The Asyut Project 7

Harrassowitz Verlag

Teodozja I. Rzeuska

Chronological Overview of Pottery from Asyut

A contribution to the history of Gebel Asyut al-gharbi

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The Asyut Project

Edited by
Jochem Kahl, UrsulaVerhoeven
and Mahmoud El-Khadragy

Volume 7

2017
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Teodozja I. Rzeuska

Chronological Overview of Pottery from Asyut

A contribution to the history of Gebel Asyut al-gharbi

2017
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Publication of this volume has been made possible by the generous funding of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation).

Cover: Aneta Cedro, vessels from the left to the right: large vessel Cat. 345 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012); globular jars Cat. 160 and Cat. 158 (the second and the third jar respectively, the rest not in the catalogue) and bowl Cat. 305 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012); vessel Cat. 45 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012); stand Cat. 107 and bowl Cat. 99 (© Musée du Louvre; Rzeuska 2012)); jar Cat. 427 and lid Cat. 426 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

Digital processing and DTP: Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska
Translation: Kasia Olchowska

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

For further information about our publishing program consult our website
http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de
© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2017
This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.
Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.
Printed on permanent/durable paper.
Printing and binding:
Printed in Germany

ISSN 1865-6250
ISBN 978-3-447-10621-4
e-ISBN PDF 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

To my husband Paweł, just for being

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Contents

Acknowledgements 9
Introduction:
Or why studying pottery is worthwhile 11
Chapter One:
Asyutian pottery: general information 15
Chapter Two:
Predynastic and Early Dynastic Period: in search of the oldest necropolis in Asyut 27
Chapter Three:
The resurrected necropolis of the Old Kingdom 63
Chapter Four:
The First Intermediate Period: innovative inheritors of the Memphite traditions 151
Chapter Five:
The Middle Kingdom: a local take on classic forms 279
Chapter Six:
The Second Intermediate Period: a reused necropolis 419
Chapter Seven:
The hidden necropolis and temples of the New Kingdom 443
Chapter Eight:
A quest for the necropolis of the Third Intermediate Period 475
Chapter Nine:
The Late Period: arrival of the sacred animals 491
Chapter Ten:
Ptolemaic pottery: necropoleis for people and sacred animals 551
Chapter Eleven:
The Romano-Byzantine Period: in the heart of the caravan routes 627
Summary 733
List of museum objects and archaeological contexts 735
Indices 741
Bibliography 749
Plates 775

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

If reconstructing a dinosaur from a single vertebra seems possible, reconstructing a society from a single sherd has always seemed to me a great achievement.

Jacques Le Goff

Acknowledgements

To start with, it must be said that this book would never have been written without encouragement from Professor Jochem Kahl, Co-Director of the Asyut Project. Therefore it is he, who deserves to be thanked in the first instance: for the inspiration, help, comments during the writing of the manuscript, and most of all for the trust he has given to the author.

Furthermore, this book could not have been written without the help from museums where objects from Asyut are stored, and so a massive thank you goes to Dr Eleni Vassilika, Dr Christian Greco the former and the present Directors of Museo Egizio di Torino respectively, Dr Matilde Borla from Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Piemonte e del Museo Antichità Egizie, Dr Guillemette Andreu-Lanoë – Director of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities of the Louvre Museum, Dr Rita E. Freed – Curator of Ancient Egyptian, Nubian and Near Easter Art at the Museum of Fine Arts – Boston and Mrs Susan J. Allen, Research Associate for Egyptian Expedition Archives at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Dr Geneviève Pierrat-Bonnefois – Chief Curator of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities of the Louvre Museum, Mrs Carolin Johansson from the Medelhavsmuseet in Stockholm and Dr Neal Spencer – Keeper from the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan in the British Museum, for opening up their treasuries, providing unlimited access to the objects and all their help during recording and analysis of the pottery.

I would also like to say a big thank you to the friends from the Asyut Project for the pleasure of sharing inspiring discussions about the stormy history of Asyut and the 'blank pages' of its past, during the excavations on the necropolis.

I would also like to thank Mrs Aneta Cedro, Mrs Andrea Kilian, Dr Jadwiga Iwaszczuk and Mrs Mariola Orzechowska, for their invaluable help in recording the pottery – without their extraordinary talents, this book would never be so beautifully illustrated.

And last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my husband Paweł, Mrs Kasia Olchowska, Dr Claire Malleson and Mrs Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska – without their dedication and work this book would not have been completed so soon.

Generous financing of The Asyut Project by DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) enabled me to spend several seasons of fieldwork with the German-Egyptian team of the Asyut Project. Thanks to a research grant from the De Brzezie Lanckoronski Foundation, I was able to work on the pottery in the British Museum.

The publication was prepared within the framework of the Harmonia funding scheme, contract number: UMO-2011/01/M/HS3/03423, National Science Centre, Poland.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Introduction
Or why studying pottery is worthwhile

To tell the history of a necropolis through pottery, even without going into great detail, is as ambitious and strenuous a task as it is arrogant and insane – especially if the necropolis in question is the one in Asyut: so crucial in understanding both the history and culture of Egypt, so full of dramatic events and of significant longevity, and so immense (***Fig. 1***). There has not been a publication in the history of Egyptological studies which has reconstructed the past of an archaeological site from such a broad perspective. Therefore, this book is bound to contain some errors and imperfections – for these the author would like to apologize in advance.

Unlike many of their fellow colleagues, Egyptologists are in the privileged position of having an enormous amount of written sources at hand. For this very reason the history of Egyptian civilisation is reconstructed primarily from texts. Although the benefit of having so many written documents is clearly apparent, it

Fig. 1: Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, view from the east. Entrances to the tombs cut in the rock are visible in the upper part of the hill (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

is also somewhat of a curse: the wealth of one type of source can sometimes also lead to other sources being overlooked.

So what can the pottery tell us about the history of Asyut that the texts can not? At first glance, not much as there are great beautiful tombs of impressive size belonging to the nomarchs, rich in relief decoration and texts of historical and biographical nature, dated back to the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom (***Fig. 2***). Furthermore, there are numerous stelae, statues, sarcophagi, mummies, papyri, ostraca and many more antiquities that fill up museum storerooms all over the world. Despite such a great wealth of material, our knowledge of the necropolis and some periods at the site still remains scant. Contrary to widely-held belief, activities on the gebel in Asyut do *not* primarily date to the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom necropolis (Málek/Baines 2000: 121-122); the history of the site is much longer and it continues to hide many secrets. It is still unclear when and where the oldest necropolis emerged, where the inhabitants of Asyut were buried during the Second Intermediate Period, or where the necropoleis of the New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period were located. The questions are many and it is impossible to address all of them in this short introduction.

It is much easier, however, to say what this publication is *not*. It definitely does not aspire to be a history of the Asyut necropolis *sensu stricto* as such a task would

Fig. 2: Material situated in the upper part of the hill continuously shifts down the hill slope. Concentration of the Late Roman ceramics with visible examples of Late Amphorae 1 and 7 resting on the eastern slope of the gebel (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

require considerably more extensive studies and the results of which would fill up many volumes. It should rather be seen as a *contribution* to this history.

The first and most important goal posed by the author is to present the lesser known parts of the history of the Asyut necropolis, those that are under-represented in the texts, as well as those for which the archaeological evidence is insufficient. This is where the ceramic material has proven to be an invaluable source, which helped to fill gaps in our knowledge. Thanks to the extensive study of the ceramics, the picture of this tremendous necropolis is becoming more and more complete.

The second goal is to present the unique character of the local pottery in Asyut, especially in comparison with ceramics found in other regions of Egypt. However, this turned out to be possible only for those historical periods which have yielded large quantities of typologically diverse material. Another equally important aim is to prove the continuity of the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi use over a period of more than four thousand years, from the dawn of Egyptian civilisation until the early Middle Ages.

And finally, the author greatly hopes she has succeeded in showing what an important and irreplaceable source of information pottery can prove to be.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Chapter One
Asyutian pottery: general information

Current state of research

What distinguishes the pottery from the necropolis at Asyut is its great variety in terms of chronology, typology and geographical provenance. Unfortunately, ceramics deriving from the on-going excavations are generally found to be in a poor state of preservation: the diagnostic fragments constitute only a small fraction of the total, and complete vessels are a great rarity. It should be noted that the majority of the material is mixed, secure contexts or vessels found *in situ* are a rare occurrence (***Fig. 3***).

Fig. 3: The deposit of three First Intermediate Period bowls found one inside another in the chapel of Khety I's Tomb V (M11.1), Cat. 105 and 101, the vessel in the middle is not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Cedro 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

There are several factors behind this situation, the most important being the geographical location of Asyut. The town is situated exactly in the heart of Egypt, at the crossroads of important north-south and east-west routes. Such a location can be both extremely beneficial to trade in the times of peace and stability – clearly confirmed by the ceramics – as well as dangerous and destructive during times of political upheaval and military conflict. Asyut the town and Asyut the necropolis paid a very high price for this central position. Each time the region became a conflict zone, the town was looted and destroyed (Kahl 2007; Kahl 2012: 3-4). A significant factor regarding the condition of the ceramic material is the location of the necropolis on the hill slope: pottery from the upper areas of the gebel continuously slides down and mixes with the ceramics from the lower levels (***Fig. 4***). Other factors contributing to the poor state of preservation are the long time span during which the gebel was in use, its use as a quarry starting as early as the New Kingdom, and intense archaeological works which have not always been carried out in accordance with generally accepted standards.

All these factors have resulted in the complete absence of a complex monograph dedicated to Asyut ceramics. The absence of a monograph does not mean, however, that nothing has been published. The pottery from Asyut appears in both the reports from previous missions (Chassinat/Palanque 1911: Pls. XV.3, XXXIV; Wainwright 1926), catalogues from the museums with rich collections of Asyut ceramics e.g. in Torino cf. (D'Amicone 1988: 88-89; D'Amicone/Pozzi Battaglia 2009a; D'Amicone/Pozzi Battaglia 2009b), Louvre (Desroches Noblecourt/Vercoutter 1981: 133) and the British Museum (Maitland 2012: 57), as well as in publications dedicated to the Asyut necropolis (Ryan 1988; Kanawati 1988; Zitman 2010). The pottery is well-represented in publications of the on-going Asyut Project which is a result of the specific research strategy of giving equal consideration to all groups of objects, including ceramics (Beck 2013; Beckh/Eichner 2010; Czyżewska 2013, Kahl 2007a: 89; Kahl 2008: 200; Kahl 2009: 121; Kahl 2010; Kahl 2014; Kahl/el-Khadragy/Verhoeven 2006: 243-245; Kahl/Engel/Sanhueza-Pino 2012; el-Khadragy 2006; Kilian 2012; Kilian 2013; Rzeuska 2011; Rzeuska 2012a; Yasin 2008; Yasin 2012). At present, there are several ceramic projects focused on, for example, pottery assemblages from the tombs of nomarchs ('Pottery from Tomb III' by Teodozja Rzeuska), or discussing the particular chronological periods and problems ('Local ceramic tradition from the First Intermediate Period to the Middle Kingdom' by Andrea Kilian, 'Roman pottery from Asyut' by Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska and 'Imported pottery' by Teodozja Rzeuska). The present work is the first in a series of soon to be published monographs dedicated to Asyut pottery.

Research framework

As mentioned in the introduction, the main goal of the book is to present the history of the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi necropolis through the ceramic material, with a special emphasis on more than 4000 years of continuity in the functioning of the site. It seems crucial to present periods that are lesser known, due to a lack of written sources (textual documentation), objects or monuments. However, this selection is not entirely dictated by the attempt to fill in the gaps in history,

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 4: Map of the necropolis in Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (© The Asyut Project, Fauerbach/Maschke 2007).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

but also stems from a very simple principle. By studying the history of the Asyut necropolis, we also reconstruct the life of the local community that inhabited the nearby settlement, and the more information about the functioning of the necropolis during the particular periods that can be collected, the greater our knowledge of ancient Asyut will be. It should not be forgotten that a necropolis was not a separate world (especially not in ancient Egypt) but a mirror that reflected the realities of life – the histories of Asyut the necropolis and Asyut the city are inseparable.

Most importantly, all of the chronological periods are represented in the pottery: from the Predynastic Period till the Ottoman era; in this book, however, the pottery analysed has been limited to the timespan from the Predynastic until the Late Roman Period. Despite this continuity some of the periods will be discussed more extensively and analysed more in depth, whilst others will be introduced more generally. This stems from the fact that the pottery representing the particular periods, e.g. the First Intermediate or Late Roman Period, is more numerous than the Early Dynastic or Second Intermediate Period examples. This situation may reflect variations in the intensity of activity on the gebel during different periods, or it may well stem from the state of the archaeological research carried out on the site by various missions for more than a century. It is more than likely that tombs and temples from the less known periods have yet to be discovered, waiting under tonnes of rock debris that have been accumulating on the slopes of the gebel for thousands of years. It is also quite likely that the future works of the Asyut project will yield new data that will allow for better insight into the history of this wonderful city and its necropolis.

Fig. 5: 19th century drawing depicting a water vessel which is thought to have been manufactured in the Asyut region (after: Fairholt 1862: 173).

It is important to stress the exceptional character of the local pottery and its uniqueness against ceramics from other regions of Egypt. Many of the objects presented in this book are a testimony to the original ideas of the local potters in terms of the manufacturing techniques, choice of shapes, or decoration that has not been found at other archaeological sites. The skilfulness and ingenuity of the potters from Asyut is further attested to by the various accounts of travellers. A relation of a British explorer F.W. Fairholt provides a perfect example:

A busier town than Siout is not upon the Nile. Its artisans are all industrious, and there is a quickness about their movements not to be found elsewhere, even in Cairo.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

*There is one branch of manufacturing art in which they stand pre-eminent, and this is, ornamental pottery; it is constructed from a fine clay obtained in the immediate neighbourhood, and is worked up into a variety of articles much prized by natives, and equally sought after by travellers. The surface of this pottery is coloured red or black, and receives a fine glaze, giving it a remarkable resemblance to the far-famed red ware of the Romans, popularly known as Samian ware. The most ambitious works of the Siout potteries are water-bottles (**Fig. 5**) and basins; they are remarkable for the elaboration of their decorations, which is produced partly by mould, but more generally by hand, as in the example we engrave, where ingenious manipulation and a correct eye alone have completed the work. There is a large demand for these and other productions of the Siout potters; and it is sometimes difficult to get good earthenware in the bazaars, now that so many travellers visit the Nile, and the large majority seek to supply themselves with specimens. The potters have latterly taken to imitate European articles of use, such as candlesticks, tumblers, &c., upon which they engraft native ornament; but these things have a strange hybrid look, while their more genuine works have frequently great and peculiar merits. The great staple manufacture, however, is pipe-bowls, which are made in enormous quantities, and have the deserved reputation of being the best in Egypt* (Fairholt 1862: 173-174).

Even at the beginning of the 20th century it was almost a duty of every self-respecting tourist visiting the region to purchase the famous and at the time valuable, locally made pottery (Beck 2013; Kubala 2008; Randall-MacIver 1905).

Finally, a few comments on the analysis of the material presented here. Despite the emphasis this publication assigns to the chronological aspects of the pottery, readers who are looking for information on fine dating may be disappointed. As already mentioned, the majority of ceramics retrieved during the current excavations come from mixed contexts. Only in a handful of cases has it been possible to date the pottery based on stratigraphy. The overwhelming majority of pieces were dated using the parallels from other sites, particularly those from the local region, as well as the stylistic characteristics of certain vessels. Furthermore, due to the reasons mentioned above, the reader will not find statistical analysis or discussion on the cultural aspects of the ceramics, e.g. the funerary customs or the everyday life of the Coptic hermits and monks.

Presentation

The ceramic material is presented in accordance with the chronological divisions of the history of Egypt. The chronological pan has been naturally defined by the pottery itself stretching from the Naqada II-Early Dynastic Period, the earliest of the periods identified in the necropolis, to the 7th century AD, when Egypt became an integral part of the newly formed Islamic *ummah*. The periods are represented only by a selection of material that has been found during excavations, or that is present in collections subjectively chosen by the author, and therefore do not reflect the entire corpus of pottery from the chosen periods. These are the most interesting and best preserved objects that fill some of the gaps in our knowledge of either the history of the necropolis and hence the city or the pottery itself.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

At the end of each chapter there is a catalogue presenting ceramics dated to the particular period. All objects have been described in accordance with a standardised pattern which comprises the following elements: provenance, size, fabric type, manufacture technique, base shaping technique, surface treatment, colour, firing, hardness, and decoration. In order to simplify the description, abbreviations have been used and their full form and meaning can be found below the text.

Provenance

The overwhelming majority of vessels presented in this book come from the excavations and surveys carried out on the gebel by the Asyut Project since 2003. Every object is described by the number given to the particular assemblage, the so-called 'study number' (st. no.) in case of a ceramic group found in one location, or the so-called 'single number' (Sing. no.) for the complete or significant vessels. Each number is preceded by the excavation season date, e.g. S04/st275 describes an assemblage number 275 from the year 2004 and S09/2 describes single number 2 found during the 2009 season. An index listing all the numbers can be found at the back of the book. Additionally, many of the vessels discovered during the earlier works, currently stored in different museums in Turin, Paris, Stockholm, Boston and London, have also been included in the book. In order to differentiate these objects the following abbreviation were used:

AS – examples found by the on-going Asyut Project
B – vessels from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston
BM – vessels from the British Museum in London
L – vessels from the Musée de Louvre in Paris
MM – vessels from the Medelhavsmuseet (Mediterranean Museum) in Stockholm
T – vessels from the Museo Egizio in Torino

Clays and wares

It is virtually impossible to create a universal classification of clays and wares which would encompass the entire spectrum of ceramic material from the Predynastic Period to the 7th century AD. The main reason behind this is both the magnitude and complexity of the material: every period brings new types while others go out of use and new ones evolve; moreover, the material contains a high number of imports. Work on the classification of clays and wares for the different periods is in progress, and the results will be published in future monographs. A compromise has been proposed as a solution to this problem: where possible, the Vienna System classification has been applied, and where this system could not be used, a description of the fabric type is provided. In the process of describing the fabrics, inclusions, their roundness and sphericity, grain size scale and sorting, the author referred to the grain card from Geo Supplies Ltd., Sheffield, UK.

As for the wares, conventional names, long used for the particular epochs, have been adopted, e.g. Blue Painted on Pink Slipped Ware for the New Kingdom, with the meaning of each term explained in the relevant chapters.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Manufacturing techniques

Unlike fabrics, techniques applied in pottery manufacture were not especially varied but remained conservative and over the time underwent little change. A small percentage of the vessels were made by hand using techniques: *hollowing and pinching, coiling* (***Fig. 6***), and *pounding* (***Fig. 7***) (Shepard 1956: 181-224; Holthoer 1977: 31-34; Rice 2005: 113-144). Another small group of vessels were made by moulding – the interior of the pot would be shaped using the *convex* type model for the interior (patrix) (***Fig. 8***) and the concave (***Fig. 9***) type for the exterior (matrix) (Aston D. 1999b: 28-29). However, the majority of ceramics from the necropolis were wheel-turned, using both the simple wheel (from the late Fourth Dynasty to the Second Intermediate Period) and the composite wheel (from the Second Intermediate Period). In the first instance, the wheel marks visible on the walls are shallow and irregular (*thrown on the wheel 1*) (***Fig. 10***), in the second, they are deeper, regular

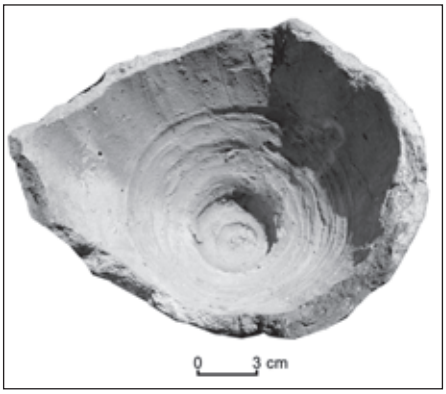


Fig. 6: Beer jar base made by hollowing and pinching combined with coiling, Cat. 83 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2010).

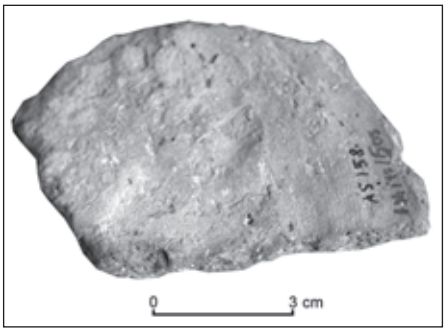


Fig. 7: Base of a bread – offering(?) tray formed by hand using the pounding method, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

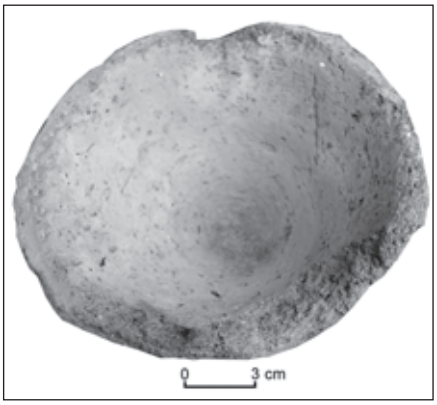


Fig. 8: Bread mould, interior shaped using moulding method, Cat. 66 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

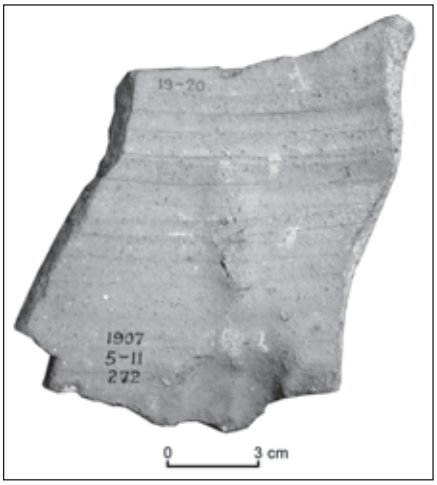


Fig. 9: Inside of a vessel with a moulded image of Hathor's face, Cat. 346 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 10: Inside of a jar formed on the slow wheel, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 11: Late Roman 7 amphora, wheel-turned; note the deep and parallel wheel marks, not in the catalogue, not to scale (© The Asyut Project; Cedro 2012).

and more evenly spaced (*thrown on the wheel 2*) (***Fig. 11***) and there is a torsion crack or dimple (in the case of closed forms) (***Fig. 12***) or a small thickening in the middle of the bottom.

As for the base shaping methods, various techniques were used. Though the handmade bases were (by defini-

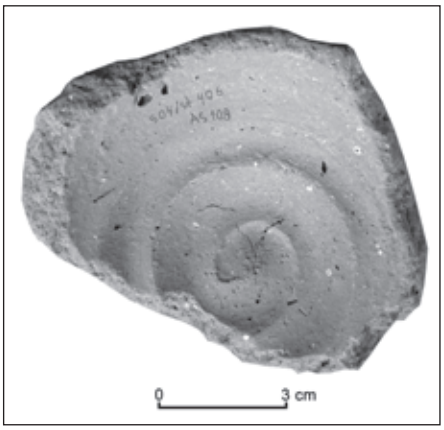


Fig. 12: Spiral on the inside of a wheel-turned vessel, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 13: Handmade base of beer jar, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

tion) typical for the handmade vessels (***Fig. 13***), they were also found in pots entirely wheel-turned or those made using the mixed method in which part of the vessel would be wheel-turned and part handmade.

The wheel-turned ceramics could be either flat or round-based. In the first example, a piece would be cut off from the wheel surface (or lump of clay) with a string – this would leave the characteristic marks in the form of concentric lines – a spiral pattern or 'shell' pattern – with a small thickening in the middle (=*cut with a string*) (***Fig. 14***) – or with a tool, leaving the parallel lines on the flat base (=*cut with a tool*) (***Fig. 15***). In the case of round-based vessels, the piece would be cut off from the wheel and subsequently shaped with tools or turned. The base was then *scraped* if the tool was positioned at a right angle to the surface of the vessel leaving characteristic scrape marks (***Fig. 16***) or *trimmed* (***Fig. 17)***, if the tool was at an angle which would result in the planes of trimming being

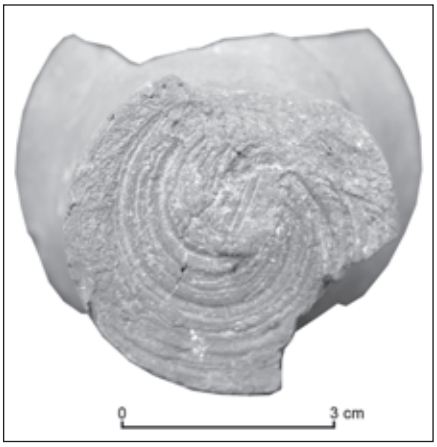


Fig. 14: Base of a small cup with marks left by cutting it off the wheel with a string, Cat. 431 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

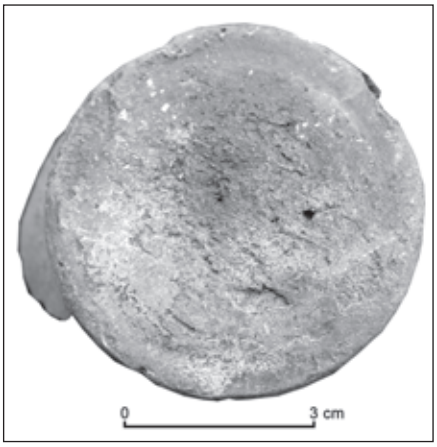


Fig. 15: Base of a medium-sized bowl with visible marks left by cutting off the wheel with a tool, Cat. 378 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

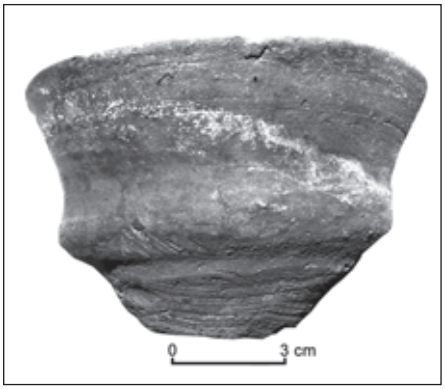


Fig. 16: Base of a carinated bowl finished by scraping method, Cat. 244 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

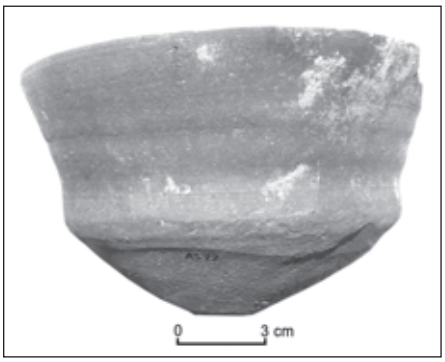


Fig. 17: Base of a carinated bowl finished by trimming method, Cat. 143 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

visible. Occasionally, the bases were further *smoothed* by hand – the process which would almost entirely conceal the other marks left by shaping (***Fig. 18***). After having been cut off from the wheel, a large number of vessels would be positioned upside down and *overthrown*, a process evident from the concentric grooves on the external surface of the bottom (***Fig. 19***).

Some of the ceramics had base rings. This type of base was formed either by pinching the clay at the bottom of the vessel to form the ring (*pinched base ring*) or by shaping (overthrowing) the bottom of the pot (*base ring*) (***Fig. 20***). Vessels with an added handmade or wheel-turned *footed base* were rare (***Fig. 21***).

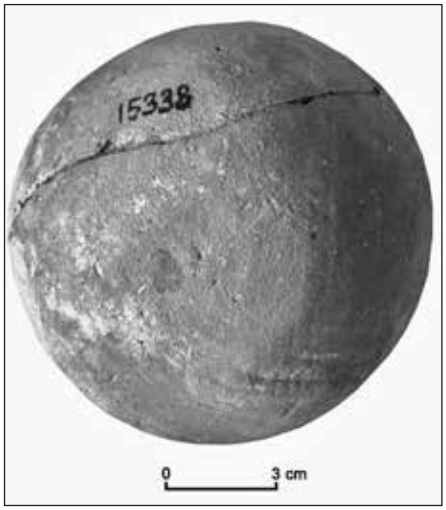


Fig. 18: Base of a medium-sized jar finished by smoothing, Cat. 116 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

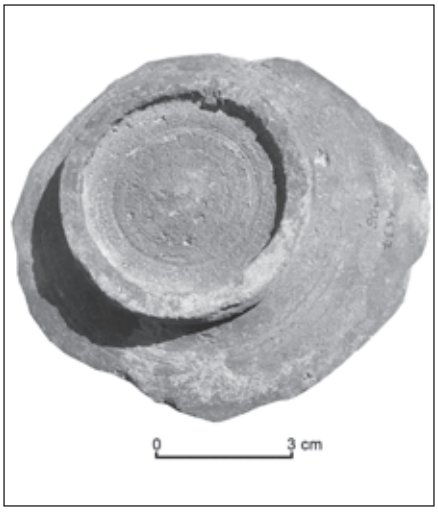


Fig. 20: Base ring of a small bowl, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

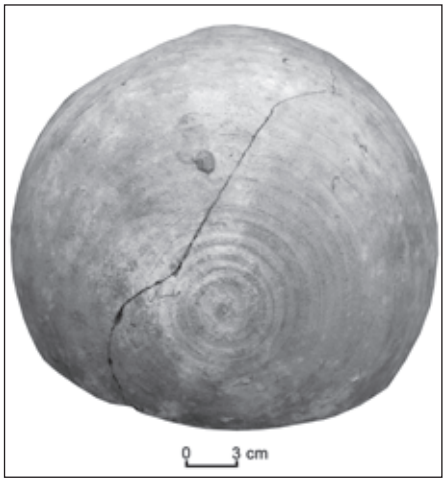


Fig. 19: Base of a large jar finished by throwing on the wheel, not in the catalogue (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 21: Fragment of a chalice on high foot, Cat. 257 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Surface Treatment

The surface could be left natural (*untreated*) or worked in a specific manner in order to tighten and smooth the walls as well as make the vessel more visually pleasing. An unfired pot could be *wet smoothed* – smoothed by wet hand leaving characteristic 'smudges', giving the impression of being painted. If the surface (or surfaces) was coated in an extra layer of a mixture of water, pigment, binders and occasionally clay prior to firing it makes it *slipped* and depending on the colour of the pigment used in the mixture it could be, for example, red slipped, pink slipped or white slipped. However, if a mixture was applied after the vessel had been fired, it is known as a *wash*. Furthermore, the surface could be *polished* using a soft material, e.g. fabric, or *burnished* with a hard tool, e.g. a pebble. At this point it should be noted that in the vessels made of certain types of clays (mainly marl and mixed) a thin layer called *scum* can be observed on the surface. It must not be confused with a surface treatment - it is an entirely natural occurrence during the process of drying.

Colour

The colour of both the external and internal surfaces of the ceramics has been described in accordance with Munsell Soil Color Charts, Year 2000 Revised Washable Edition.

Firing

Two firing methods were identified in the corpus: in the *oxidized* or *reduced* environment. Oxidization takes place when the clay is fired evenly; a break will appear to be either monochromatic or have a narrow core of a different colour in the middle. The second method can also be observed in a break; either a thick dark core or a uniform grey or black colouring. Some vessels, especially those large in size with varying thickness of the walls, can show evidence of firing in inconstant conditions.

Decoration

The wide chronological spectrum of the Asyut ceramics is further reflected in its broad range of decoration methods. *Painted* decoration applied prior to firing appears to have been the most popular, slightly behind that is painted decoration applied after firing. In both cases the decoration was either monochromatic (one colour), dichromatic (two colours), or polychromatic (many colours) on differently treated surfaces: untreated, slipped, and washed. Examples of *incised* decoration are also present in the material. This was applied with either a single-bladed tool (e.g. piercer) or a multi-bladed tool (e.g. a comb-like instrument, such as a fish fin). Other methods of decoration found in the material are *impressed* with a knurl or rope pre-firing, *carved* with a small U-shaped chisel post-firing, *cut-out*: when a motif is cut out from the wall of the vessel and applied*:* when the ornamental motif is shaped by hand and applied onto the surface of the vessel. There were a few rare pre-firing decoration methods identified amongst the ceramics from the necropolis: *impressed* decoration made by impressing a pattern in the wet clay with a special tool, e.g. knurl, and *stamped* decoration, which

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

involves pressing a stamp on the surface of the vessel. The last of the decoration methods observed amongst the material is *moulding*, which is when the surface of the vessel is pressed into a matrix in order to create ornaments.

Terminology of vessels

It is important to note that the terminology used in this book is dictated by the shapes rather than the function of the vessels presented. The starting point is the well-known division into two classes: closed and open forms. The borderline between the two is determined by the AI – *Aperture Index*, which reflects the ratio between the rim and the largest diameter. If a pot has the AI index greater than 100 it belongs to the closed forms; if the index is equal or lower than 100, it is an open form. Furthermore, the subdivisions within the two classes are described by the VI *Vessel Index*, i.e. the ratio between the largest diameter of the vessel and its height. The following categories are distinguished within the two classes (Aston B. 1994: 179-181).

Closed forms:
- slender jar, when VI is lower than 50
- tall jar, when VI falls between 50 and 90
- globular jar, when VI is between 90 and 115
- squat jar, when VI is higher than 115

Open forms:
- beaker, when VI is lower than 125
- bowl, when VI falls between 125 and 275
- dish, when VI is between 275 and 500
- plate, when VI is higher than 500

Due to the fact that only a small number of the vessels representing the closed forms are preserved complete enough to permit calculation of the Vessel Index, they are often described only as jars. Nevertheless, some fragments belong to such characteristic vessels that their identification and classification did not present any difficulty.

Moreover, due to the specific character of a category of Egyptian pottery that simply cannot be classified into any of the above mentioned classes, it was decided to create two additional groups: non-containers: stands along with covers, and miniature vessels.

In several instances commonly adopted names of some vessels which are deeply rooted in specialist literature that refer to the function of the vessel, such as: 'beer jar', 'bread mould', 'bread platter', 'hemispherical cup', or 'amphora' were used.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Chapter Two
Predynastic and Early Dynastic Period: in search of the oldest necropolis in Asyut

It is rather striking that when looking at a map of archaeological sites representing the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods the region of Asyut stands out as a blank spot. This part of the Nile Valley appears to have been unoccupied, almost deliberately avoided by the early inhabitants of Egypt. What makes this even more puzzling is the fact that not far from Asyut lie sites such as Matmar, Mostagiddo, Deir Tasa, Badari and Qau el-Kebir, which are all key sites for our knowledge of the dawn of Egyptian history. Immediately, a question arises: does this 'blank spot' on the map reflect the real situation and was the region indeed uninhabited? Or, does it result from the state of research in the area? The current work at Asyut has demonstrated that it is the second option that seems to be the answer, and the recently excavated ceramic material proved to be the key for the search for the oldest necropolis on the gebel.

The pottery presented here comes from both the collections of the Medelhavsmuseet in Stockholm, the Egyptian Museum in Turin, and the fieldwork carried out on the gebel by the Asyut Project.

The examples from the museums lack detailed provenance/stratigraphic information, whilst that information is known for the objects deriving from the recent the surveys and excavations, therefore it seems most logical to present the material analysed according to the two assemblages: material from museums and then material from the surveys and excavations.

Pottery from the Medelhavsmuseet in Stockholm

Two examples from Stockholm derive from the antiquities market and despite having been purchased in Asyut their association with the gebel is impossible to prove. The first one, donated to the museum by N. Retting in 1931, is a small jar (***Fig. 22***) with a distinctive painted decoration in the form of vertical and horizontal wavy lines, dated to Naqada II (George 1975: 64).[1] It corresponds with D-Ware (5H) in Petrie's classification of prehistoric pottery (Petrie 1921: Pl. XXXI). The second vessel (***Cat. 1***), also dated to Naqada II, is a medium-sized ellipsoid jar with two handles (***Fig. 23***).[2] It comes from the collection of a famous

1 The vessel can be viewed on the museum website: http://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-mhm/web/object/3006059 (accessed October 2014).
2 The vessel can be viewed on the museum website: http://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-mhm/web/object/3006556 (accessed October 2014).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

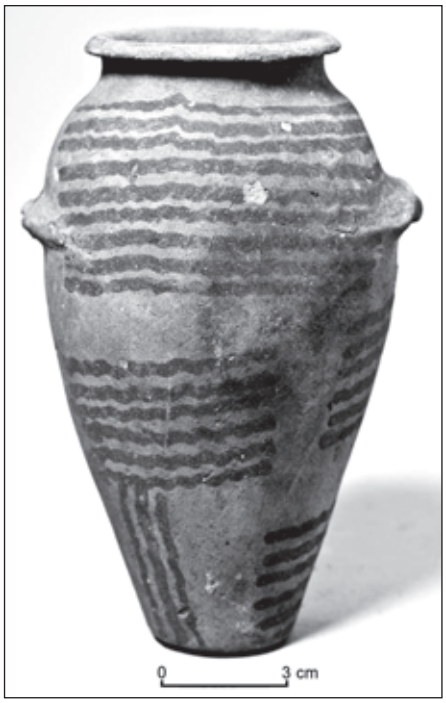


Fig. 22: Naqada II jar purchased in Asyut, not in the catalogue (MM 10506; Courtesy of Medelhavsmuseet).

British Military Major and art collector, R.G. Gayer-Anderson, and was purchased for the museum in 1934. The object can be classified as P-Ware (80S) of Petrie's typology (Petrie 1921: Pl. XIII), although its red slipped exterior is not polished.[3]

Fig. 23: Squat jar from Naqada II purchased in Asyut, Cat. 1 (© Medelhavsmuseet; Rzeuska 2014).

The pottery from the Egyptian Museum in Turin

The group of ceramics from Turin presents a more valuable assemblage, in comparison to the Stockholm objects. It was excavated by Ernesto Schiaparelli during his excavations on the gebel in Asyut between 1911 and 1913. Unfortunately, Schiaparelli did not leave any records which could help determine the precise provenance of the ceramics – apart from an enigmatic reference to 'archaic vessels' on the inventory list, there is no other information about the group (Kahl 2007b: 28; Zitman 2010: 90, no. 589; Kahl 2012a: 10). The assemblage, formed of a total of 10 objects, comprises eight Predynastic and Early Dynastic vessels that can mainly be classified as Half-polished Ware (P2-Ware) and one hemispherical bowl with a round base which can be classified as Red Slipped Ware.

Half-polished Ware

The vessels representing Half-polished Ware, characterised by the burnished surface, constitute the largest group. Usually, only the interior is entirely treated, while the external surface, apart from the area below the rim, is left unburnished. The distinctive burnish was applied to the surface which had been coated with red

3 According to Petrie's typology, vessels classified as P-Ware should have their surface polished. Many objects representing this class, however, do not have polished surfaces and sometimes are not red slipped either, cf. Friedman 1994: 94.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 24: Deep conical bowl on a flat base with burnished exterior, Cat. 2 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

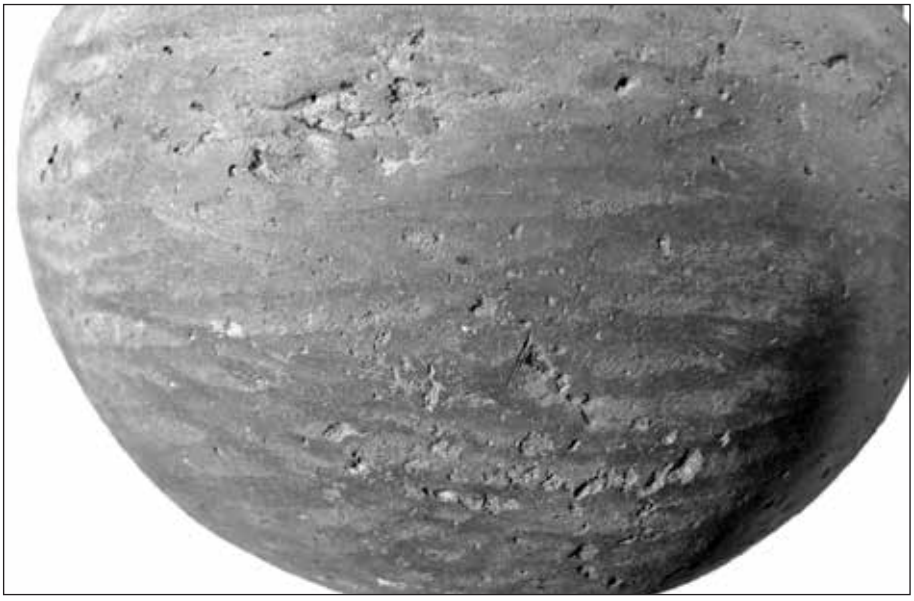


Fig. 25: Close-up of a handmade base of a bowl; note the irregular burnish, Cat. 2 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

slip, which quite often is extremely thin and almost invisible. Examples of this ware from Asyut are found exclusively in this museum collection and thus far none have been identified from the recent survey/excavation. The group has four distinct vessel types. These are deep carinated bowl, deep conical bowl, hemispherical bowl, and shallow plate. Apart from the deep carinated bowl, which falls into the 'transitional' category between the closed and open forms, all of the objects are open forms. All of them are made from various types of Nile silts or a fabric, which appears to be a mixture of Nile silt with marl clay.

The first type of Half-polished Ware is represented by a deep carinated bowl on a flat base (***Cat. 2***) (***Fig. 24***) made from Nile B2 fabric. The entire exterior of this vessel is decorated (***Fig. 25***), while the interior is left untreated – a diversion from the standard procedure, which may be a result of the somewhat transitional nature of the shape of the vessel between open and closed forms. With only the exterior visible to the user of the bowl, there was no practical reason to decorate the obscured interior as well. This object, similarly to the others, was made by coiling and is characterised by a rather crude execution, apparent from its lack of symmetry.

Fig. 26: Interior of a conical bowl representing Half-polished Ware, decorated with the characteristic radially arranged burnished pattern, Cat. 3 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The second type of Half-polished Ware is represented by conical bowls with flat bases, a rounded rim and straight or gently rounded walls (***Cat. 3-5***) (***Figs. 26-27***). The bowls display an identical design to the burnished ornaments: a narrow horizontal band with a radially arranged pattern on the inside and outside – below the rim. In one instance the motif is right and in the other left-rotated. One example bears a pot mark in the form of four short hashes, executed prior to firing (***Fig. 28***).

The third vessel type present in this assemblage is three hemispherical bowls on a rounded or a flat base (***Cat. 6-8***). The interior of the first bowl was burnished in an unusual manner. The pattern consists of three panels, each decorated with

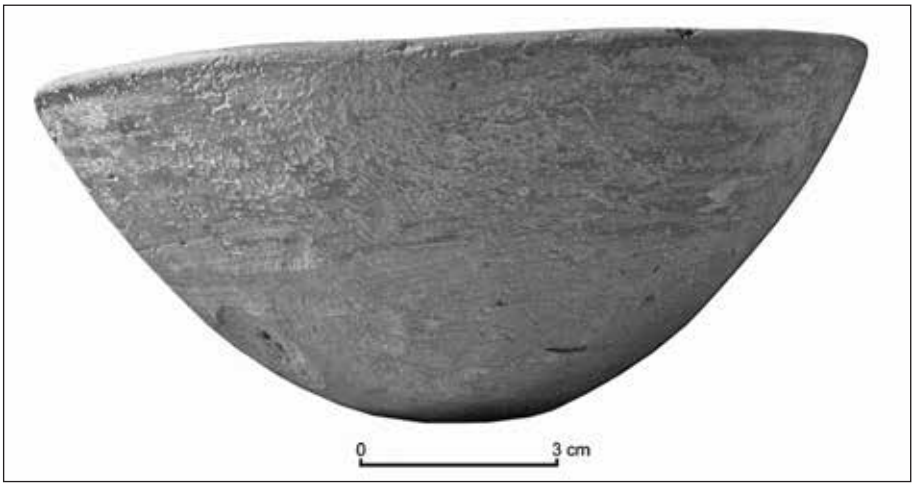


Fig. 27: *Half-polished* Ware conical bowl, Cat. 4 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 28: Pot mark in the form of four short hashes, executed prior to firing, Cat. 4 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

a polished oblique pattern. The external surface, on the other hand, was left partially untreated and only the upper part of the bowl has a horizontal polish (***Fig. 29***). The second and the third bowls have the same horizontal burnished pattern which embellishes the entire exterior and the upper part of the outer surface (***Figs. 30-31***). Additionally, one of the bowls (***Cat. 8***) has a pot mark immediately at the base in the form of four oblique and short hashes incised on the surface prior to firing (***Tab. 1***).

The fourth type of Half-polished Ware is represented by shallow plates (***Cat. 9-10***), the interior of which is decorated with the common pattern:

Fig. 29: Bowl with rounded rim, belly and rounded base with burnished design on the interior divided into three panels, Cat. 6 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

a narrow horizontal band with another design, arranged either radially or perpendicularly to it, placed below the rim (***Fig. 32***).

Parallels for these bowls and plates have been found in contexts dated to the Predynastic and Early Dynastic times in Buto (Köhler 1998: Pls. 23, 26), Elephantine (Kopp 2006: Pls. 19, 23), Tarkhan (Steinmann 1998: 16-17) and Abu Zaidan (Needler 1984: 222-223).

Fig. 30: Hemispherical bowl on a flat base, Cat. 7 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

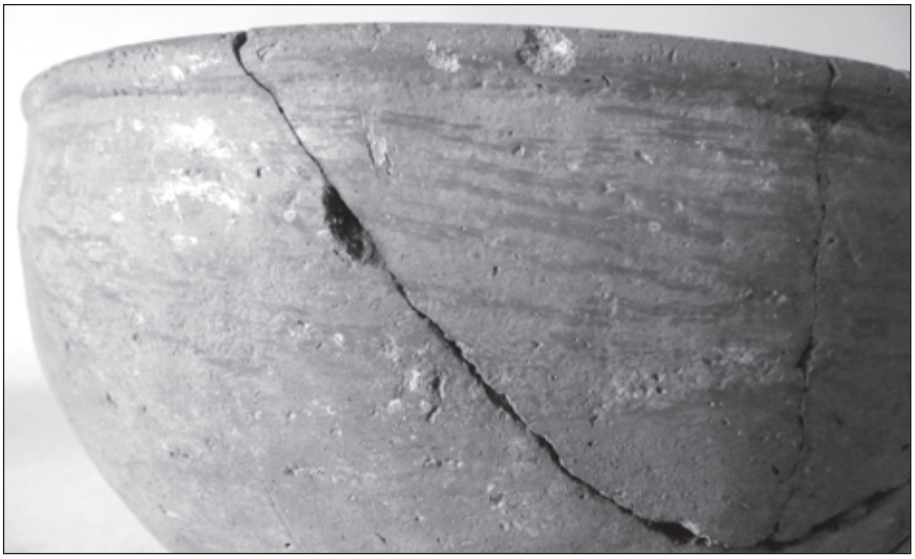


Fig. 31: Close-up of an exterior decorated with burnished horizontal motif, Cat. 7 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 32: Shallow plate with a burnished design on the interior, arranged perpendicularly to the rim, Cat. 9 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

Red Spilled Ware

The Red Slipped Ware is represented by one hemispherical bowl with a rounded rim on a round base (***Cat. 11***) (***Fig. 33***) which in terms of shape resembles the Half-polished Ware hemispherical bowls presented above. A further likeness can be seen with the bowls Cat. 4 and 8, as these examples also bear pot

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

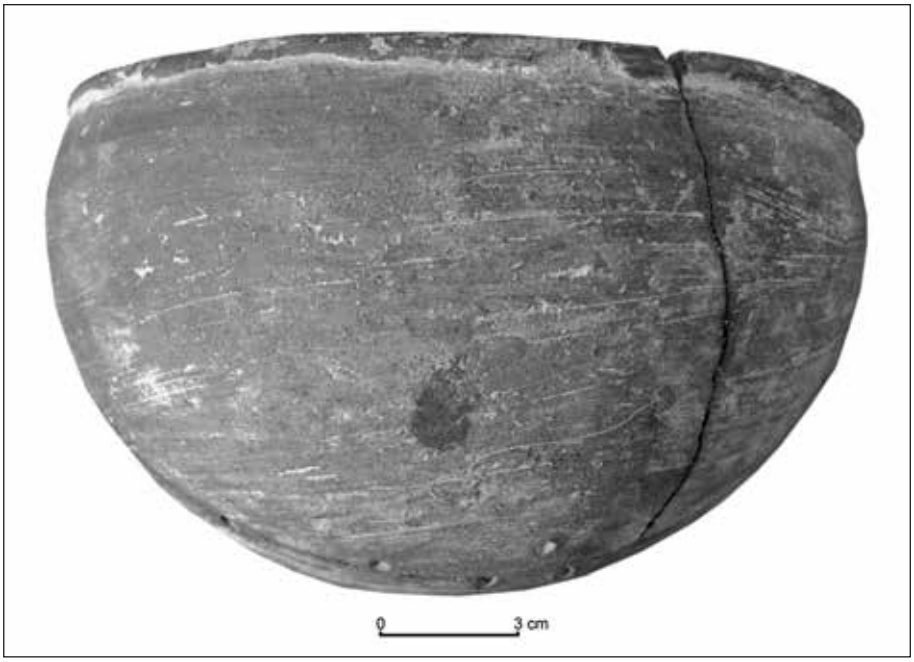
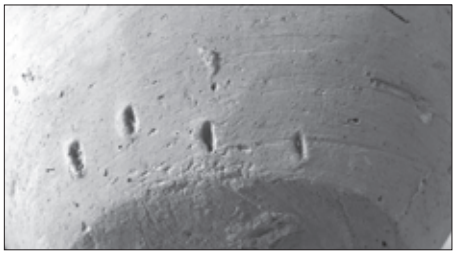
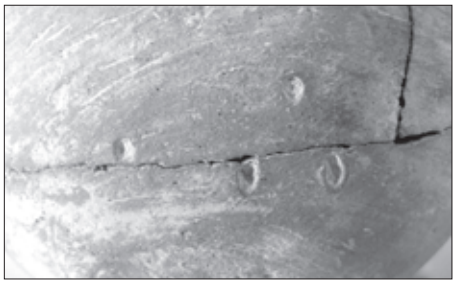


Fig. 33: Hemispherical bowl representing Red Slipped Ware, Cat. 11 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 34: Pot mark in the form of four short hashes, executed prior to firing, Cat. 11 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

marks in the form of four short hashes, executed prior to firing (***Figs. 34*** + ***37***). Although the meaning behind these signs is being studied and has yet to be understood, the fact that they are nearly identical and in both the instances placed in the same area on the vessel (directly by the base) is significant. It remains a question open to future research to answer whether these were 'brand' marks similar to signatures on porcelain, signs indicating the place for which they were destined, or perhaps a person for whom they had been made.

	Cat. 4
	Cat. 8
	Cat. 11

Tab.1: Pre-firing pot marks on Half-polished and Red Slipped Wares (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

Beer jars and ovoid jars

Apart from the vessels presented above, the museum collections also contained two handmade beer jars Cat. 12-13.

The first jar (***Cat. 12***) (***Fig. 35***) is fusiform with a narrowing rim. Its thick base was formed by hollowing and pinching, while the external shape was achieved through pressing by the hand, resulting in the asymmetrical shape of the jar (***Fig. 36***). This technique is evident from the grooves visible on the base. The body was made from coils, joined together by diagonal movement of the hand on the outside and vertical on the inside, creating an effect of diagonal, more or less regular grooves and protrusions on the surface of the jar.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 35: Early fusiform beer jar with a narrowing rim, Cat. 12 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

Fig. 36: Close-up of an early beer jar shaped by pressing the clay between the palms of the hands, Cat. 13 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

The second jar (***Cat. 13***) (***Fig. 37***) differs slightly from the first one in terms of the manufacturing technique, which resulted in a different shape of the vessel: wider and better-defined shoulders and a broader body. The base, just as thick as in the first example, is symmetrical. The body is shaped similarly to the first jar, from coils joined together in the same manner. An extra coil or slab was attached to the body to form the neck. The angular junction between the neck and the body is the feature which gives the vessel its distinctive shape. This is an early type of beer jar, a prototype of

Fig. 37: Early handmade beer jar; note the traces left by diagonal shaping of the body, Cat. 13 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

the characteristic Third and early Fourth Dynasty jars with a horizontal groove (German 'Halskragen') popular throughout Egypt: from Elephantine through Elkab to the Memphis necropolis. Based on a similar vessels from Naga el-Deir (Reisner: Figs. 28-31) and Elephantine (Raue 1999: 177) a Second–early Third Dynasty – date can be suggested for this presented example.

The last object from this collection is a medium-sized jar (***Cat. 14***) (***Fig. 38***) made from marl clay with a high content of limestone – most probably an early version of Marl C. It has a rounded, broad rim, concave neck and ovoid body. Its base was made by pinching, while the body was formed by coiling; the neck and rim were formed separately and attached to the rest of the vessel. The joint between the two parts can be seen in the form of a crease below the neck. Additionally, the jar has a pot mark in the shape of a loop with ends pointing downwards, made on the shoulders prior to firing (***Fig. 39***).

Based on the parallels from the Step Pyramid complex, the jar can be dated to the Third Dynasty (Firth/Quibell 1935: Pl. 102.21).

Despite the wealth of this collection and its significance for the reconstruction of the beginnings of the necropolis on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, the lack of provenance information considerably decreases its importance. Although it provides evidence for activity on the gebel as early as Naqada II, it does not provide any information on the localisation of the necropolis to this date.

Fig. 38: Medium-sized jar made by mixed technique with handmade base and wheel-turned body; the joint, in the form of a sharp edge, is visible on the shoulders, Cat. 14 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 39: Loop-shaped pot mark etched on the shoulders of a jar prior to firing, Cat. 14 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Pottery from excavations and surveys on the gebel

The impossibility of locating an early necropolis based on the pottery from museum collections has made this question one of the main goals of the team currently working on the gebel within the framework of the Asyut Project. Two strategies have been employed:

– selective sampling of ceramics retrieved during the current excavations
– purposive survey on the gebel, in particular its previously unexplored parts

Ceramic material collected during the current excavations contains occasional examples of the early pottery. These are primarily beer jar fragments, which are identical to those from the top of the gebel described below. Particularly noteworthy is a body sherd of a cylindrical vessel illustrating the so-called Black-topped Ware (***Cat. 15***) (***Fig. 40***). Regardless of its poor condition, which prevents a more precise identification of the form, the presence of pottery dated to Naqada I-IIa-b (Kaiser 1957: Pls. 21-22) provides strong evidence of the existence of an early necropolis somewhere on the gebel.

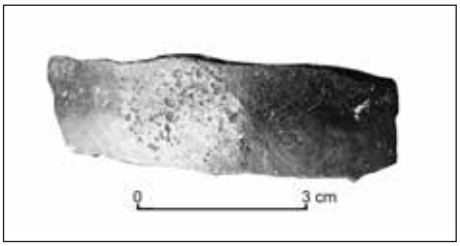


Fig. 40: Mid-section of cylindrical Black-topped vessel of Naqada II, Cat. 15 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2014).

The ceramic examples presented here come from redeposited/dump contexts and bear no association with the place of their original deposition e.g. the jar fragment was found in the courtyard of Tomb V and the Black-topped vessel in the courtyard of Tomb III. Nevertheless, the location of the fragments suggests that they originate from the upper regions or top of the gebel.

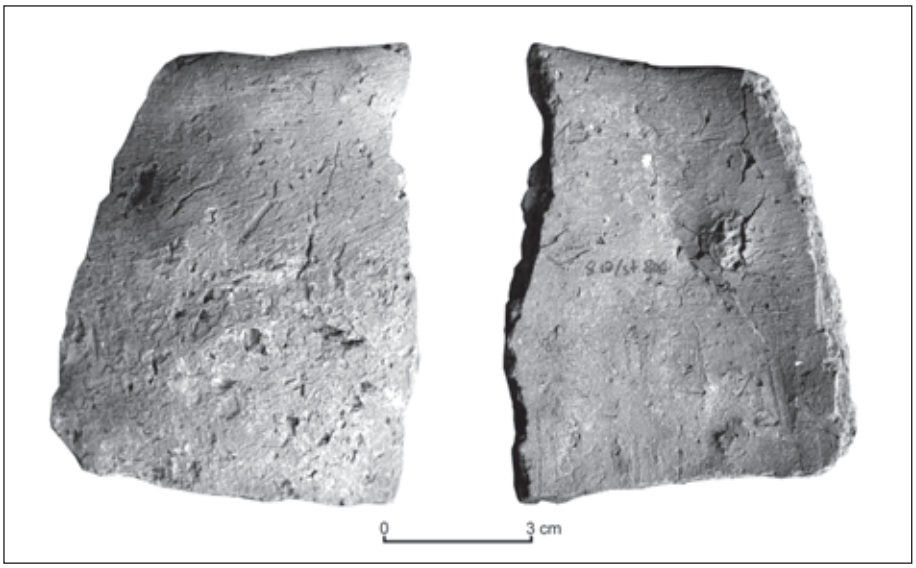


Fig. 41: Rim fragment of a Second Dynasty beer jar, one of many found in abundance on the top of the gebel, Cat. 17 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The ceramics collected during the survey on the gebel outnumber those from excavations or museums, but are less diverse and to date only three types of vessels have been observed. These are beer jar, carinated bowl, and large unidentified jars. Early Dynastic pottery was first identified during the fieldwork carried out on the top of the gebel between the years 2010 and 2012 (Rzeuska 2012a: 224), with the largest concentration recorded on the eastern edge of the hill, in the vicinity of two openings(?) cut in the bedrock – probably grave shafts of the early burials (Rzeuska 2014). If the shafts originally had any superstructures (which is very likely), they have vanished without a trace. This can be easily explained taking into account the high level of activity in this area, especially during the Late Roman period.

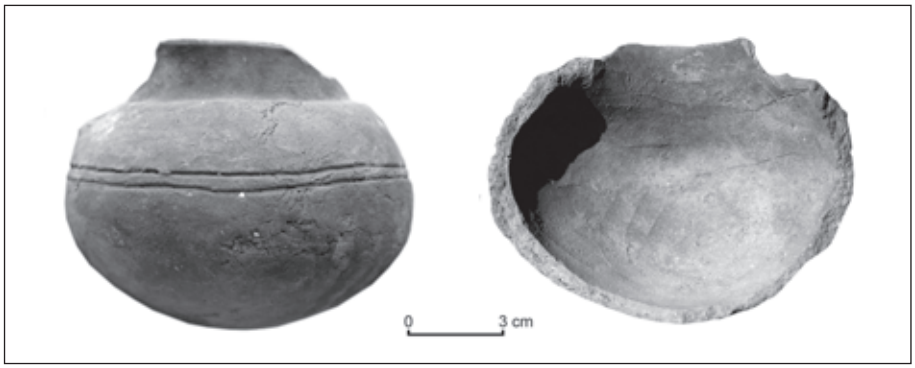


Fig. 42: Early, small carinated form, shaped by hand, the prototype of the Old Kingdom 'Meidum bowls'; note the ripple-marks on both the surfaces attesting to moulding technique in which the body was formed, Cat. 23 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

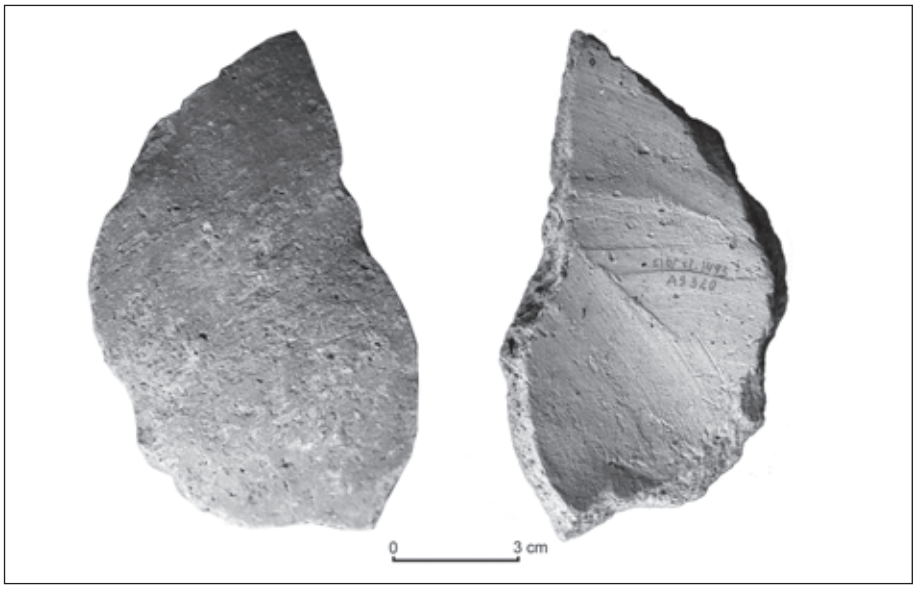


Fig. 43: Base fragment of a large jar shaped by hand, Cat. 24 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The first vessel type comprises handmade beer jars. The largest concentration of these vessels was situated by the grave shaft on the north-east edge of the top of the gebel. The jars are made from Nile silt C tempered with organic inclusions, sands and crushed limestone. All of the examples are characterised by thin walls, especially in comparison to the later beer jars. The majority were fired in reduced atmosphere. The dominant group of fragments are rims and upper parts of the jars (***Cat. 16-21***) (***Fig. 41***), while the pointy bases with a distinctive dip are rare (***Cat. 22***). Based on the paralells from Hierakonpolis (Raue 2007: 331), Abydos (Engel 1997: 28) and Elephantine (Raue 1999: 176-177), these beer jars could be dated to the late Second Dynasty.

The second type is represented by one fragment of a small bowl (***Cat. 23***) (***Fig. 42***), an early form of the carinated bowls which later evolved into the classic carinated – so-called – 'Meidum bowl' (see next chapter). The bowl, moulded from medium fine marl clay (similar to A1 in the Vienna System), has red slipped external and internal surfaces. Although vessels of identical shape are common on many Early Dynastic sites, e.g. Qau-Badari (Brunton 1927: Pl. 13), this displays two atypical elements: two horizontal grooves incised prior to firing, encompassing the body at its widest point and a small protrusion on the shoulders, resembling a mark where a spout was attached. Similar examples from Adaïma and Elkab suggest a Second Dynasty date for this object (Op de Beck 2004: 247-248).

The third type comprises a large jar of an as-yet unidentified form (***Cat. 24***) (***Fig. 43***). Its early date is evident from the manufacture technique: the jar is handmade, with characteristic traces left on the inside. Unfortunately, the fragmentary nature of this example prevents exact identification of the vessel type it belongs to.

Summary

To summarise, the presence of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic ceramics – especially those recovered during the current works – confirms the existence of an early necropolis on the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi from as early as Naqada II – if not Naqada I. The concentration of ceramics from these periods on the top of the hill strongly indicates that this is where the oldest necropolis is most likely located. The presence of such an early cemetery could confirm human habitation in the Asyut area as early as Naqada I or II. In regard to its potential location, the pottery found during the survey of the top of the gebel as well as the sampling suggests we should search for the earliest necropolis on the top of the gebel and its upper regions. It remains a task for future research to determine its exact location.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

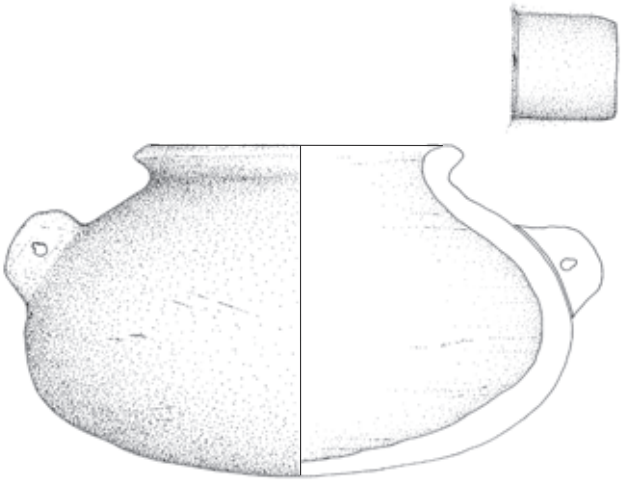
Catalogue

Cat. 1
Medium-sized ellipsoid jar with two handles
No.: MM 10980
Ac.: purchased by Gayer-Anderson in Asyut (old numbers E980, G-A14)
Clay: probably Marl clay A3, pink version
Technique: handmade by pinching
Surface treatment: red slipped on the outside, inside uncoated
Colour: outside 10R 4/4 weak red, inside 5YR 7/4 pink
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 9.8 cm; max body diam.: 16.3 cm; height: 9.8 cm
Preservation: complete, some fragments of the rim chipped off
Remarks: two handmade horizontal dummy handles attached to the belly

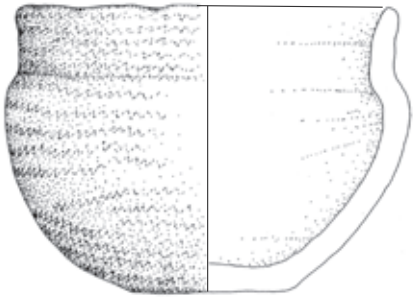
Cat. 2
Small bowl with straight neck, rounded belly and flat base
No.: T 9451
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: outside red slipped and burnished, inside red sipped
Colour: inside and outside 10R 5/8 red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 10.8 cm; max body diam.: 11.4 cm; base diam.: 4.5; height: 8.1 cm
Preservation: almost complete, 340° of the rim

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 1



Cat. 2



0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

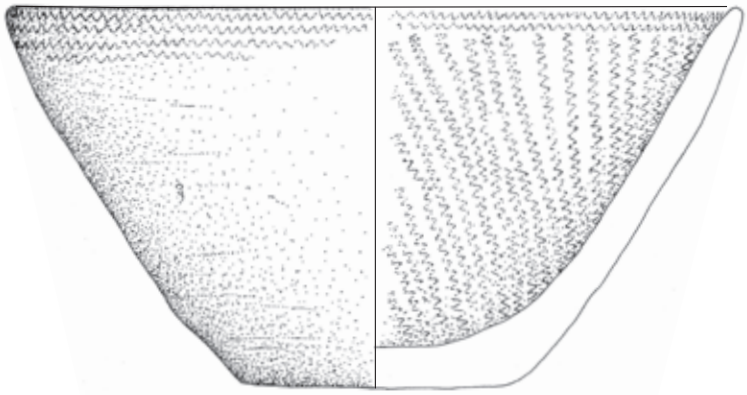
Cat. 3
Bowl with simple rim, flaring wall and flat base
No.: T 15445
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside red slipped and partially burnished
Colour: inside 10R 5/6 red, 4/3 weak red, outside 10R 5/6 red and 5/2 weak red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 18.8 cm; base diam.: 6.7 cm; height: 10.6 cm
Preservation: almost complete, 350° of the rim
Remarks: eroded surface

Cat. 4
Bowl with simple rim, slightly rounded body, and flat base
No.: T 14965
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside partially red slipped and burnished
Colour: inside 10R 5/8 red, outside 10R 6/6 light red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 20.4 cm; base diam.: 7 cm; height: 8.9 cm
Preservation: almost complete, 250° of the rim
Remarks: pre-firing pot mark

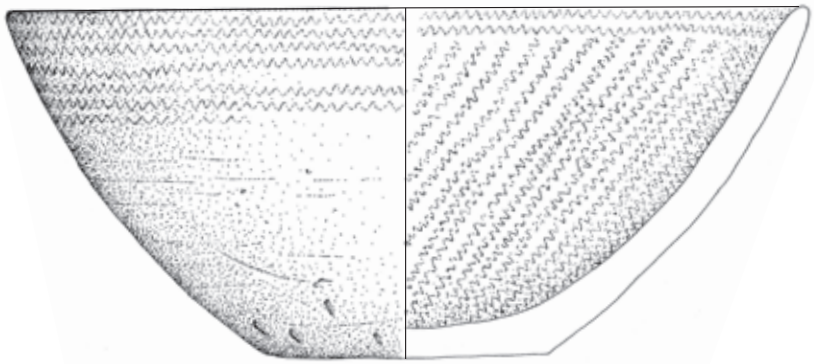
Cat. 5
Bowl with simple rim, flaring wall, and flat base
No.: T 15442
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside red slipped and partially burnished
Colour: inside 10R 6/4 pale red, outside 10R 6/6 light red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 21.4 cm; base diam.: 7.5 cm; pres. height: 10 cm
Preservation: complete

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

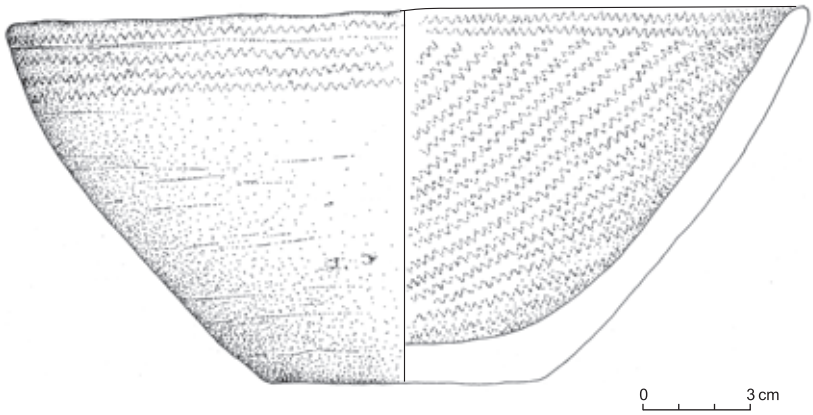
Cat. 3



Cat. 4



Cat. 5



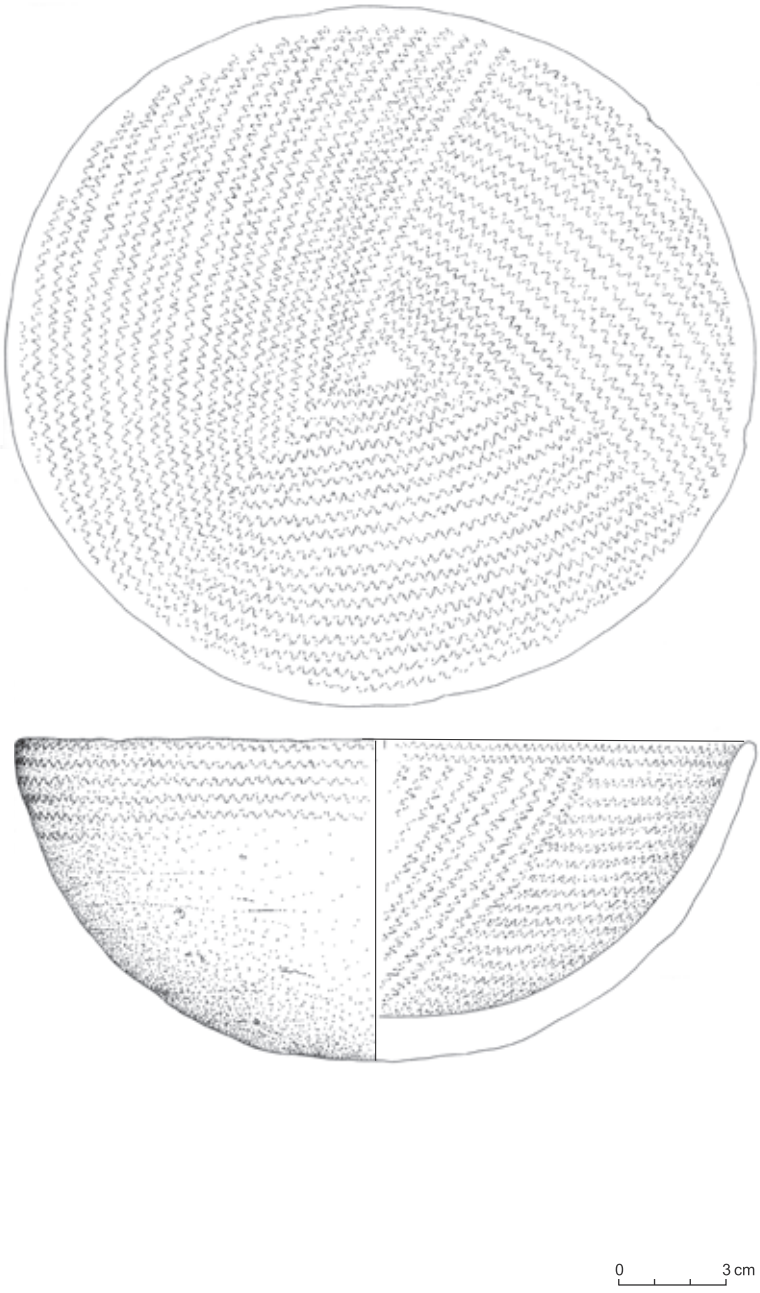
© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 6

Hemispherical bowl with rounded base
No.: T 14963
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: outside and inside red slipped and burnished
Colour: outside and inside 10R 5/6 red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 20.3 cm; max body diam.: 20.3 cm; height: 8.8 cm
Preservation: complete
Remarks: outer surface partially eroded

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 6



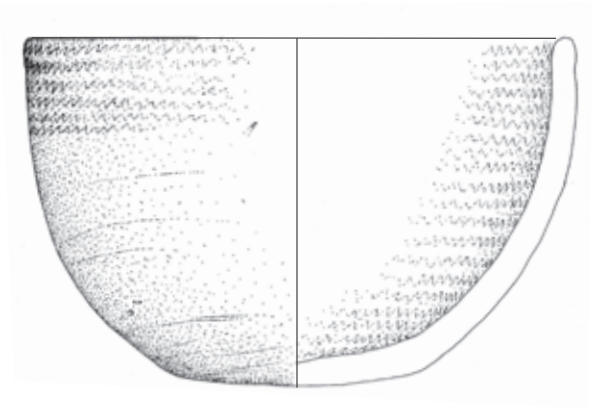
© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 7
Bowl with rounded rim, hemispherical belly, and flat base
No.: T 14964
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: outside and inside red slipped and burnished
Colour: 10R /6 red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 15.5 cm; height: 9.9 cm
Preservation: almost complete, 260° of the rim

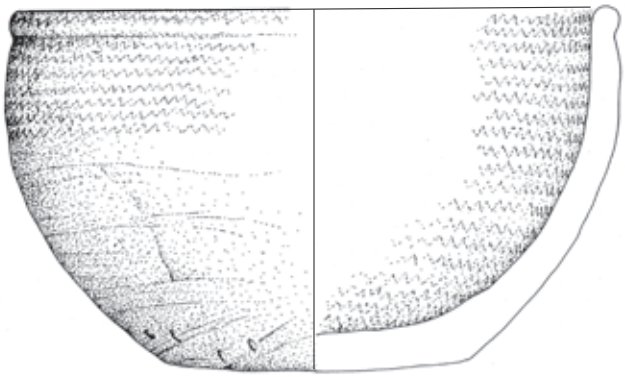
Cat. 8
Bowl with rounded rim, hemispherical belly, and flat base
No.: T 15573
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside red slipped and partially burnished
Colour: outside 10R 6/4-6 pale red-light red, inside 10R 5/8 red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 17.2 cm; base diam.: 8.6 cm; height: 10.4 cm
Preservation: complete
Remarks: pre-firing pot mark

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 7



Cat. 8



0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

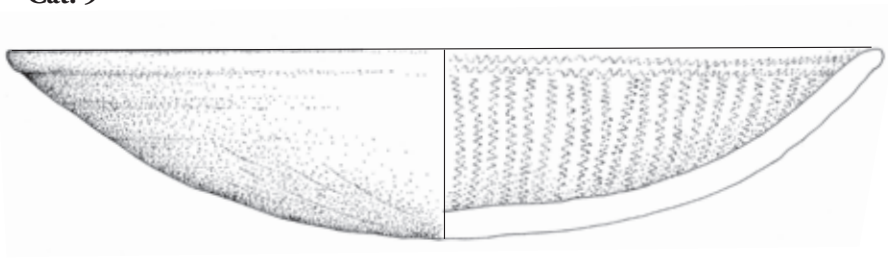
Cat. 9
Shallow plate with simple rim and rounded base
No.: T 15438
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside uncoated
Colour: inside 10R 6/4 pale red, inside 2.5YR 5/8 red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 25 cm; pres. height: 5.5 cm
Preservation: complete

Cat. 10
Shallow plate with simple rim and flat base
No.: T 15436
Clay: Nile B2 fine version
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside red slipped and burnished, outside not to establish
Colour: inside10R 5/6 red, outside eroded
Firing: oxidised with a thin core
Hardness: medium hard
Rim diam.: 24.3 cm; height: 4.9 cm
Preservation: reconstructed from sherds, complete

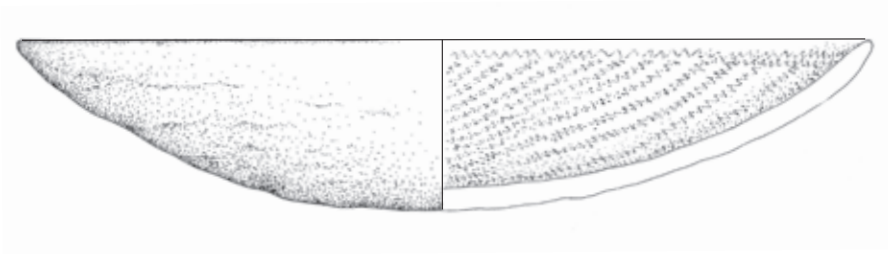
Cat. 11
Hemispherical bowl with rounded rim
No.: T 15574
Clay: Nile B1
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: inside and outside red slipped
Colour: inside 10R 6/4 pale red, outside 10R 6/4 weak red, 4/3 weak red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 13.1 cm; max body diam.: 13.3 cm; height: 7.9 cm
Preservation: almost complete, 350° of the rim
Remarks: pre-firing pot mark

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

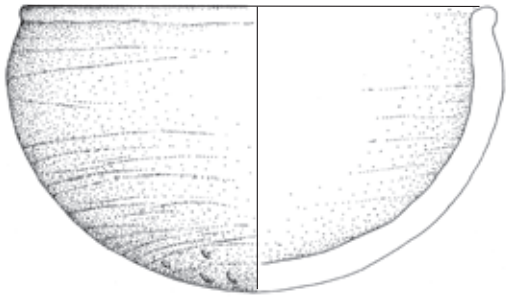
Cat. 9



Cat. 10



Cat. 11



0 3 cm

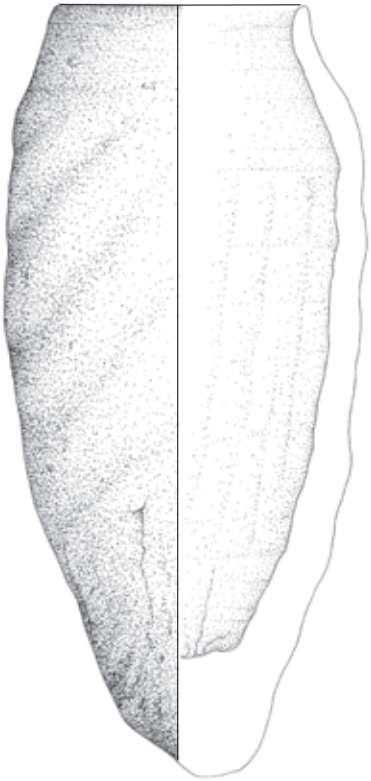
© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 12
Beer jar
No.: T 14961
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: 7.5YR 6/2 pinkish grey
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 9.6 cm; max body diam.: 13.8 cm; pres. height: 30.5 cm
Preservation: complete

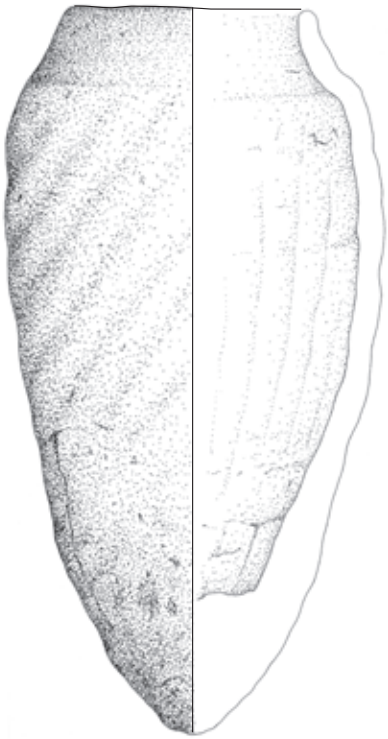
Cat. 13
Beer jar
No.: T 14967
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: 7.5YR 6-5/4-2 pinkish grey-brown, light brown
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 9.4 cm; max body diam.: 14.7 cm; height: 28.2 cm
Preservation: complete

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 12



Cat. 13



0 3 cm

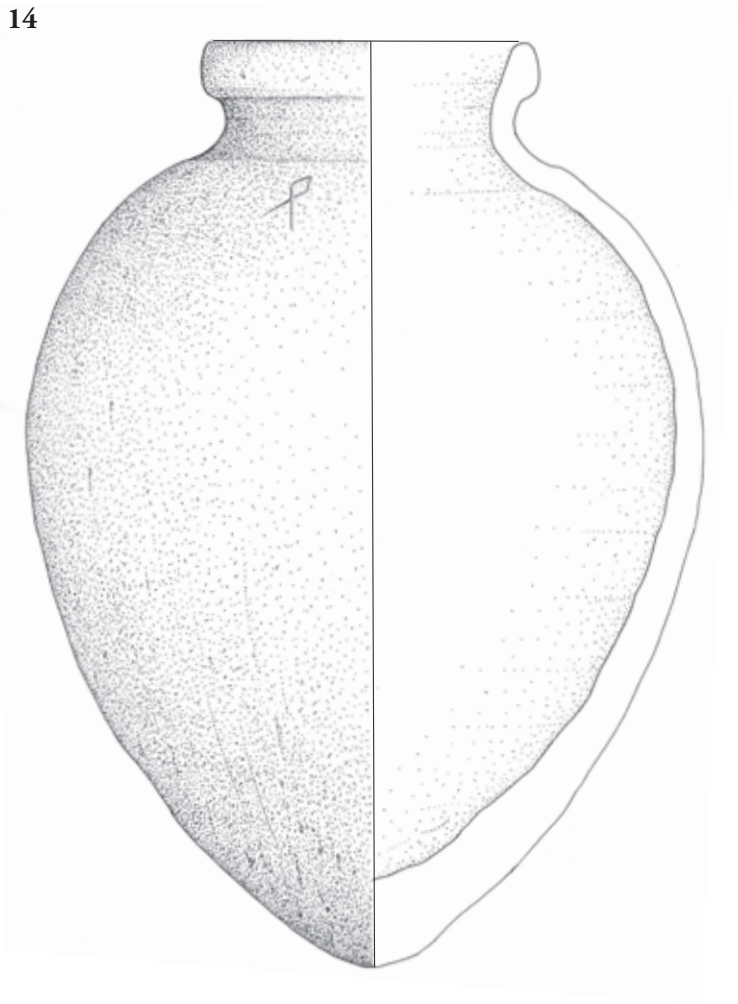
© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 14
Ovoid jar with modelled rim and pointed base
No.: T 15072
Clay: probably Marl C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: outside scum
Colour: 2.5YR 6/2 pale red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 9 cm; max body diam.: 18 cm; pres. height: 24.8 cm
Preservation: complete
Remarks: pre-firing pot mark

Cat. 15
Fragment of a small cylindrical vessel
No.: AS 1100
Ac.: S04/st2A
Clay: Nile A
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: red slipped and squarely burnished on the outside
Colour: outside 10R 5/4 weak red and black, inside black
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Max body diam.: 12.2 cm; pres. height: 2 cm
Preservation: body fragment

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 14



Cat. 15

0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

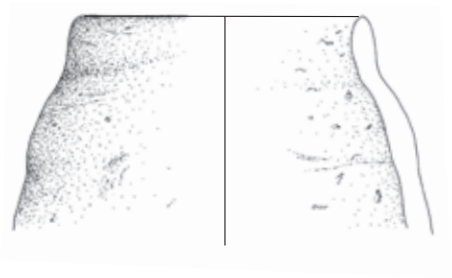
Cat. 16
Beer jar
No.: AS 130
Ac.: S04/st5A
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside 2.5YR 7/4 light reddish brown, inside 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 8.2 cm; pres. height: 6 cm
Preservation: 25° of the rim

Cat. 17
Beer jar
No.: AS 412
Ac.: S04/st70A
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside and inside 5YR 6/4 light reddish brown
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 10.4 cm; pres. height: 10.3 cm
Preservation: 80° of the rim

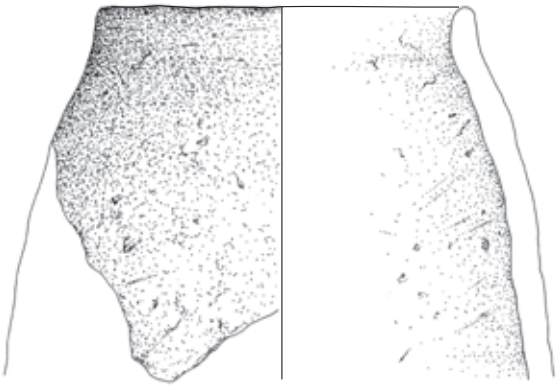
Cat. 18
Beer jar
No.: AS 413
Ac.: S10/st806
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside 7.5YR 6/3 light brown, inside 5YR 6/4 light brown
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 12.4 cm; pres. height: 10.9 cm
Preservation: 90° of the rim

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

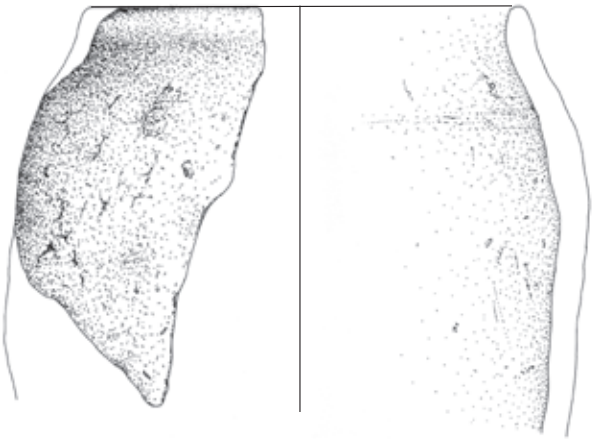
Cat. 16



Cat. 17



Cat. 18



0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

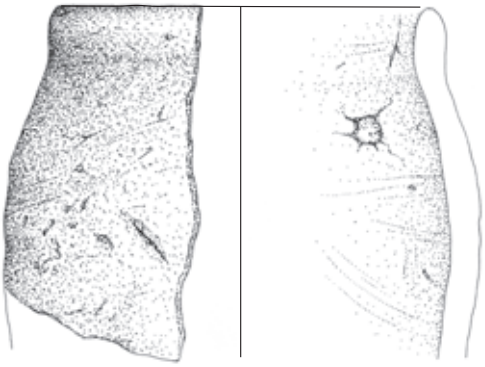
Cat. 19
Beer jar
No.: AS 417
Ac.: S10/st806
Clay: Nile silt C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside 5YR 5/6 yellowish red, inside 5YR 5/3 reddish brown
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 10.5 cm; pres. height: 9.5 cm
Preservation: 85° of the rim

Cat. 20
Beer jar
No.: AS 541
Ac.: S11/st707
Clay: Nile silt C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside 2.5YR 5/4 reddish brown, inside 2.5YR 5/4-3 reddish brown
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 10.7 cm; pres. height: 7.3 cm
Preservation: 66° of the rim

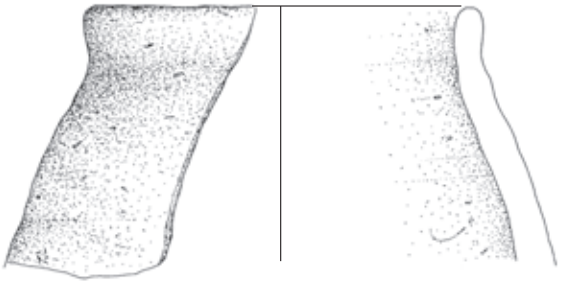
Cat. 21
Beer jar
No.: AS 542
Ac.: S11/st69
Clay: Nile C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: uncoated
Colour: outside and inside 2.5YR 6/4 light brown
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Rim diam.: 10.1 cm; pres. height: 6.8 cm
Preservation: 50° of the rim

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

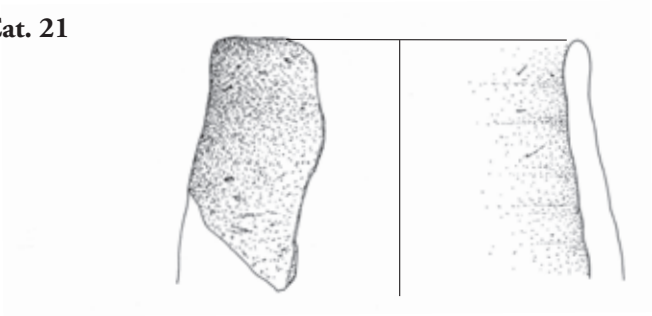
Cat. 19



Cat. 20



Cat. 21



0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

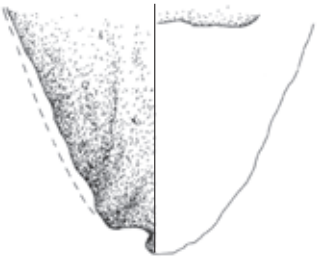
Cat. 22
Base of a beer jar
No.: AS 212
Ac.: S11/st603
Clay: Nile silt C
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment and colour: not to establish, eroded
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Pres. height: 7 cm
Preservation: complete bottom

Cat. 23
Carinated Meidum bowl with flaring neck
No.: AS 200
Ac.: S11/st601
Clay: Nile B1, sandy version
Technique: handmade by moulding
Surface treatment: outside red slipped, inside uncoated
Colour: outside 2.5YR 5/4 reddish brown, inside 5YR 56 yellowish red
Firing: oxidised
Hardness: medium hard
Max body diam.: 12 cm; pres. height: 8.9 cm
Preservation: half of the body
Remarks: traces of spout in the middle of the body

Cat. 24
Base fragment of a large jar
No.: AS 320
Ac.: S10/st1493
Clay: Nile B2
Technique: handmade
Surface treatment: outside red slipped, inside uncoated
Colour: outside 2.5YR 5/4 light reddish brown, inside 2.5YR 6/4 reddish brown
Firing: reduced
Hardness: hard
Body diam.: 24.1 cm; pres. height: 7.3 cm
Preservation: base fragment

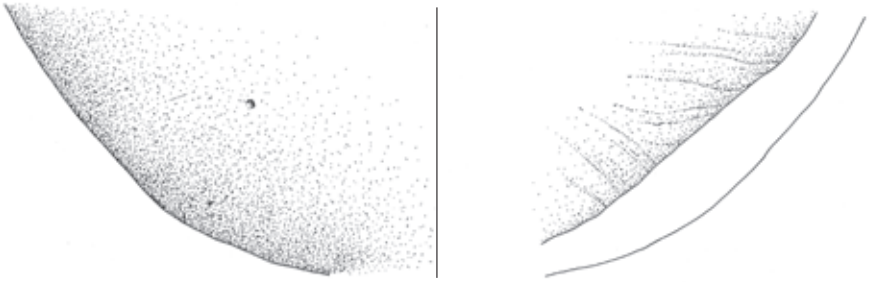
© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Cat. 22



Cat. 23

Cat. 24



0 3 cm

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Chapter Three
The resurrected necropolis of the Old Kingdom

Despite the fact that written sources referring to the Old Kingdom Asyut are infrequent, tombs dated to this period discovered during recent works by the Asyut Project leave no doubt that the gebel was used as a burial ground during the Old Kingdom (Kahl 2007b: 72; Kahl 2012: 9-11). Although the current excavations at Asyut rarely produce Old Kingdom pottery (Rzeuska 2011a; Kilian 2015), the rich museum collections contain many high quality examples of Old Kingdom ceramics from Asyut, filling the gaps. Both assemblages – from the site and museums – sufficiently complement each other in terms of chronology and typology, therefore a few tentative observations can be made.

The pottery in question displays a great variety of forms: all sizes and shapes of storage jars including beer jars, tableware (bowls and plates), vessels used for food preparation: (bread moulds) as well as non-containers (stands). Apart from a few exceptions, all of the objects are made from Nile silt. A handful of vessels are executed in mixed clay, which the author has classified as Mixed clay P.60 at Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 42-44; Rzeuska 2009). Notably, there are no examples of ceramics made from marl clays, neither Marl C from the Memphis – Fayum region, nor the Upper Egyptian Marl A. Therefore, the majority of the vessels seem to be local products, though a number of ceramics from a different region (most likely Memphis) have been observed (see below).

The Old Kingdom pottery is presented following a division into three chronological groups:

1. Early Old Kingdom (*c.* Third–Fourth Dynasty)
2. Late Old Kingdom (*c.* Fifth–Sixth Dynasty)
3. Terminal Old Kingdom (*c.* Eighth Dynasty–beginning of the First Intermediate Period)

To start with, it must be stressed that such division – though certainly reflective of the evolution of the pottery analysed – is artificial. Seldom does the chronology of ceramics reflect the rigid chronology of dynasties. Hence, certain pottery types can be dated to periods falling in between the dynasties, e.g. late Fourth–early Fifth Dynasty, and theoretically can belong to two phases. Nevertheless, the objects had to be assigned to only one phase for ease of presentation.

Early Old Kingdom

Ceramics of the early Old Kingdom retrieved from the excavations are infrequent and comprise predominantly small fragments, usually re-deposited within the

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

later contexts. The only exception are those which were concentrated largely in the upper parts of the gebel – which suggests that the early Old Kingdom necropolis may have been located in this area – a hypothesis yet to be confirmed.

Beer jars represent the most numerous vessel type in this material: handmade from highly tempered Nile C fabric with untreated surfaces. A beer jar from Turin (***Cat. 25***) (***Fig. 44***) provides a perfect example. The vessel was made, as in the Early Dynastic Period, from three parts: base, middle part, and shoulders with rim. In the early Old Kingdom, however, the manufacturing technique was differed slightly from the one used earlier. Here the base was made using a method known as 'hollowing and pinching': held by the potter in one hand and shaped by circular motion of the fingers of the other hand. Thanks to this method the interior bears grooves resembling wheel marks. Additionally, the 'new' type of base is thinner and more symmetrical than its predecessor – a result of losing the characteristic asymmetrically twisted 'tail'. The middle part of the jar was made, similarly to the earlier examples, using coiling technique. The separate coils were subsequently joined applying vertical strokes from the inside and diagonal from the outside, which is evident from the clear marks/hollows on the surface. The 'diagonal' forming of the outer surface was very rare amongst the late Old Kingdom beer jars. The third part of the vessel, shoulders with rim, was most probably made in one slab judging by the presence of horizontal marks on the inside and outside of the jar.

Similar examples are found from many sites, e.g. Giza (Hawass/Senussi 2008: 104, no. 6), Meidum (Pertrie 1892: 18, Pl. XXI.15), and El Kab, where they have been dated to the early Fourth Dynasty or, in the case of the latter site, the Second to early Fourth Dynasty (Op de Beck 2009: 55, no. 38/4). In addition, vessels with bases similarly shaped inside, but with slightly differently formed upper parts, have been found at El Tarif in Thebes (Eggebrecht 1974: Taf. 50b).

The gebel area yielded similar jar fragments (***Cat. 26***), but particular attention should also be paid to the early Old Kingdom beer jars which are a slightly different shape: with more rounded body compared to with the fusiform example (***Cat. 25***, ***27-28***) (***Fig. 45***).

Whereas the outer form of the two vessels is alike, the insides of the bases are different, clearly pointing to different variants of the 'hollowing and pinching' technique applied. The first vessel (***Cat. 27***) has visibly more slender proportions and a less rounded body. The inside of its base is rounded and its walls become gradually thinner upwards. Reading from the marks left on the vessel, it appears the potter would hold a lump of clay in one hand using the fingers of the other to form a roughly hemispherical shape on the inside of the base, applying circular motion. The second vessel (***Cat. 28***) on the contrary, displays a clearly distinguished flat base and a form resembling a truncated upside down cone. It seems the potter would hold a lump of clay in one hand, while using the thumb of the other to open it; subsequently, keeping the thumb inside the lump and the other fingers on the outside, the potter would shape the inside of the base with circular motion of the thumb. The increasing thickness of the walls results exactly from the position in which the potter would place his thumb. It is not certain whether these two different variants of the 'hollowing and pinching'

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

relate to differences in dating for the particular types, though it is highly likely. The distinct shaping methods are certainly reflected in the shapes of the vessels: the first one being more ovoid, the second more rounded. It must be mentioned that the drawings of this type of vessels in older publications tend to be very schematic and do not include any details which could make the identification of the shaping technique applied possible – preventing the identification of this vessel type. Parallel examples, dated to the Fourth Dynasty, are known from, e.g. Giza (Kromer 1978: Pl. 19, 4-5), Dahshur (Alexanian 1999: 137, M64), and El Tarif in Thebes (Arnold Di. 1974: Pl. 43a).

Open forms are represented by small fragments of carinated (so-called 'Meidum') bowls and bowls with an inner ledge. The carinated bowls – a distinctive tableware form of the Old Kingdom found throughout Egypt (Op de Beck 2004) – constitute a diverse pottery group. Vessels of various shapes are found in this group: with sharp or gentle carination, made from marl clay (***Cat. 29***), as well as fine Nile silt, (***Cat. 30-31***). However, the one feature they have in common is the location of the maximum diameter at the shoulders, resulting in a characteristic, slightly 'spherical' appearance.

Fig. 44: Beer jar from the early Old Kingdom; note the diagonal shaping of the upper part of the body, Cat. 25 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 45: Fragmentarily preserved beer jar from the early Old Kingdom, Cat. 27 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2011).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The bowls with an inner ledge (***Cat. 32***) may have also been used as lids for conical bread moulds (Raue 1999: 183; Moeller 2003). And, indeed, the ledge is a perfect fit to the inside of the mould, covering it tightly. Paralells are found from early Old Kingdom sites throughout Egypt, e.g. Abu Rowash (Moeller 2003), Giza (Wodzińska 2009; Hawass/Senussi 2008: 243; Wodzińska 2009: 210), Dahshur (Alexanian 1999: 144-147; Köpp 2009: 65), El-Kab (Op de Beck 2009: 67).

Late Old Kingdom

The late Old Kingdom pottery is markedly more numerous than that of the preceding period – a picture reflected both in the museum collections and ceramic material retrieved in the course of excavations. However, the provenance of the majority of the ceramics stored in the museums is difficult or altogether impossible to ascertain. Although numbers assigned to some of the tombs are known, it is not possible to link objects to specific tombs for several reasons. Firstly, every subsequent mission that worked at Asyut introduced its own numbering system for newly discovered tombs, at the same time leaving only a brief description of their location in the area of the gebel. Secondly, the landscape of the area has undergone significant changes during the last hundred years and many of the tombs have become inaccessible, buried under the constantly shifting downhill rock debris. The location of ceramics from the current excavations allows for a conclusion that the necropolis of the late as well as the early Old Kingdom was also situated in the upper part of the gebel.

The assemblage is rich and varied in terms of shape and surface treatment, though strikingly uniform when it comes to fabric: the majority of vessels are made from different types of Nile silts.

Fine (=Residential) Ware (***Pl. 1***)

Particular attention should be given to a group of excellent quality vessels made from very fine Nile silt A or Nile B1, with a characteristic orange, light red and red, shiny (though not polished), surface. It is likely that the term Fine (Residential) Ware, at least to a certain extent, overlaps in meaning with Meidum Ware, which appears in the literature and is unspecified, but is certainly very useful. The surface treatment of these ceramics does not display characteristics of a typical slip – it does not form a clearly distinct layer, but instead appears to be an integral part of the vessel, a kind of 'self-slip'. The vessels of Residential Ware appeared already in the early Old Kingdom, but have yet to be identified in the material from Asyut.

It is especially noticeable when analysing sherd break under x20 magnification. The actual methods used to achieve this effect remain a mystery, though the excellent quality of the vessels, resembling that of luxury ceramics of the Roman times, is simply astonishing.

The technological difference between such 'self-slip' of Fine (=Residental) Ware and a more typical red slip is not entirely understood: perhaps the ingredients or firing were differently, e.g. at a higher temperature. Whatever the answer, these two kinds of slip differ so clearly that it is simply impossible to treat them

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

as one and the same group. 'Self-slipped' vessels of such high standard are rarely found even from the necropolis in Memphis – though they appear to be a product of the residential (capital) pottery workshops.[1] They tend to be associated with tombs of higher class individuals, e.g. of Vizier Merefnebef at Saqqara (Rzeuska 2001b: 31-32), despite the fact that (almost) the only ceramics representing Red Slipped Ware (discussed below) were present in the adjacent tombs.

All vessels in the Residential Ware are wheel-turned, with the lower parts of the body and base (though carefully smoothed over) showing signs of shaping with a tool, e.g. knife or spatula.

This group is represented by three objects: a perfectly spherical jar with a short and widening rim (***Cat. 33***), a round jar with a straight broad neck and long spout (***Cat. 34***) (***Fig. 46***), and a *ḥs* vase (***Cat. 35***). The second example is particularly interesting, the spouted jar, which is a part of a washing set – a typical element of funerary goods. Such sets usually consisted of a wide conical bowl with a flat base (***Cat. 52***) called *šʿwtj,* used as a container for sand and an ewer, sometimes spouted like the presented object, called *ḥzmnj*, which suggests it was used for storage of natron solution (Balcz 1932: 95-98; Bourriau 1981a: 52). Similar sets are found at different necropoleis throughout Egypt, a good example is from Giza (Allen 1999: 419).

A comparative example to the *ḥzmnj* vessel – similar in terms of shape, but made from much poorer quality fabric and with less careful surface treatment – has been found in Giza. It has been dated to the late Fourth Dynasty (Wodzińska 2010: 284, Pl. 18, AB 35).

The presence of the *ḥs* vase in the material from Asyut is fairly surprising, given that this form is extremely rare amongst the Old Kingdom ceramics from necropoleis.

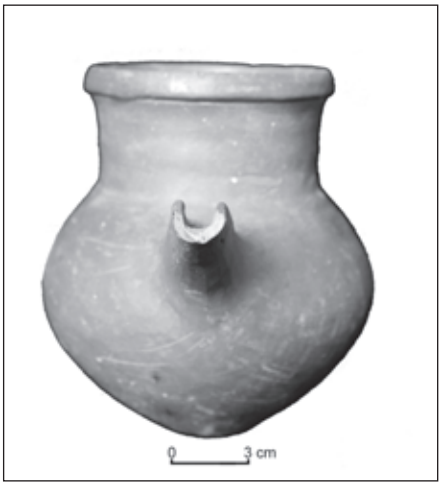


Fig. 46: *Ḥzmnj* jar with a long spout, representing the high-quality Fine (Residential) Ware, Cat. 34 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

In addition to the group presented above, there is one other example of a possible 'residential' vessel: a partially preserved miniscule juglet with wide shoulders (***Cat. 36***). Although its exterior has been completely abraded, the inside of the rim still bears traces of the distinctive 'self-slip', which shows the same quality and coloration as in the objects described above. Parallels, dated to the Fourth–Fifth Dynasty, are known from Giza (Reisner 1955: 73, Figs. 93, 34; Meisterwerke 1978: 122-125, no. 145) and Qau-Badari (Brunton 1928: Pl. LXXXI, 88P and R).

1 Verbal information from Stephanie Vereecken, ceramicist from the Dayr al-Barsha Project (Egyptology Department at Leuven University, Belgium); I would like to thank her for the discussion and sharing her ideas on Residential Ware.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

The open-form category is represented by just two bowls. 'Meidum bowl' with a gently rounded carination and a narrowing, rolled rim (***Cat. 37***). Parallels for this bowl have been found from stratigraphically secure contexts dated to the Sixth Dynasty in Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 298-299). The other vessel is most likely a spouted bowl, sometimes called 'libation bowl' or 'libation dish'. The spout, which has not survived, would have been placed immediately below the rim, thus explaining the distinct inwardly rolled upper part of the vessel. With this shape of the rim, it is practically impossible to pour liquid out of the bowl without a spout. A similar vessel, dated to the Sixth Dynasty, has been found in Abydos (Bourriau 1981a: 53).

The last object worth mentioning is a fragment of a tall cylindrical stand, of which only the middle part has been preserved (***Cat. 38***). So far, no parallel examples have been found.

The dating of these ceramics is difficult: excluding the 'Meidum bowls', there are no close parallels and, furthermore, such precious high-quality vessels like those of the Residential Ware may have been in use over a long period of time. However, taking into consideration the comparative examples, the shape of the vessels, their surface treatment and manufacturing techniques, it can be suggested that both the jars – spherical and spouted – come from the late Fourth–early-mid Fifth Dynasty. The 'Meidum bowl', in turn, can be dated to the late Fifth–early Sixth Dynasty – though a slightly later phase cannot be excluded.

The presence of the Residential Ware on the gebel in Asyut may indicate that tombs of high state officials and aristocrats of the Old Kingdom Fifth and Sixth Dynasties were situated in this area and if they have not been destroyed by the quarrying, they might still be waiting to be discovered.

Red Slipped Ware (***Pl. 2***)

Vessels classified as Red Slipped Ware constitute a distinct ceramic group also of good quality, though certainly not equal to the Residential Ware. This is a typologically diverse assemblage and similarly to the Fine Ware, the vessels are made from Nile silts, primarily B1 and less often B2. The group comprises small juglets, for example, a conical one with a flaring rim, angular shoulders and concave base (***Cat. 39***) (***Fig. 47***) and medium-sized biconical jars with broad shoulder (***Cat. 40***) (***Fig. 48***). For the former vessel, perfect, identically shaped parallels were found at Qau-Badari, where they have been described as polished and dated to the Fourth–Fifth Dynasty (Brunton 1928: Pl. LXXXI, 88D, E).The biconical jars appear to have been a popular form, for which parallels were also found at Qau-Badari (Brunton 1928: Pl. LXXXI 80L and P). Additionally, another similar example, though of unknown provenance, has been dated slightly earlier i.e. to the Fourth Dynasty (Meisterwerke 1978: 122-125, no. 144). Also worth mentioning is a globular juglet with a long cylindrical neck (***Cat. 41***) (***Fig. 49***). Amongst the medium-sized jars, the one that should be mentioned is a partially preserved ovoid jar with a flaring rim (***Cat. 42***) (***Fig. 50***).

A biconical jar with a round base is yet another form popular during this period (***Cat. 43***) (***Fig.51***). The method used for shaping the base of this form

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

of vessel is of particular interest. The lower part of its body has been trimmed to the desired shape with a tool and the traces left by this procedure in the form of diagonal scrape marks are still visible, though only at the level where the body reaches its maximum diameter and slightly below this point. The trimming marks on the lower part of the body were subsequently smoothed over by hand. At this

Fig. 47: Small red slipped conical vessel dated to the late Old Kingdom, with a characteristic slightly convex base, Cat. 39 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

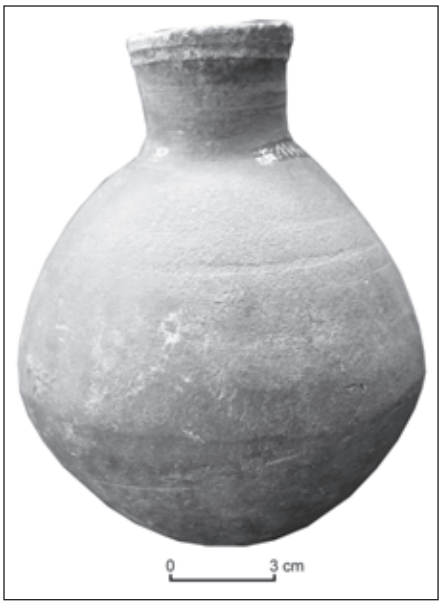


Fig. 49: Small globular red slipped juglet with a long cylindrical neck, Cat. 41 (© Musée du Louvre; Rzeuska 2012).

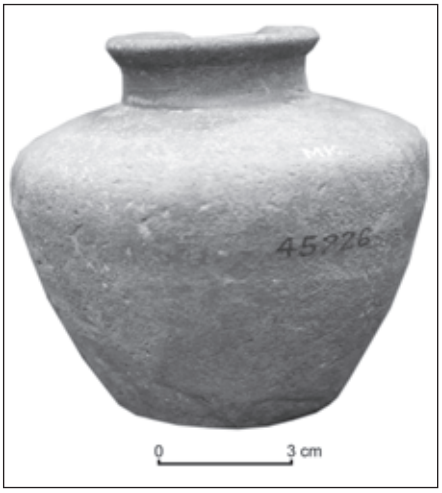


Fig. 48: Biconical red slipped vessel with broad shoulders, Cat. 40 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 50: Fragment of red slipped ovoid jar with a flaring rim, Cat. 42 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

stage, the vessel would be placed standing upside down on the rim and so the evening out of its shape by circular motion would start at the body and finish at the base. This, in turn, resulted in a spiral-like feature on the base, characteristic for vessels overthrown on the wheel – a much later shaping method, known from the Second Intermediate Period.

Red Slipped Ware also includes: the *ḥs* vases (***Cat. 44***) (***Fig. 52***) – of nearly identical shape and proportion to the aforementioned vessel categorised as Residential Ware. Also medium (***Cat. 45***) (***Fig. 53***) and large-sized ovoid jars (***Cat. 46***) (***Fig. 54***). As mentioned above, this type of jar (*ḥs* vases) is practically absent from the Memphis necropolis, but commonly appears in Middle and Upper Egypt. Similar *ḥs* vases have been found in, e.g. Sedment (Petrie/Brunton 1924: Pl. XXXIV, type 84), Akhmim (Hope 2006: Fig. 8, Pl. 3d), Qau-Badari (Brunton 1928: Pl. LXXXVIII, type 95), and Dendera (Petrie 1900: Pl. XVI,

Fig. 51: Medium-sized biconical jar of the late Old Kingdom, with the base treated in such manner that it appears to be wheel-turned, Cat. 43 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 52: Ritual *ḥs* vase from the late Old Kingdom, Cat. 44 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 53: Medium-sized red slipped ovoid jar with sooted outer surface, Cat. 45 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2014).

Fig. 54: Large-sized red slipped ovoid jar, with the greater part of the surface left without slip, Cat. 46 (© Musée du Louvre; Rzeuska 2012).

30). The possibility that such vessels are of Upper Egyptian origin cannot be ruled out and it may also be that in this area they were adopted sooner than in the North.

Fig. 55: Unique miniature 'Meidum bowl', Cat. 47 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 56: Red slipped bowl called *Šʿwtj*, Cat. 52 (© Medelvasmuseet; Rzeuska 2014).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Unlike the closed forms of red slipped wares, the open shapes are not as varied in terms of shape. The one certainly noteworthy object is a unique miniature 'Meidum bowl' (***Cat. 47***), without any known parallels (***Fig. 55***). Strikingly, its proportions are exactly the same as in the 'regular' sized vessels. In regards to bowls of 'regular' size, the assemblage includes, amongst others, 'Meidum bowls' (***Cat. 44-49***), bowls with a bent profile (***Cat. 50***), and with a rim rolled inward (***Cat. 51***). Their parallels have been found from a vast number of sites, e.g. Giza, Saqqara (Reisner 1955; Op de Beck 2004; Rzeuska 2006).

Another interesting object is a complete bowl (***Cat. 52***) (***Fig. 56***) called *šʿwtj*, used as a container for sand; together with an ewer (e.g. ***Cat. 34***), it formed a cosmetic set used for ablutions during offering rituals. Ceramic sets of this kind were a common element of grave good assemblages during the Old Kingdom.

All of the vessels are wheel-turned and red slipped – in the case of the open forms both inside and outside, while the closed forms only on the external surfaces. Although the slip is applied well, its quality simply cannot be compared to the excellent quality of that used in Residental Ware. Quite often it appears rubbed off, as seen on a large

Fig. 57: Lower part of the high pot stand, probably X-shaped, Cat. 53 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 58: X-shaped red slippedhigh pot stand, Cat. 54 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

jar (***Cat. 46***), or separated from the surface in the form of scales/flakes, revealing the original surface, as seen on the *ḥs* jar (***Cat. 44***).

The last category of objects representing Red Slipped Ware typical for the Old Kingdom necropoleis are stands, which in terms of typology are not overly diverse during this period. The shapes identified include slender X-shaped objects (***Cat. 53-54***) (***Figs. 57-58***), occasionally decorated with two or three cut-out triangles (***Cat. 55***) (***Fig. 59***), and small A-shaped stands (***Cat. 56***) (***Fig. 60***). Vessels representing this type are known from many

Fig. 59: Small cylindrical pot stand with two cut-out triangles, Cat. 55 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 60: Small A-shaped pot stand, Cat. 56 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 61: Stand fragment with a rare cut-out decoration in the form of circles and rectangles, Cat. 57 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

sites, e.g. Giza (Reisner 1955: Figs. 129-130) and Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 346-351). Of particular interest is a body sherd of a stand, decorated with cut-out circles and most probably rectangles – only one corner survives, which makes identification impossible. Unlike the stands with a few cut-out triangles, this one was most probably entirely decorated with openwork (***Cat. 57***) (***Figs. 61-62***). Stands with such exquisite ornamentation are extremely rare from the Old Kingdom and apart from the Asyut example, only two more are known, both from Dendera (Petrie 1900: Pl. XVI, nos. 28, 100), although in the case of the two parallels, the cut-out pattern is limited exclusively to triangles.

Excluding the unique miniature bowl, the majority of objects have known parallels from across Egypt, e.g. from the necropolis at Memphis and Middle and Upper Egypt.

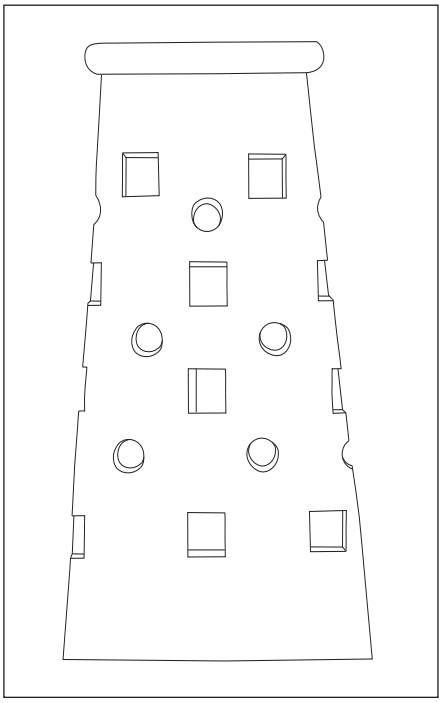


Fig. 62: Reconstruction of a stand, based on a fragment from Asyut, Cat. 57 (J. Iwaszczuk).

Probable imports from the Memphis area (***Pl. 2a***)

As already mentioned, the overwhelming majority of vessels are made from Nile silts and the only other fabric identified from this period is mixed clay. The author classified this clay in the Old Kingdom material retrieved from Saqqara as P.60. Despite the location of the sources of raw mixed clays having yet to be ascertained, the presence of large amounts of mixed clay ceramics and their varied shapes (closed and open forms, miniatures, and stands) recorded at Saqqara speak volumes (Rzeuska 2009: 142). Based on these facts, a hypothesis that pottery workshops manufacturing mixed clay vessels during the Old Kingdom were most likely located in the Memphis region can be formed. Nevertheless, such ceramics – or to be exact, selected closed forms – would be distributed throughout Egypt (Rzeuska 2009).

One of the distinctive vessels of this group from Asyut is a wide-mouthed, large, slender jar with a spindle-shaped body and a most often flat (occasionally pointed) base, which has been classified at Saqqara as Form 15 (Rzeuska 2006: 116-117, 389-390). Although such vessels are not overly common for the Memphis necropolis, their presence is noticeable, e.g. at Giza (Junker 1953: 117-118, Fig. 54). There are examples made from the Mixed clay P.60 alongside those made from Nile silt (***Fig. 63***). The Asyut vessel, made from Nile silt, is slightly different (in terms of shape) to the objects in the Memphis region: its rim is triangular and it has a 'collar' in the lower part of the neck.

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Fig. 63: Slender jar with spindle body and flat base, probably import from Memphite area, Cat. 58 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2014).

Fig. 64: Medium-sized jar from Mixed clay P.60, most likely an import from the Memphis region, Cat. 60 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

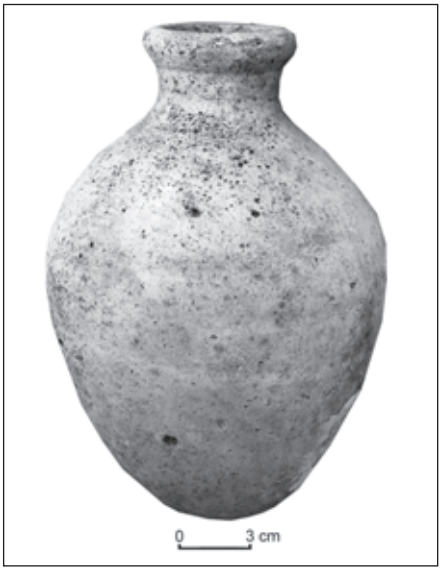


Fig. 65: Ovoid jar with made of Mixed clay P.60, probably import from Memphis area, Cat. 59 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2014).

Fig. 66: Large jar from Mixed clay P.60, a probable import from the Memphis region, Cat. 61 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

A perfect example of these imports comes in the form of medium-sized jugs with an ovoid body (***Cat. 59-60***) (***Figs. 64-65***), classified at Saqqara as Form 22 (Rzeuska 2006: 132-135, 393-394). Vessels identical to this object, displaying characteristics of the same workshop or even of the same 'hand', have been found from several sites of the Old Kingdom: Giza, Saqqara, Dahshur, Meidum, Qau-Badari, and Edfu (Rzeuska 2009: Pls. XI, XIII). It can be said without a doubt that the jars from Asyut are products of the same workshop. Vessels of this type are dated to the first half of the Sixth Dynasty.

Another object made from mixed clay, which also seems to be imported, is a large jar (***Cat. 61***) (***Fig. 66***), which represents a shape resembling Saqqara's Form 18 dated to the Sixth Dynasty (Rzeuska 2006: 122-123, 391-392).

White Slipped Ware

A group that deserves special attention is ceramics vessels with a white slipped surface, which is most likely to have been an attempt to imitate marl clay ceramics – these are exceptional and rarely found in Old Kingdom assemblages. This type of surface treatment is particularly difficult considering that white pigment was rarely used for slips, due to its sensitivity to high firing temperatures (Noll 1981: 134).

A typical form for this ware type is a medium-sized ovoid jar made from Nile silt, which did not require firing at high temperature – making it better suited to the white slip. A jar from Asyut (***Cat. 62***) (***Fig. 67***) belongs to exactly this type. It can be dated to the Sixth Dynasty based on comparison to vessels from Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 148-149).

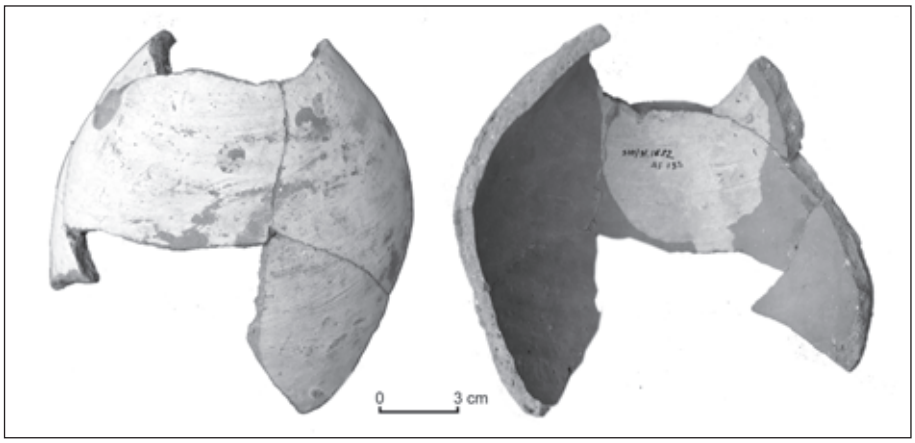


Fig. 67: Fragment of a medium-sized jar with extremely rare white slip; note the inside view where the white slipped area is clearly visible, Cat. 62 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

Bread moulds

Bread moulds, classified by Helen Jacquet-Gordon as type A2, constitute a group characterised by a considerable variety of shapes (Jacquet-Gordon 1981). Typologically, however, the vessels display little variation: they are all moulded in more or less sandy and/or organic Nile silt, without regards to symmetry and

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

surface treatment. Furthermore, they must have been fired at low temperatures and in a reduced atmosphere, which is attested to by unfired lower parts of the vessels; fragility of the walls; grey or grey black colouration of the surface; and a thick grey or black core visible in the break. A good example from Asyut is a medium-sized conical mould with flat base dated to the Sixth Dynasty (***Cat. 63***). Identical vessels are found from many sites in Egypt, e.g. in Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 332-333). Additionally, a slightly less common type in Old Kingdom material is a smaller but also conical form (***Cat. 64***), dated to the Sixth Dynasty. Also present are tiny, almost miniature bread moulds (***Cat. 65-66***) (***Figs. 68-69***) made from a clay heavily tempered with organic material, with a triangular rim gently rolled outside, which – judging by the parallels objects from Saqqara (Rzeuska 2006: 328-329) – appears to date to the Sixth Dynasty.

Of particular interest in this category are bread moulds on a thick cylindrical 'foot' which are atypical and extremely rarely identified in Old Kingdom material (***Cat. 67-68***) (***Figs. 70-71***). These are usually found entirely unfired or partially-fired. Their rims are invariably painted white (Rzeuska 2006: 334-337). Considering the size (capacity) of the mould, the bread loaves baked in such vessels must have been relatively small. In Saqqara these objects have been dated to the times of Pepy II, as were identical moulds from Abusir (Arias-Kytnarová 2011: 87). Therefore, it appears logical to suggest a similar date for the examples found in Asyut.

The presence of such functional ceramics in a necropolis may seem rather unusual, as this type of material is usually thought to be associated only with settlement sites. Nevertheless, they are typical for cemeteries, where they were placed in grave shafts as part

Fig. 68: Small bread mould of *bḏ3* type, Cat. 65 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 69: Small bread mould of *bḏ3* type, Cat. 66 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

of offering deposits and in burial chambers as a part of the grave goods where they served in the mortuary cult (Rzeuska 2006: 443-444, 451-452). They were also sometimes reused as building material for the tomb structures (Arias-Kytnarová 2011: 84, Fig. 6.13).

Fig. 70: Semi-fired shallow bread mould on high foot, dated to Pepy II's reign, Cat. 67 (© Museo Egizio di Torino; Rzeuska 2012).

Fig. 71: Unfired foot of a bread mould from the times of Pepy II's reign; note the fresh fracture, which displays a high frequency of inclusion – mostly grain bracts, Cat. 68 (© The Asyut Project; Rzeuska 2012).

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8

Beer jars

One of the most typical and recognizable forms found in great numbers both from necropoleis and settlements of the Old Kingdom are bottles used for beer or, in archaeological terms, 'beer jars'. They are present at Asyut, although they are not as numerous as one might anticipate. Similarly to the bread moulds, the beer jars constitute a group which is typologically diverse, but remarkably uniform in terms of technology. All beer jars were shaped by hand using Nile silt C and by two basic methods: hollowing as well as pinching and coiling. The external surface was usually left untreated, although there are examples of white washed or red slipped beer jars, but they have yet to be identified at Asyut. Not only does the great variety of shapes reflect chronological differences, but also potentially varied contents – different shapes of jars, chronologically contemporary, might have been used for different kinds of beer, just as it is commonly observed nowadays. Hence, there are in Asyut fragments of jars with a pointed base, most likely ftom the Fifth Dynasty, or fragments with a rounded and thin-walled base (***Cat. 69***) from the Sixth Dynasty (Rzeuska 2006: 72-77).

A particularly interesting example is the only complete medium-sized beer jar from Asyut, which has horizontal grooves below and around the rim (***Cat. 70***) (***Fig. 72***). Similar vessels are found in the Sixth Dynasty contexts, from the times of Pepy I (Rzeuska 2006: 78-79) until the end of this dynasty (El-Khouly/Kanawati 1988: Pl. 43), and so the Asyut example can dated to the same period.

As with the bread moulds, beer jars are found in different contexts, where they served different functions. They are a typical element of offering deposits in burial shafts or grave goods in burial chambers, and they can also be associated with a mortuary cult or used as building material for the tombs. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine the original context and therefore functions of the beer jars found at Asyut, because they were all found re-deposited in secondary contexts.

Fig. 72: Cylindrical jar with round base dated to the late Old Kingdom, Cat. 70 (© The British Museum; Rzeuska 2012).

One additional vessel type has been identified in the material – vessels with

© 2017, Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden
ISBN Print: 978-3-447-10621-4 — ISBN E-Book: 978-3-447-19758-8