 1-3 & 5: Square 25; 4: Grid 6 Pl.

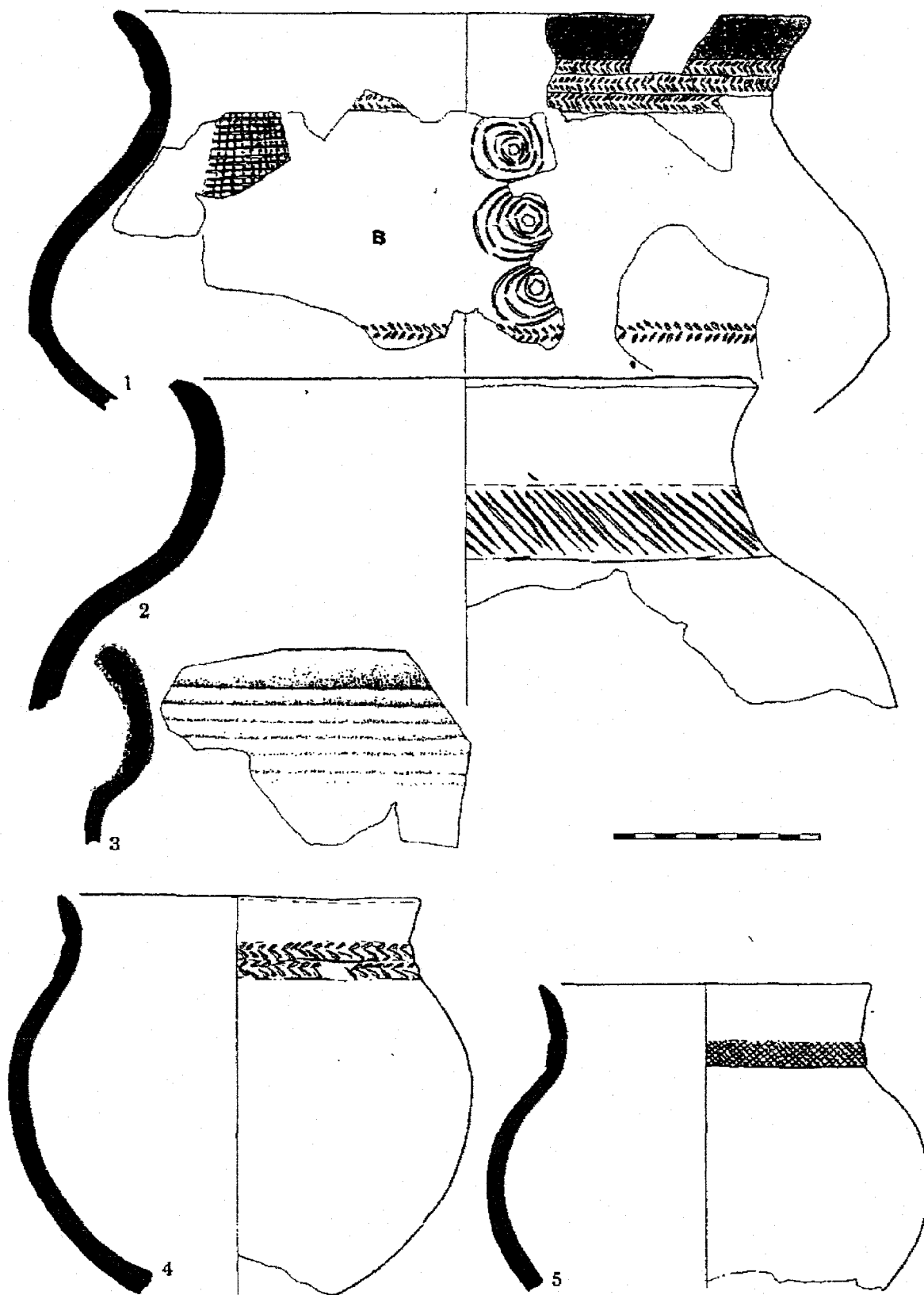


Fig. 9. Ceramic class 16: 1; class 10: 2-5. Provenance 1: Grid 6; 2: SVP87; 3: SVP73; 4: T2 U7; 5: Grid 2 Pl. Stippling indicates graphite burnish.

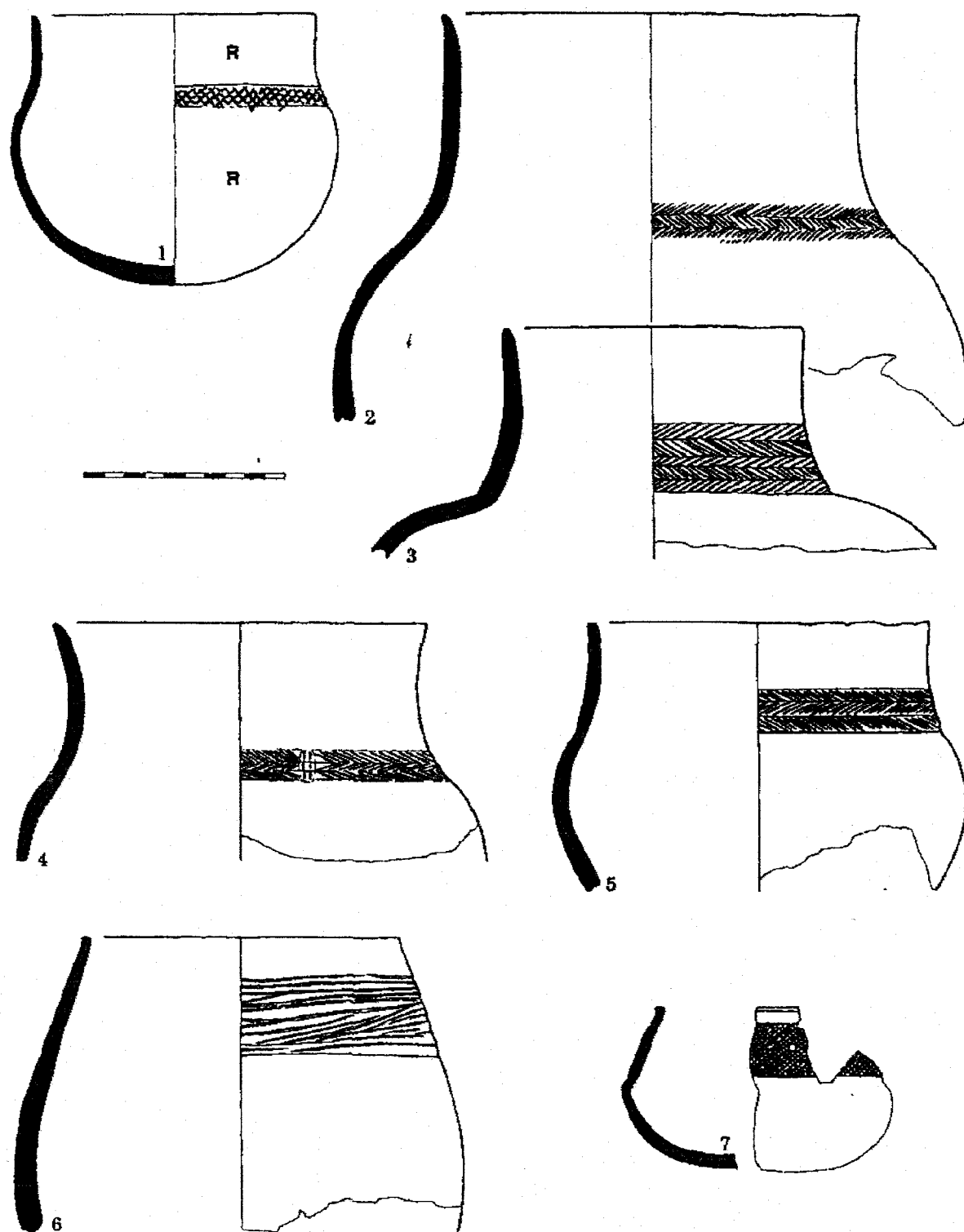


Fig. 10. Ceramic class 10: 1-5; class 17: 6 7. Provenance 1: Grid 2; 2 & 3: Grid 6 P4; 4: TS76; 5: SVP32 pit; 6: Square 15; 7: Square 24. R indicates red burnish.

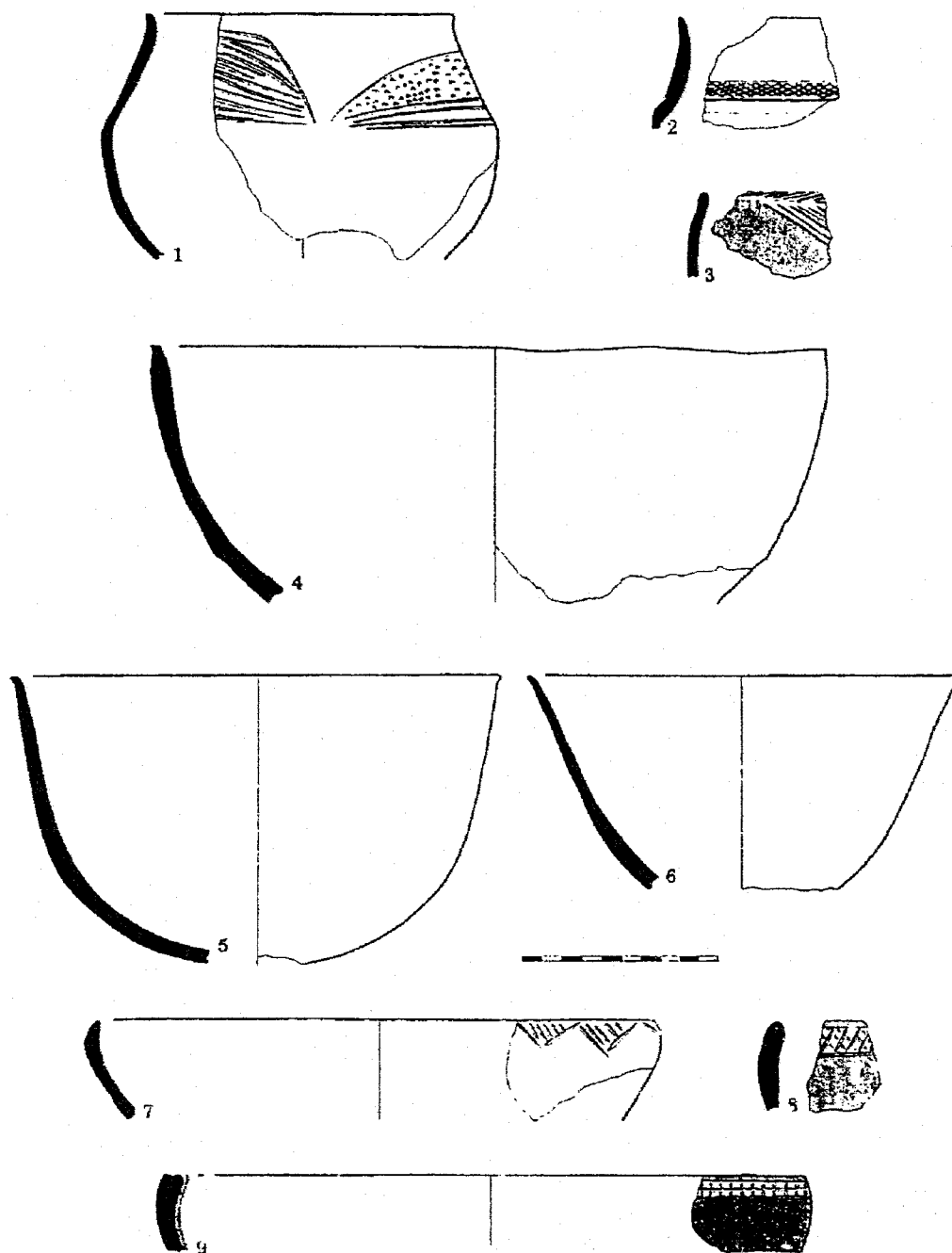


Fig. 11. Ceramic class 17: 1 2; class 18: 3; class 12: 4-6; class 20: 7-9- Provenance I: Square 14; 2: SVP115.3: SVP25 (only a fragment of this class is preserved); 4: Square 25; 5: SVP138; 6: Grid 2; 7: SVP80/81; 8: SVP87; 9: Square 12.

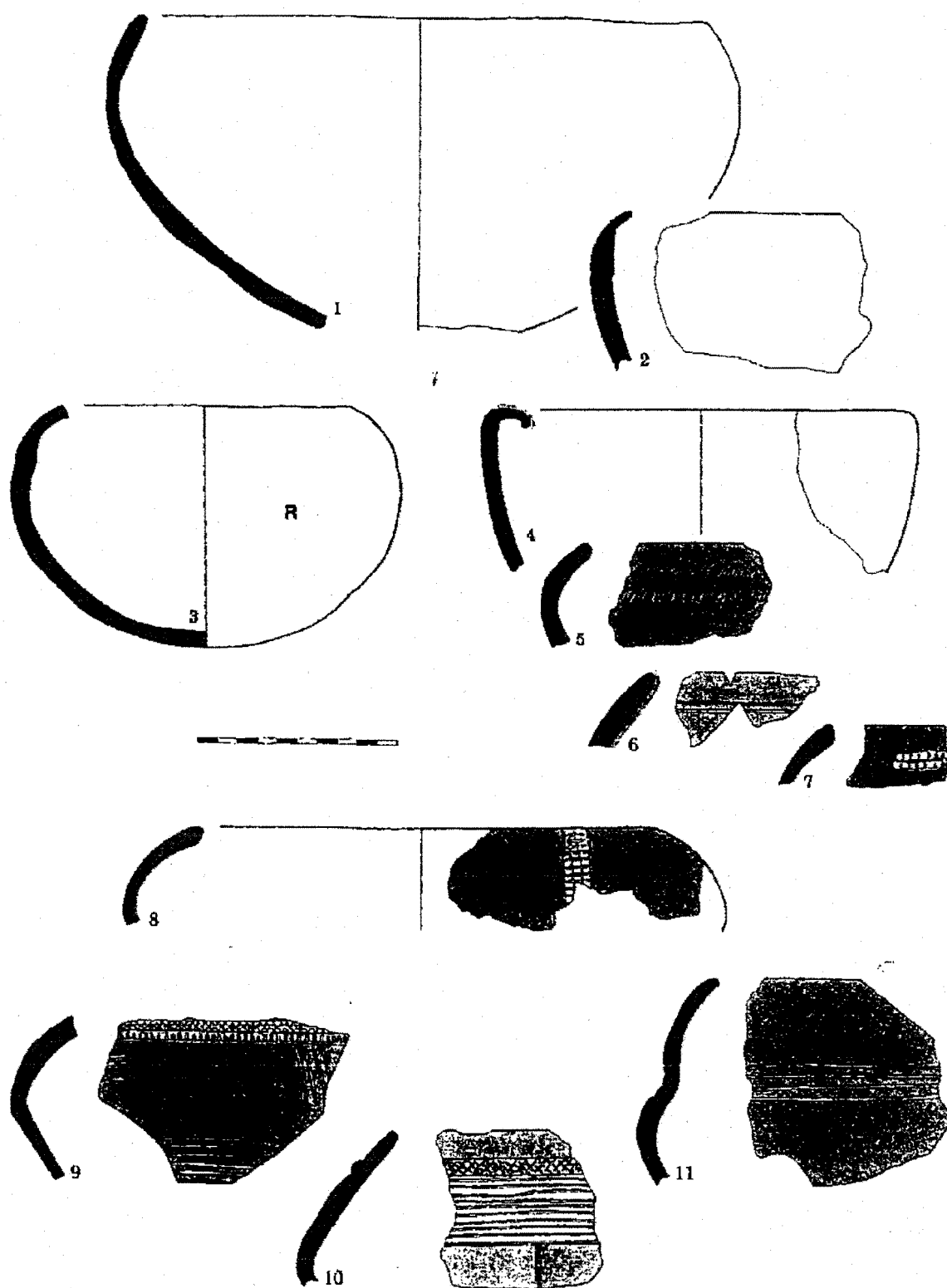


Fig. 12. Ceramic class 13: 1-4; class 14: 5-7; class 21: 8; class 22: 9. This is an Msuluzi bowl (cf. Maggs 1980⁹). No. 10 is also an Msuluzi bowl but is too fragmentary to assign to a class. Class 23: 11. Provenance M79-11: Square 25; 5 8: Grid6 P2; 6: SVP87.

Appendix 8

NTSITSANA CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Prins & Granger 1993: 158-165).

Ceramics were the main artefactual material recovered during the excavation of Ntsitsana. They included both potsherds and figurine fragments. Two ceramic phases could be identified in the field, one resembling the Natal Msuluzi phase and dating to *ca.* AD 660, the other resembling the Natal Ndondondwane phase and dating to *ca.* AD 770. The description of the pottery therefore follows the system used in Natal (Maggs 1980a *b* 1984a Maggs & Michael 1976, Maggs & Ward 1984). The analysis was undertaken to establish the sequence of the distinctive styles represented in the Transkei assemblages and to compare and contrast with the better-dated and well-documented sequence of early farming settlement from adjacent Natal. Characteristics of the Ntsitsana pots (numbers refer to attributes)

Shape

- 2 Curved, everted neck
- 44 Upright neck

Position of decoration

- 8 Whole of neck
- 9 Upper neck
- 32 Lower neck
- 11 Just below (attached to) body/neck junction

Decorative motifs

- 13 Single horizontal groove
- 14 Band of several horizontal grooves
- 15 Band of oblique hatching
- 24 Band of alternate parallelograms, hatched
- 34 Band/s of even cross-hatching
- 35 Band/s of uneven cross-hatching
- 17 Band of horizontal and oblique or vertical cross-hatching
- 20 Band of alternate triangles (pendant), hatched
- 37 Band/s of opposed hatching *without* intervening groove
- 38 Band/s of opposed hatching *with* intervening groove
- 39 Cord effect, where a band is thickened to stand out in relief
- 27 Short horizontal row/s of individual impressions
- 30 Miscellaneous

Characteristics of the Ntsitsana bowls

Shape

- 11 Subcarinated just below lip
- 4 Subspherical
- 3 Hemispherical

Lip profile

5 Rounded

6 Flattened

7 Tapered

18 External/internal emphasis

Decoration

41 Applied bosses/strips

Ceramics resembling Msuluzi

The excavated pottery from Pit 1 and the exposed material from Pits 8 & 9 belonged to this phase (Tables 1-2). The pottery from Pit 7, excavated after the typological analysis was completed and therefore not included, also belonged to this phase. As at the Msuluzi Confluence site (Maggs 1980), there is a high degree of internal typological consistency, even though some of the vessels included in this description are from surface features.

Forty five vessels were sufficiently complete for inclusion in this analysis. Although the sample may not cover the full range of attribute combinations, it is adequate to describe the main characteristics of shape and decoration of the vessels (Table 1).

Like the Msuluzi pottery from Natal there is little variation in pot shape (Table 1), all vessels fall in the category of 'curved, everted necks'. Bodies are spherical to subspherical in shape.

Most of the 45 pots are decorated; seven (13%) are plain. Decoration consists of one or more horizontal bands occupying the whole neck (60%) (Fig. 3,1), the upper neck (24%) (Fig. 3,2) and the lower neck (17%) (Fig. 3,3). Decoration is by relatively bold V or U shaped grooving in the form of horizontal lines, oblique hatching, cross-hatching and short horizontal row or rows of uneven cross-hatching. Most vessels have one or two bands (Fig. 3). Some have three bands, but none has more, in contrast to the Natal Msuluzi sample (Maggs 1980&). The sample is too small to give a clear indication of preferred combinations of motifs. As in the case of the Natal Msuluzi pots, body decoration takes the form of pendant triangles from the body/neck junction (Fig. 3,1). This is the only form of body decoration recorded from Ntsitsana although the Natal sample contains a larger range of body decoration motifs. However, the same general range of motifs appears in both assemblages, but in different proportions (Table 1).

Bowls are described separately from pots as they have few attributes in common. Only six bowls were sufficiently complete for analysis. Bowls were less common than pots. In contrast to the Natal assemblage none of Transkei bowls was decorated, and only two simple shapes occurred (Table 2).

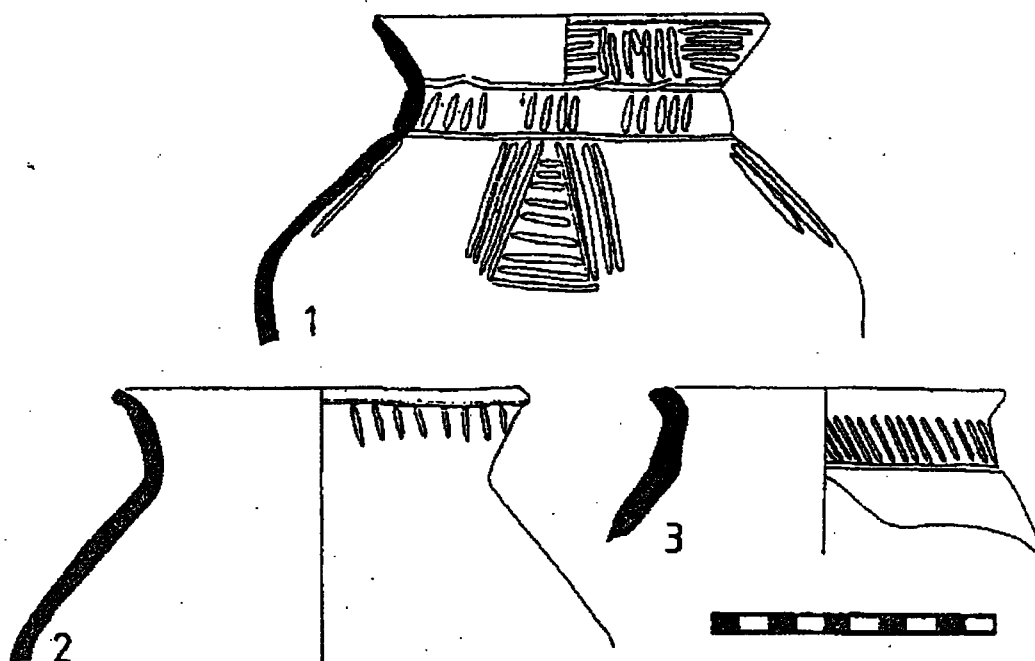


Fig. 3. Ntsitsana/Msuluzi pots: 1 from Pit 1, 2 from Pit 8, 3 from Pit 9.

TABLE 1

Attributes of pots from Ntsitsana (Transkei) compared with Msuluzi and Ndondondwane in Natal. Attributes 2 & 44 relate to neck profile, 8 9 32 & 11 relate to position of decoration, 39 is cord effect. For descriptions see page 158. Abbreviations: Nt/Ms = Ntsitsana/Msuluzi, Nt/Nd = Ntsitsana/Ndondondwane, Ms = Msuluzi, Nd = Ndondondwane.

Attribute	Ntsitsana Ceramic style						Natal	
	Nt/Ms Pit No.		Nt/Nd Pit No.				Ms	Nd
	1	8	9	2	3	5	6	
2	100	100	00	4	1	8	9	100
44	0	0	0	96	98	92	91	0
8	50	57	74	4	0	9	0	80
9	25	43	4	0	0	0	0	2
32	0	0	17	96	88	91	100	7
11	13	0	0	0	0	9	0	18
13	25	0	9	0	81	0	0	0
14	13	43	52	20	0	0	50	4
15	0	71	30	4	6	36	0	9
24	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
34	13	0	13	64	25	46	0	0
35	38	29	48	4	13	9	0	22
17	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	38
20	13	0	4	0	0	0	0	9
37	0	0	4	8	25	27	50	0
38	13	0	0	4	6	9	0	24
39	13	29	9	0	0	27	0	16
27	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	2
30	0	0	9	4	0	0	0	0
No. decorated	8	7	23	25	16	11	2	45
No. undecorated	1	0	6	23	60	13	9	4
Total vessels	9	7	29	48	76	24	11	49

TABLE 2

Attributes of bowls from Ntsitsana (Transkei). For description of attributes see page 158. Abbreviations: Nt/Ms = Ntsitsana/Msuluzi, Nt/Nd = Ntsitsana/Ndondondwane.

Attribute	Ceramic style					
	Nt/Ms Pit No.		Nt/Nd Pit No.			
	1	8	9	2	3	5
11	0	0	0	0	40	50
4	100	100	50	75	60	50
3	0	0	50	25	0	0
5	33	100	0	25	40	50
6	67	0	100	75	40	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	100	0	0	20	0
41	0	0	0	0	20	0
Total vessels	3	1	2	4	5	1

The group includes incurved bowls (four) and hemispherical bowls (two) with rather thick walls. Four lip profiles were flattened and two are rounded (Table 2). Typologically these bowl types are similar to those of the Ntshekane ceramics (9th century AD) in Natal (Maggs & Michael 1976). None of the typical Natal Msuluzi bowls was present in the Ntsitsana assemblage.

No burnishing occurred on the pots or bowls though burnishing occurred on bowls of the Natal Msuluzi assemblage. As in the Natal Msuluzi sample the inner surface was often noticeably rougher, as if the pots had been scoured frequently during use (*vide* Maggs 1980b). Some vessels have been blackened from use on a fire.

Ceramics resembling Ndondondwane

Four of the excavated pits (2 3 5 & 6) contained pottery belonging to this phase (Tables 1-2). It is related to the Natal Ndondondwane assemblage (Maggs 1984a, Maggs & Ward 1984), both in time and typology. Some 159 pots and 15 bowls were sufficiently complete for study. It must be noted that there is some overlap in the attributes of the Msuluzi and Ndondondwane ceramics from Transkei. In such cases only one example of the ceramic phase has been illustrated.

There is little variation in pot shape (Table 1). Most (over 90%) fall into the category of upright necked vessels while the remainder have curved everted necks. The Natal Ndondondwane sample differs in this regard in that most of the necks are curved everted, but there is a significant number of upright necked vessels (Maggs 1984a: 80). Fifty-five percent of the Transkei pots were undecorated. No undecorated pots have been reported from the Ndondondwane assemblage in Natal, but one undecorated pot with a fairly upright neck was found at Mhlopheni (Maggs & Ward 1984).

The most characteristic decoration at Ntsitsana was a single band of decoration on the lower half of the neck ending at the body/neck junction, with a broad undecorated band above it (Fig. 4,1). This feature dominates the Natal Ndondondwane assemblage, but in a smaller proportion (Maggs 1984a: 30). Generally, the decoration of the Ndondondwane pottery was much finer than that on the Msuluzi pottery, even though some of the motifs were shared. Most common motifs of the Ndondondwane assemblage in Transkei were: a band or bands of even cross-hatching; a band of several horizontal grooves; a band of oblique hatching and a band of opposed hatching without intervening grooves. In this regard the sample was very similar to the Natal material in which the most common motifs were hatching and cross-hatching (Maggs 1984a: 80). So-called 'cord effect' decoration, where the bands stand out in relief, was more common than in Natal. Multiple bands covering most of the neck typical of Msuluzi Confluence and Msuluzi-type ceramics in Transkei did not occur though such decoration did occur in the Ndondondwane sample in Natal. Body decoration was absent from the Transkei sample (Fig. 4,1), and rare at Ndondondwane in Natal. While no burnishing occurred on pots from the Msuluzi assemblage, it occurred in the Ndondondwane assemblage on pots as red ochre, black, graphite, and uncoloured burnish. The bowls are described in Table 2.

Only 15 bowls were recovered from the pits, which again reflects a low ratio of bowls to pots. This group includes nine incurved bowls, three subcarinated just below the lip (Fig. 5,2), two hemispherical (Fig. 5,1) and one deep straight-sided with rather thick walls that are slightly inward sloping (Fig. 5,3) (Table 2). Incurved bowls have both flattened and rounded lips. The deep, straight-sided bowl has a flattened lip, while the lips of the hemispherical bowls are tapered, and those of the subcarinated bowls are rounded. One subcarinated and one hemispherical bowl have bosses. With the exception of bosses (Fig. 5,1), no decoration or burnish occurs on the bowls. Hemispherical bowls were recorded also on the Ndondondwane site in Natal, whilst incurved bowls and subcarinated bowls have been recorded only from the Ntshekane site (Maggs & Michael 1976). Incurved and hemispherical bowls occurred also in the Ntsitsana/Msuluzi-type assemblage.

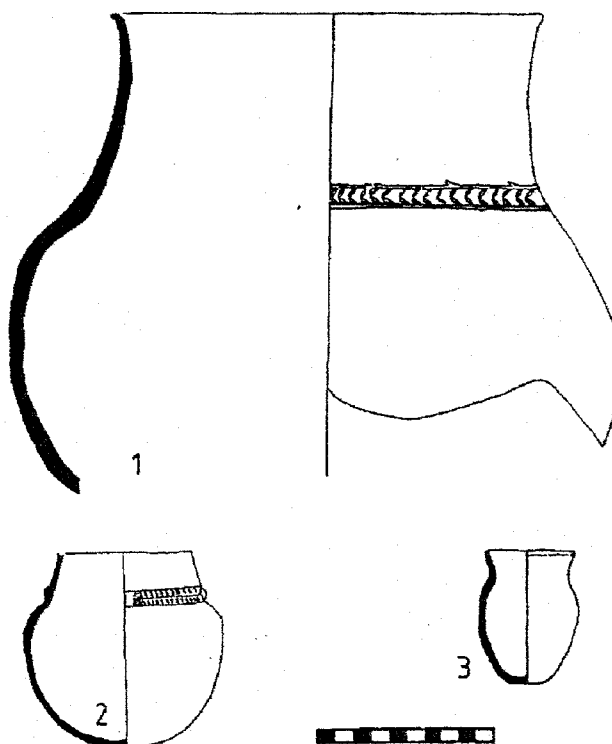


Fig. 4. Ntsitsana/Ndondondwane pots: 1 fitting sherds from Pits 3 & 6, 2 & 3 from Pit 2.

As at Ndondondwane in Natal and Broederstroom in the Transvaal (Mason 1981), there are a few examples of very small vessels (Figs 4,2-4,3). These have been interpreted in functional terms as toy pots (Maggs 1984a: 85). One of them had an inward-sloping neck, an attribute typical of ninth century AD Ntshekane vessels in Natal (Maggs & Michael 1976).

Most of the vessels were blackened by fire. The inside of a complete pot from Pit 6, was smeared with red ochre. Some pots were used for collecting or storing ochre and there were pieces of red ochre in the pit. The nearest known source of red ochre is at Dumsi location about 8 km from Ntsitsana. A number of the pits contained nearly complete pots discarded or buried, usually with their bases broken prior to being discarded. Ntsitsana is the southernmost known Early Iron Age occurrence of the

practice of ritually breaking pots. Potsherds belonging to the same vessel were recovered from two separate pits (3 & 6), suggesting that some of the pits were filled contemporaneously.

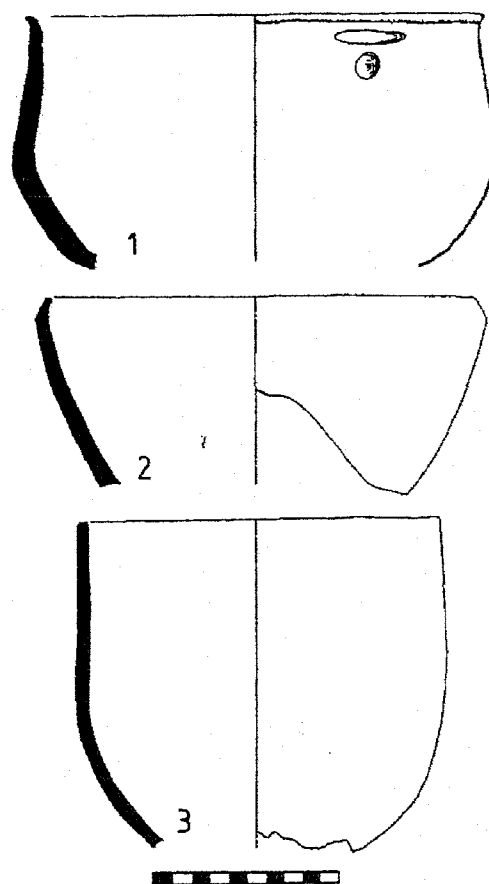


Fig. 5. Ntsitsana/Ndondondwane bowls; 1 from Pit 6, 2 & 3 from Pit 3.

Discussion

The typology of the pottery from Ntsitsana is easily related to the typology of contemporary sites in Natal (Tables 1 & 2). There are some local differences, however, and the following broad differences between the Natal and Transkei assemblages are evident.

1. Bowls are more common at the Natal sites than at Ntsitsana.
2. Vessels from Ntsitsana are smaller, ranging in diameter from 40-240 mm as compared with 80-400 mm for Natal samples (Maggs 1980&, Maggs & Michael 1976).
3. The transition from the Msuluzi to the Ndondondwane phase appears to have been more abrupt in the Transkei sequence than in Natal.
4. The Msuluzi and especially the Ndondondwane assemblages in Transkei included decorative elements more characteristic of the later, Ntshekane, ceramic phase in Natal. This may be more significant than simply idiosyncratic variability, but larger scale research would be necessary to investigate such patterning in time and space.
5. The Transkei ceramics, especially the Ndondondwane phase, are less decorated

than contemporary ceramics from Natal.

6. The Natal Msuluzi ceramics appear to have deeper necks with a more pronounced curved everted shape than the Msuluzi-like ceramics from Transkei.

The Transkei sample therefore shows stylistic differences which merit the designations Ntsitsana/Msuluzi and Ntsitsana/Ndondondwane phases. However, Natal and Transkei samples are typologically similar and can be related to a larger unit, now known as the Kalundu Tradition (Huffman 1989&). This facies has a distribution that includes the eastern and western Transvaal and large parts of Natal. Mpame (Cronin 1982) and Lujjozi (Robey 1985, Robey & Feely 1987) are other sites in the southern Transkei known to relate to this Tradition. The nature of the difference between the ceramics of Natal and Transkei suggests that the ceramics belong to separate facies of the same Tradition (*vide* Evers 1988).

Appendix 9

KULUBELE CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Binneman 1996(a): 29-33).

Ceramics: pots and bowls

A small number of decorated potsherds were recovered from the pit whereas a relatively large sample came from the midden excavation. The assemblage, however, was fragmentary and large pot fragments in general were broken at the neck/shoulder junction which made it difficult to establish the extent of shoulder and body decoration. The majority of vessels were decorated only on the rim and occasionally on the lip and the inside of the rim. Only a few decorated body fragments were found which indicate that shoulder and body decoration occurred less frequently. The most common band motifs were hatching, cross-hatching (even and unevenly spaced), herringbone and alternating triangles. The incisions range from heavy, deep, rough U- and V-shaped incisions to carefully executed, shallow U- and V-shaped incisions.

The ceramic assemblage at Kulubele was divided into 17 classes (including undecorated vessels) using vessel profile, decoration placement and decoration following Huffman 1980. The following classes were identified:

1. Pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim and pendant motifs on the shoulder (Fig. 2.1).
2. Pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim and a band inside the neck (Fig. 2.2).
Note: This class consists of small fragments only and although the full extent of the decoration cannot be established, it is considered sufficient evidence for an independent class.
3. Pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the rim and a band on the neck (Fig. 2.3).
4. Pot with an everted neck with herringbone incisions on the lip and a band of decoration below the rim (Fig. 2.4). Note: This class consists of small fragments only and although the full extent of the decoration cannot be established, it is considered sufficient evidence for an independent class.
5. Pot with an everted neck with diagonal incisions on the lip and a band of decoration on the neck (Fig. 2.5).
6. Pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration below the rim (Fig. 2.6).
7. Pot with an everted neck with a band of decoration on the neck (Fig. 2.7).
8. Plain pot with everted neck (Fig. 2.8).
9. Plain open bowls (Fig. 3.1).

10. Plain inturned bowls (Fig. 3.2).
11. Plain deep-straight sided bowls (Fig. 3.3).
12. Deep straight-sided bowl with diagonal incisions on the lip (Fig. 3.4).
13. Deep straight-sided bowl with a band of decoration on the inside rim (Fig. 3.5).
14. Inturned bowls with diagonal incisions on the lip (Fig. 3.6).
15. Inturned bowls with a band on the rim (Fig. 3.7).
16. Inturned bowls with a band of decoration on the rim and lower body. (Fig. 3.8)
17. Inturned bowls with diagonal incisions on the lip and a band of decoration on the rim (Fig. 3.9).

Discussion of the ceramics

Although fragmentary, the Kulubele assemblage provided sufficient information to be identified and classified with the Msuluzi phase as first described by Maggs (1980a) for the Msuluzi Confluence site in KwaZulu-Natal.

The most obvious difference is the absence of elaborate decoration on the shoulder and lower body of pots. This attribute seems also to be absent from Ntsitsana in northern Transkei. An interesting aspect of the Kulubele pots is the decoration inside the neck of several vessels. No decoration on the inside of pots has been reported from KwaZulu-Natal or northern Transkei (Prins 1993, Prins & Granger 1993). Inturned bowls from Kulubele were decorated but no typical Msuluzi bowls or carinated bowls were present.

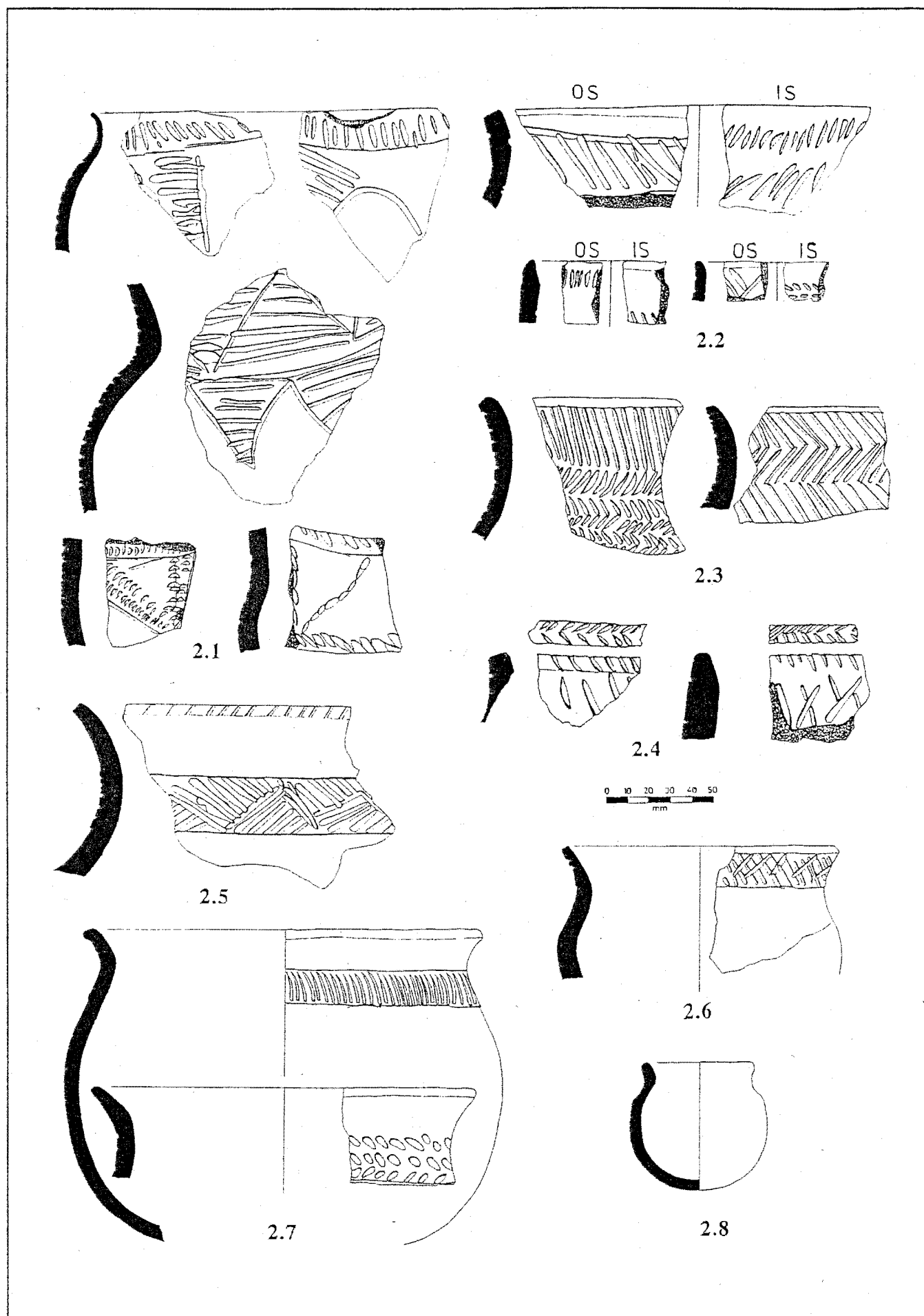


Fig. 2. Decorated pots from Kulubele. Classes 1-8.

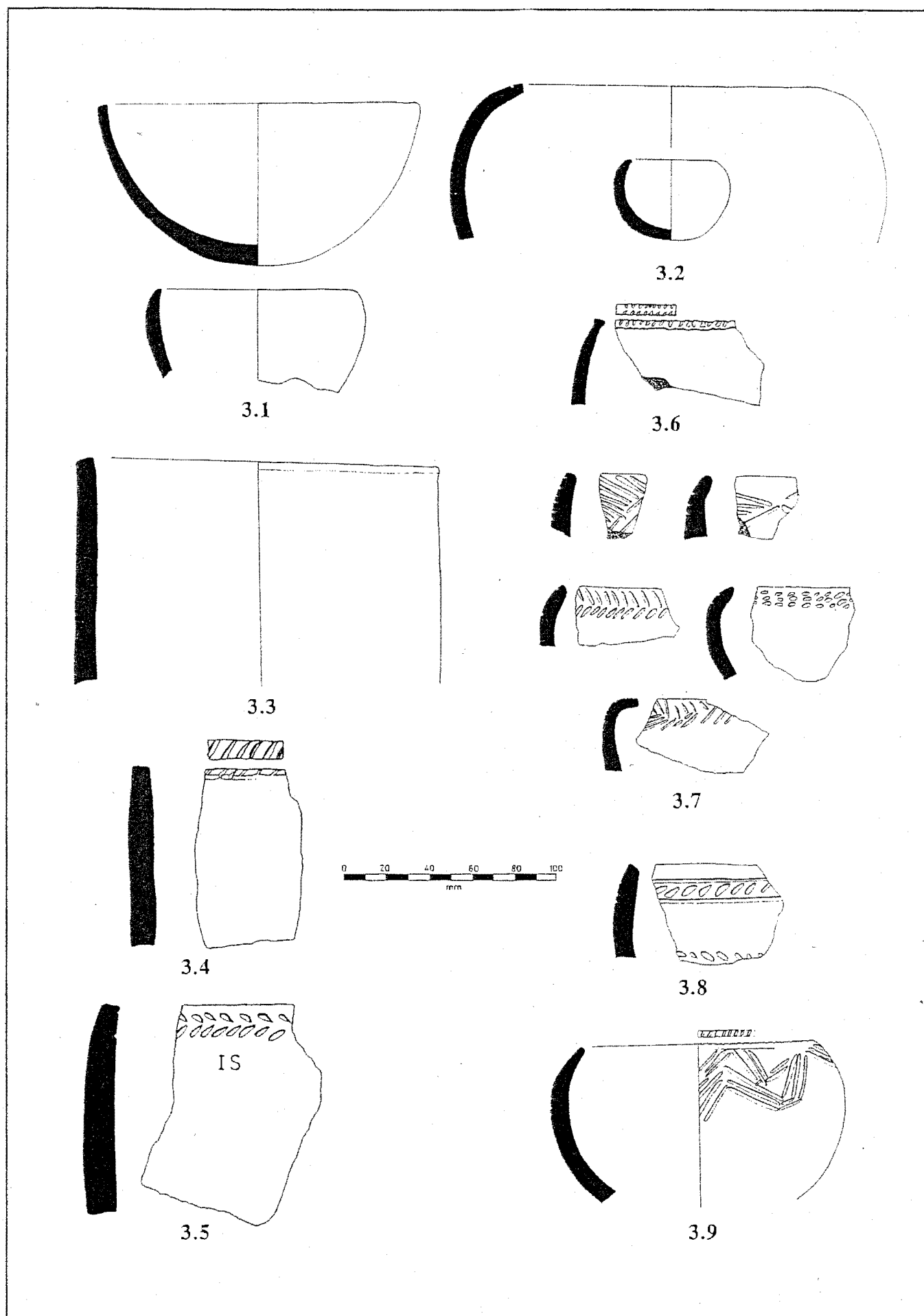


Fig. 3. Decorated bowls from Kulubele. Classes 9-17.

Appendix 10

CANASTA PLACE CERAMIC VESSEL ASSEMBLAGE ANALYSIS

(Nogwaza 1994: 104-105).

POTTERY ANALYSIS

A total number of 240 diagnostic fragments were recovered. These include decorated body sherds, decorated rim sherds and plain rim sherds (Table 1). Analysis took place at the Natal Museum under the guidance of Mr F Prins and Ms V Ward. The methodology was similar to that used in the analysis of material from EIA sites in Transkei and Natal. Analysis focused only on decoration because the fragments were too small to reconstruct rim diameters and vessel profiles with confidence, but an attempt was nevertheless made to reconstruct vessel shapes by using technologies developed by Natal Museum (Fig. 4b, c & d). The purpose of the analysis was to compare the Natal/Transkei wares and Canasta Place ware.

Some of the sherds indicate a coil technique was used in the construction of the vessels (Gitywa 1970: 2). A possible site for the firing *i.e.* kilns or ovens, was discovered in a ploughed lucern land close by at a depth of 0,50 m under the surface. Baked clay pieces, pottery sherds, quantities of charcoal, burnt wood and ash occur. Black burnish has been identified on very few sherds. A detailed analysis of decorated body sherds and decorated rim sherds is shown in Table 1. A total of 57 plain rim sherds were also identified. The thickness of the body sherds varies between 5-14 mm and the majority of the sherds lie in the range of 8-10 mm thick. The diagnostic rim sherds (excluding plain rims) have the following forms: inward sloping neck, 18 (Fig. 3c); everted neck, 4 (Figs 3b & 3d); inward sloping neck, 18 (Fig. 3c); hemispherical, 12 (Fig. 4a); open, 5 (Fig. 4c); wide-mouthed, 1 (4b) and subcarinated, 5 (Fig. 4d).



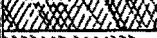


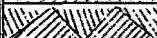


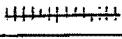

Feature	Decoration	Number of Rim Sherds	Number of Body Sherds	Total
	Hatching	8	49	57
	Even cross hatching	18	27	45
	Uneven cross hatching	0	15	15
	Opposite hatching	2	53	55
	Opposite hatching with intervening groove	0	2	2
	Hatched interlocking triangles	1	2	3
	Band of opposite hatching below a band of cross hatching	0	1	1
	Applied bosses	2	0	2
	Lip notching	1	0	1
	Plain Band above even cross hatching	2	0	2
				183

Table 1. Canasta Place: Motif categories and total number of both the diagnostic rim sherds and diagnostic body sherds (excluding plain sherds).

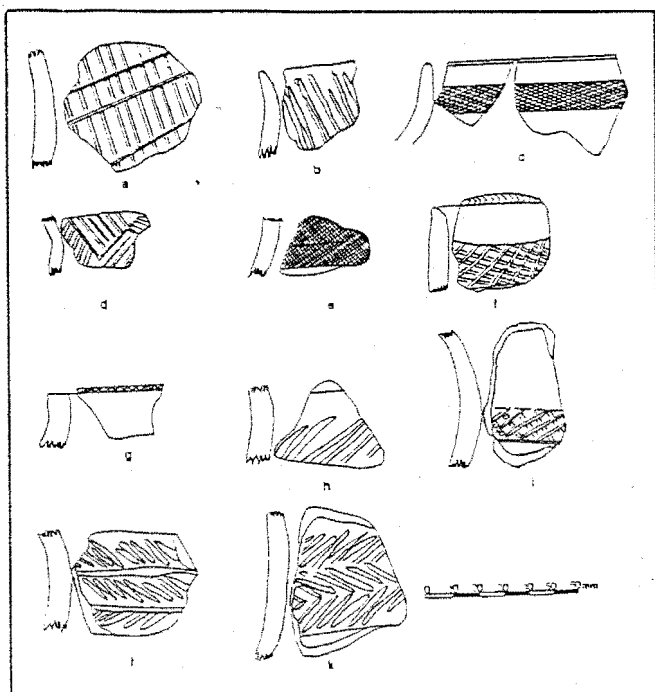


Fig. 3. Decorated pottery fragments from Canasta Place.

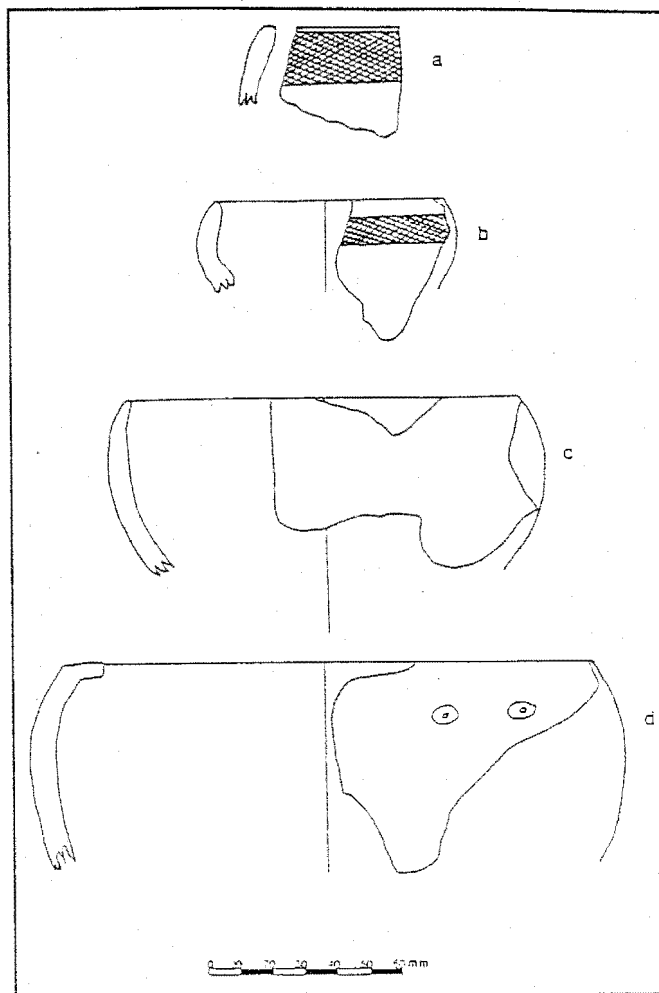


Fig. 4. Canasta Place: forms of diagnostic rim sherds.

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