

# NUBIAN STUDIES 1998



Proceedings of the Ninth Conference  
of the  
International Society of Nubian Studies

August 21-26, 1998  
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TIMOTHY KENDALL  
EDITOR

With technical assistance by  
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Cover Photo: Elevated view of the entrance of the  
Temple of Mut (B 300) at Jebel Barkal, March 2002.

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## List of Abbreviations used in the Text, Footnotes, and Bibliography

ÄAT	<i>Ägypten und Altes Testament</i> , Wiesbaden
ADAW	<i>Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> , Berlin
AEt	<i>Annales d'Éthiopie</i> , Paris
ANL	<i>Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei</i> , Rome
ANM	<i>Archéologie du Nil Moyen</i> , Lille
Ann.CF	<i>Annuaire du Collège de France</i> , Paris
ARCE	American Research Center in Egypt, Cairo
ASAE	<i>Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte</i> , Cairo
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i> , Oxford
BdÉ	<i>Bibliothèque d'Étude, Institut français d'archéologie orientale</i> , Cairo
BJb	<i>Berliner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte</i> , Berlin
BIEA	British Institute in East Africa, Nairobi/London
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français archéologie orientale</i> , Cairo
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientali</i> , Leiden
B.J.Linn.Soc	<i>Biological Journal of the Linnean Society</i> . New York
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i> , Bamberg
BSAC	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte</i> , Cairo
BSFE	<i>Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie</i> , Paris
BzS	<i>Beiträge zur Sudanforschung</i> , Vienna
CdE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i> , Brussels
CEDAE	Centre de l'Étude et Documentation sur l'Ancienne Égypte, Collection Scientifique, Cairo
CRAIBL	<i>Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Comptes Rendus</i> , Paris
CRIPeL	<i>Cahier de recherches de l'Institut de Papyrologie et d'Égyptologie de Lille</i> , Lille
ET	<i>Études et Travaux</i> , Warsaw
FHN	<i>Fontes Historiae Nubiorum</i> (4 vols), Bergen
GM	<i>Göttinger Misczellen</i> , Göttingen
HAB	<i>Hildesheimer Ägyptologische Beiträge</i> , Hildesheim
HAS	<i>Harvard African Studies</i> , Cambridge, Massachusetts
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , Baltimore/Boston/New Haven
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i> , Boston/Princeton/New York
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i> , London
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Voorasiatisch-Egyptisch genootschap "ex Orient Lux"</i> , Leiden
JJP	<i>The Journal of Juristic Papyrology</i> , Warsaw
JNES	<i>Journal of the Near Eastern Studies</i> , Chicago
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i> , London



JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> , London
KAU	<i>Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki</i> , Warsaw
LÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> , Wiesbaden
LAAA	<i>Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology</i> , Liverpool
LD	Richard Lepsius, <i>Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien</i> , Berlin 1842-45
MDAIK	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo</i> , Mainz
MGH AA	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. (Auctores Antiquissimi)</i>
MIFAO	<i>Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire</i> , Cairo
MIO	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</i> , Berlin
MittSAG	<i>Mitteilungen der Sudanarchäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin</i> , Berlin
NARCE	<i>Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt</i> , New York/Cairo
OBO	<i>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</i> , Freiburg/Göttingen
OINE	<i>Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition</i> , Chicago
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i> , Louvain
PAM	<i>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</i> , Warsaw
PM	B. Porter and R. Moss, <i>Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings</i> , vols 1-7, Oxford
RAPH	<i>Recherches d'archéologie, de philologie et d'histoire</i> , Cairo
RCK	Dows Dunham, <i>Royal Cemeteries of Kush</i> , vols. 1-5, Boston
REG	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i> , Paris
RdE	<i>Revue d'Égyptologie</i> , Paris
REL	<i>Revue des Études Latines</i> , Paris
RMNW	<i>Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie</i> , Warsaw
SAE	Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Cairo
SAK	<i>Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur</i> , Hamburg
SAOC	<i>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization</i> , Chicago
SARS	<i>The Sudan Archaeological Research Society</i> , London
SAS	Sudan Antiquities Service, Khartoum
SbWien	<i>Sitzungsberichten der Oesterreiches Akademie der Wissenschaften</i> , Vienna
SNR	<i>Sudan Notes and Records</i> , Khartoum
SUGIA	<i>Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika</i> , Frankfurt/Cologne
VA	<i>Varia Aegyptiaca</i> , San Antonio
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunden des Morgenlandes</i> , Vienna
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete bzw. Vorderasiatische Archäologie</i> , Berlin
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i> , Berlin

## **Wadi Shaw 82/52: a Peridynastic Settlement Site in the Western Desert and its Relations to the Nile Valley**

*By Mathias Lange*

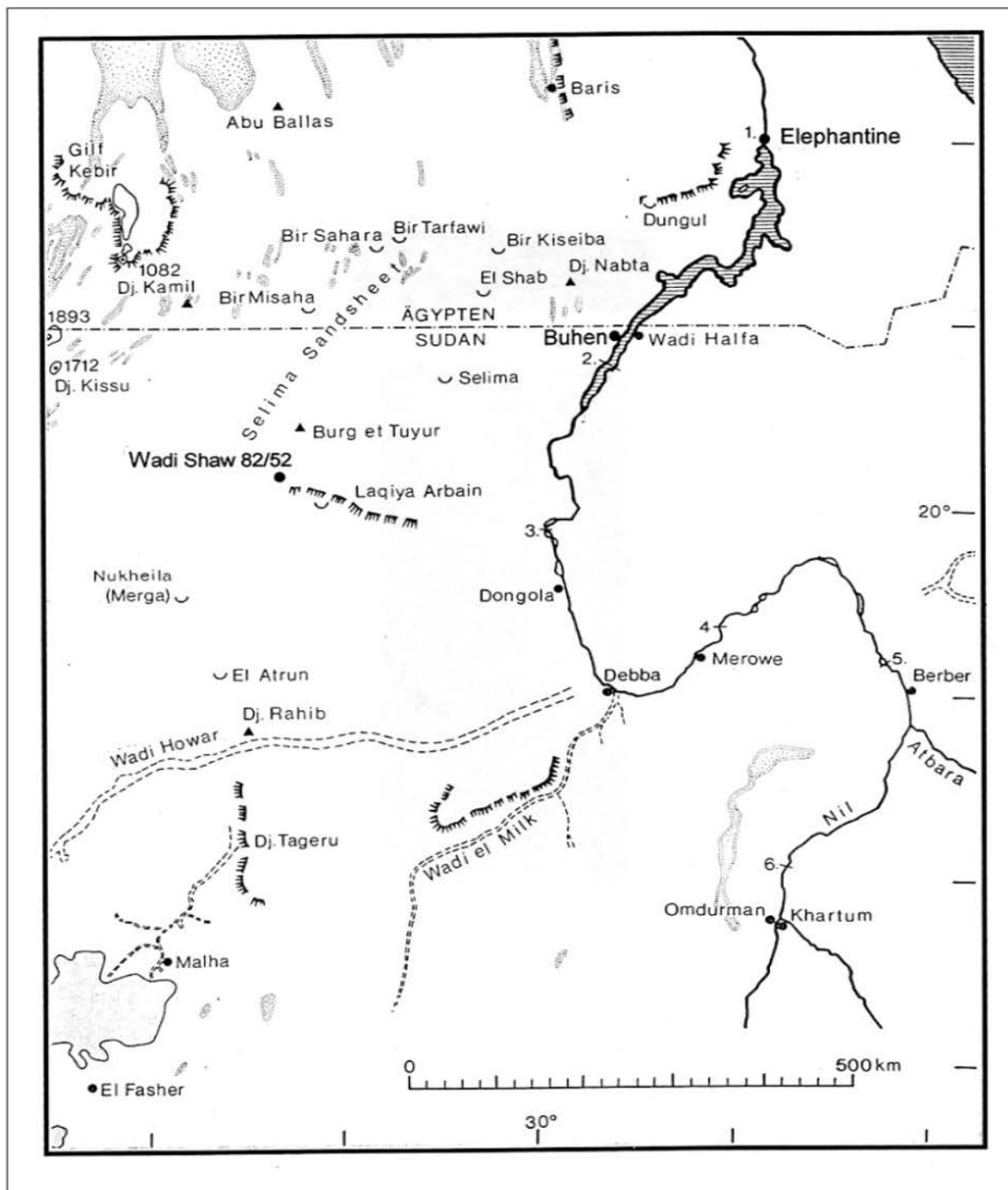
### **1. General Context**

The settlement site of Wadi Shaw 82/52 is situated in the Laqiya region in northwestern Sudan. Among its pottery finds are sherds of an Egyptian Maidum-bowl, characteristic of the Fourth and early Fifth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom, and red-polished black-topped ware, typical of the Nubian Nile Valley. This suggests the existence of a Nubian-related population in the Western Desert, chronologically between the Nubian A- and C-Groups around the middle of the third millennium BC. This adds new insights to the discussion of the archaeological hiatus between the A- and the C-Groups in Lower Nubia and suggests a need to extend the geographical area normally under consideration for these groups.

The site Wadi Shaw 82/52 in Wadi Shaw northwest Sudan was discovered in 1982 by excavations of the Project BOS (Besiedlungsgeschichte der Ostsahara = Settlement History of the Eastern Sahara) (Kuper 1986). Wadi Shaw (cf. Map 1) is located about 180 kilometers south of the Egypt-Sudan border and about 360 kilometers west of the Nile Valley in a region with several tectonically caused depressions, situated at the Laqiya-escarpment (Gabriel 1986). About 70 kilometers southeast of Wadi Shaw 82/52 are the oases Laqiya Arbain and Laqiya Umran. The site 82/52 is located at 20°30' N and 27°18' E in the eastern portion of the wadi along a range of sand dunes that crosses the wadi from north to south. The site was found on a playa, partially covered by wind-borne sand. It consisted of several dispersed concentrations of finds, one of which was studied more closely through excavation of 51 sq. m. This site, with four hearths, contained grinding- and millstones, bones, stone artifacts, pottery, objects made from ostrich eggshell, and jewellery.

The bones allow us to conclude that we are dealing here with a settlement of herders because they were those of cattle (*Bos taurus*), sheep (*Ovis ammon*), and goats (*Capra hircus*). There were in addition also bones from wild animals, such as Dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), Dama gazelle (*Gazella dama*), Sabre antelope (*Oryx gazella dama*), and Mendes antelope (*Addax nasomaculatus*), all of which would have represented supplementary sources of meat gained through hunting. With the help of botanical analysis of the charcoal fragments, Katharina Neumann (1989) could reconstruct Wadi Shaw's contemporary environment as temporary grazing land, dependent on an annual rainy season. This means that the inhabitants here were probably nomadic.

Stone artefacts were most numerous, consisting of almost 13,000 pieces. The majority were produced from different varieties of quartzite and quartzitic sandstones. Fossilized wood and a type of black flint-stone were also common. These raw materials are still to be found in the local area. The most important category of stone tools in this inventory is that of the borers. There were 94 examples found, comprising 27% of the stone tools. These borers probably were used to produce beads made from ostrich eggshell, and in at least one instance, for the production of quartz jewellery. A quartz bead, for example, was found to have broken while being perforated. Analysis of the intensive reworking patterns of the stone artefacts revealed that the original dispersion of the debris had been preserved without significant post-depositional changes at the site. The existence of several original concentrations of stone artefacts could be proved. These, in combination with the analysis of other find categories, identified the areas of activity that served different types of work, for example the production and use of stone tools and ostrich eggshell artefacts, the preparation of food with grindstones and millstones, cooking, or the grinding of haematite to coloured powder. These areas of activity were centered around the hearths.



Map 1

The most far-reaching statements can be made of the pottery finds. Altogether 586 sherd fragments larger than one square centimeter could be combined into 25 individual vessel units. Unfortunately, on the whole, the pottery is poorly preserved so that statements about the vessel forms must be limited. Of great importance, however, are the sherds of a Maidum bowl, definitely from Egypt, which can be seen as an example of imported pottery (Pl. 1.1). One rim sherd reveals the recognizable S-shaped profile of the vessel. This characteristic form allows the vessel to be classified in the typological sequence compiled by Werner Kaiser from the finds at the Userkaf Sun Temple in Abusir (Kaiser 1969). The Maidum bowl conforms most strongly to Types XIII 86 and XIII 87, which are dated to the Fourth and early Fifth Dynasties. It was produced from calcium-rich clay, as demonstrated by a test with salt-acid. The average diameter of the rim was about 10 cm; the diameter of the widest point was about 11.5 cm. This find made it possible to date Wadi Shaw 82/52 to the time of the Fourth or early Fifth Dynasties, or about 2500 BC. This was further confirmed by C-14-dating obtained from charcoal remains in the hearths (Lange 1998).

Beyond its worth for dating purposes, this Maidum bowl can be seen as a good indicator of the far-reaching trade or barter of goods that took place outside Egypt during the Old Kingdom. It is especially interesting in light of the known Egyptian trade expeditions from the Sixth Dynasty, for example Harkhuf's famous journeys (Edel 1955, 1967). But we also know that such Maidum bowls have also been found in the Old Kingdom settlements of Buhen (Emery 1963) and Kubban (Gratien 1995). At Buhen there is an especially good chronological parallel with Wadi Shaw because the seals found there signal the end of the Fifth Dynasty settlement there. Whether the Maidum bowl from Wadi Shaw 82/52 could possibly have come from Buhen is questionable. Unfortunately the pottery finds from Emery's excavations have not been published and so a comparison is not possible. It is also imaginable that the Maidum bowl was brought to Sudan in a trading expedition such as was described by Nisuhu (Säve-Söderbergh 1941, Zibelius 1972), Sabni (Edel 1984) or Harkhuf (Edel 1955, 1967). The question naturally comes to mind what the inhabitants of Wadi Shaw had to offer in exchange for Egyptian imported goods? Possibly it was stock animals: cattle, sheep and goats. A settlement the size of Buhen could not have gone without outside support. Alongside its role as an emporium for trade goods, Buhen was also a center for smelting copper, and a large number of workers had to be provided for.

Additional pottery finds from Wadi Shaw 82/52 are also of great interest. This applies especially to two red-polished vessels. One of them features a black-topped rim typical of the red-polished black-topped wares of the Nubian Cultures like the A- and C-Groups in the Nile Valley. The first vessel is a jar with relatively steep sloping convex sides (Pl. 2.1). The vessel's surfaces are finely polished both inside and out and have a dark red color coming from a coating. Quartz in the form of grains of sand, chalk and botanical remains, probably grass, could be distinguished as tempering components. On the basis of these features it is possible to assign the vessel to the category "coated polished brown wares" from Nordström's classification of Nubian pottery, probably belonging to Ware H2.11 (Nordström 1972). The second red-polished vessel (Pl. 2.2) is dark brown to black on the inner surface. The outer surface is made of a red-brown coating. The surfaces are well polished. The vessel's temper consists of quartz in the form of small grains of sand, small chalk particles and a small portion of botanical temper. On the rim irregular dark-brown to black spots appear, so that this vessel can be put in the group of "surface-coated polished brown and black wares" according to Nordström's classification, probably belonging to Ware H4.11.

All three of these described vessels feature perforations, a type of modification, which could be used to patch up a cracked vessel. This signals the high value placed upon them.

Further pottery examples at the site cannot be placed in Nordström's ware classification system. But some of them suggest similarities with Nubian pottery on the basis of their decoration patterns. Among

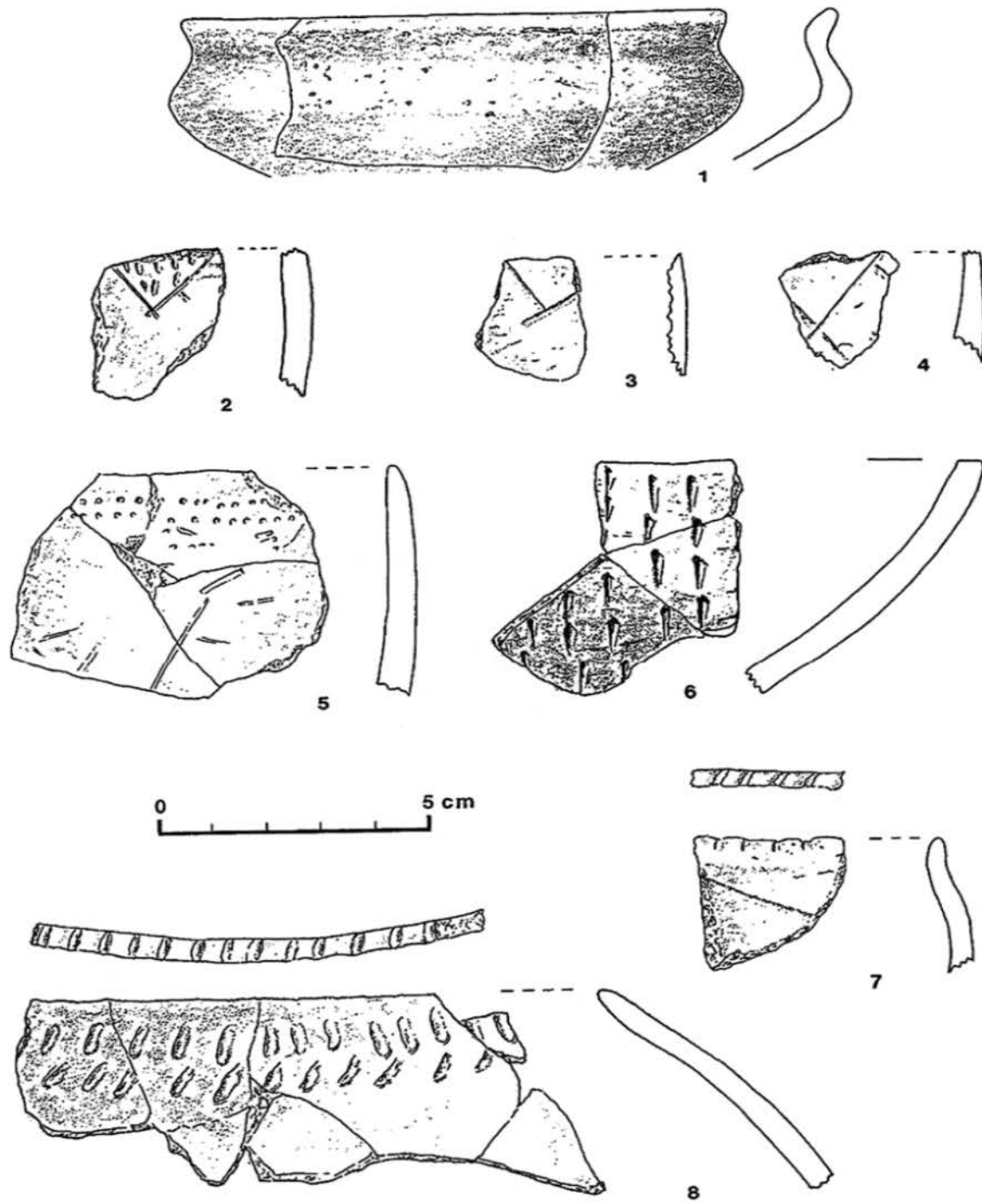


Plate. 1

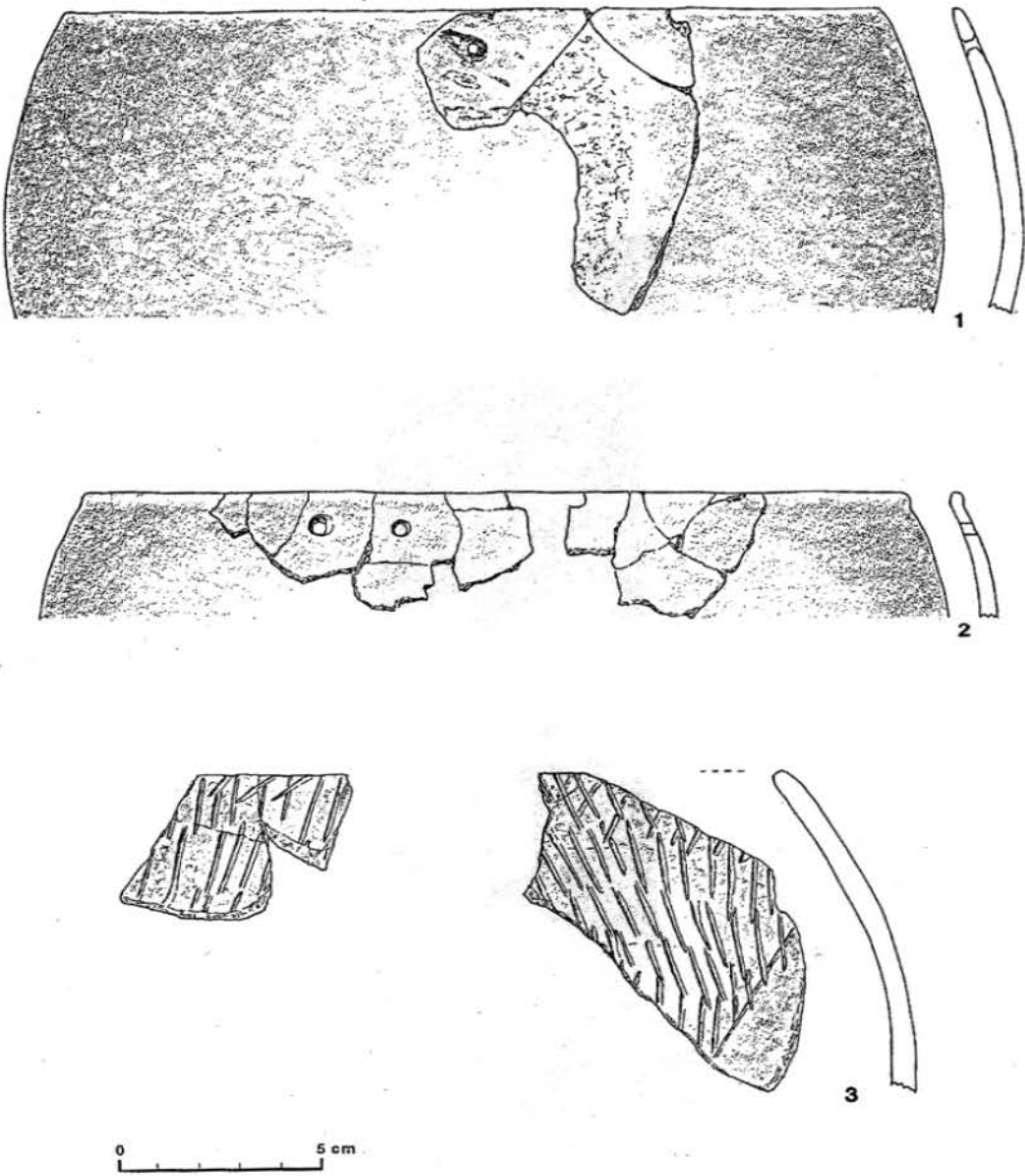


Plate. 2



these there is a vessel made from a hard-fired pottery with a temper of quartz, mica and botanical remains (Pl. 2.3). The vessel is pinkish colored on the outer surface and ochre colored on the inner, but upon breaking shows a light grey core. The outer surface is partially covered by coarse incised decoration descending from the rim downwards in hanging triangles filled with short, parallel lines. The lines appear relatively irregular and seem carelessly executed. The decorated surfaces were marked off by a borderline from the free-remaining portions. On the vessel's rim the lines were placed in crossed pairs forming x-shaped crosses. Due to these characteristic decorations the vessel is closest to certain vessels of the C-group, especially to a sherd of an incised utility bowl from Serra East (Williams 1993: 111, Pl. 63). From Ashkeit a vessel (Object Nr. 97/0: 157) from a C-Group cemetery also features line decoration. In addition the decorated and undecorated portions of the outer surface are divided from each other by borders on this vessel (Säve-Söderbergh 1989, Pl. 28, 2). Another possible comparison could be that of a vessel from a Kerma-culture cemetery on Sai Island (Gratien 1986: 34; Pl. 12g). This vessel is decorated likewise with line-filled triangles and x-shaped rim decorations from coarse irregular lines, but was produced from red-polished black-topped ware. Finds from a C-Group settlement, Faras East Site 18C (Säve-Söderbergh 1989: 261-262; Pl. 163: 9, 12) and from Kerma itself (Privati 1978: Pl. 3-4) demonstrate that vessels with coarse incised decoration in the shape of hanging triangles appear also in the settlement's pottery.

Alongside the vessel with incised decoration of hanging triangles three further individual sherds with incised decoration were found. One of these showed a combination of incised and impressed decoration (Pl. 1.2). The other two sherds probably belong to one vessel (Pl. 1.3, 1.4).

Other vessels from Wadi Shaw feature decorations in parallel horizontal and vertical rows and fingernail impressions (Pl. 1.5-8). One vessel shows two impressed parallel horizontal rows under the rim (Pl. 1.5). Another vessel with two horizontal rows of wide, short impressions is decorated on the rim's edge with fingernail impressions in short intervals (Pl. 1.8). A single sherd has its rim's edge decorated with fingernail impressions but with an additional incised decoration under the rim (Pl. 1.7). Lastly one vessel is decorated with descending rows of impressions over the surface (Pl. 1.6). The elements of decoration, the rim decoration and impressed decoration in rows appear in single instances in the context of the A- and C-Group, but here comb-impressions, rocker-stamp technique and herring-bone ornament are much more common. In conclusion it must be mentioned that undecorated vessels were also found.

The two red-polished vessels are typical examples of pottery as they appear in A-Group and C-Group inventories in the Nile valley. Considering the site's dating to about 2500 BC, it is noteworthy, based upon the studies of H.Š. Smith (1966), that there are no archaeological finds from this time period in Lower Nubia. Smith interpreted his results from his studies on the so-called "B-Group" to the effect that between the First Dynasty and the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty no graves (or very few) were constructed in Lower Nubia (Smith 1966: 119). He explained that the A-Group population, or parts of it, would have been forced to change their settled way of life because of recurring military attacks and reprisals by the Egyptians. Therefore, without meaning to imply that Lower Nubia would have been abandoned by its native inhabitants, I would suggest that elements of this population left the Nile Valley to become nomads in the lands either to the east or the west of the Nile. As evidence for the existence of settlement in the eastern Sahara, Smith used the grave discovered in 1935 by W.B. Kennedy Shaw in the Grassy Valley, about 100 km northwest of Wadi Shaw (Shaw 1936). During the Sixth Dynasty, as the central power of the pharaohs slowly collapsed, these people could have returned to the Nile Valley, forming what is archaeologically known as the C-Group culture (Smith 1966: 119-124).

The Egyptian sources do actually give an impression of the pharaohs' militaristic policies: for example, Pharaoh Aha's inscription from the First Dynasty naming a victory over "Ta-Seti" (Nubia); or the rock-

inscription from the reign of Pharaoh Djer on Gebel Sheikh Suleiman. In addition to these there is Kha'sekhem's victory stele from Hierakonpolis of the Second Dynasty (Gratien 1995: 44, Kaplony 1975: 911; Leclant 1996: 73).

Another theory for the ending of the A-Group is presented by Nordström. In his view A-Group decline is not only to be seen as the result of military conflicts, but rather as economic collapse. The A-Group's development is described by him as a result of a close relationship to the Naqada culture. In exchange for its raw materials the A-Group would have received a portion of the surplus in highly-valued goods, luxuries and foodstuffs from the Naqada culture. Thus Egyptian goods would have been a fixed component in the A-Group's subsistence. But with the creation of the Old Kingdom, through the union of the smaller kingdoms, a strong centralized power was established that excluded the Nubians from trading, thereby robbing them of their cultural prosperity (Nordström 1972: 31-32). According to K. Zibelius-Chen, the Nubians had been primarily middlemen in the trade for African products (not necessarily from their own region), and with establishment of an Egyptian monarchical trade monopoly in the First Dynasty the Nubians became an unnecessary connecting link. This, in connection with military campaigns, led to the impoverishment of the A-Group's population (Zibelius-Chen 1988: 52-53).

Smith's theory that the A-Group developed outside Lower Nubia was occasionally reinforced by others. In 1966 Nordström proposed that the pottery from Site 11-M-77 and 11-L-14 in Saras could be an example of the development from the A-Group to the C-Group in Upper Nubia (Nordström 1966: 64). W. Schön also agreed with Smith's assessment of the C-Group's development from the late Neolithic in the eastern Sahara (Schön 1994: 151). Also M. Bietak sought the origin of the C-Group in the Libyan Desert near Wadi Shaw and Wadi Howar, although he did not proceed with a direct development of the C-Group from the A-Group (Bietak 1966: 40-41; 1986: 115-116).

A number of scholars mention finds of Nubian pottery in different locations in Nubia that are chronologically parallel to the Old Kingdom. The most important of these finds are those referenced by Emery, who (naturally in 1963) described them as "B-Group" in the preliminary report of the excavations in the Old Kingdom Egyptian settlement at Buhen. This pottery was found in the level of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasty (Emery 1963: 120). B. Gratien having studied Nubian pottery from Buhen considered these as evidence for the presence of a native people during the time of the Old Kingdom, although she admits the stratigraphical assignment to the stratum of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties is uncertain (Gratien 1995: 51). Williams describes two graves from Adindan dating to the period between the A- and C-Groups (Williams 1989: 122). Interestingly more evidence now comes from Elephantine, where Nubian pottery appears in an area outside of the city described as an artisans' quarter in the stratas of the Old Kingdom city (Seidlmayer 1991: 346-347; Raue 1998).

The written sources reveal that there must have been a Nubian population in Lower Nubia during the Old Kingdom, and these sources bear witness to continued aggressive Egyptian policies: Pharaoh Snofru of the Fourth Dynasty, for example, boasts on the Palermo Stone that he crushed Nubia and took 7000 captives (Zibelius-Chen 1988: 52). Habaut, the territorial governor, announces in Inscription 27 from Khor el Aqiba that he had fought the country "Wawat" with an army of 20000 soldiers (Zibelius 1972: 6). Inscription 28 from Khor el-Aqiba reveals Governor Sahuib took 17000 Nubians as captives (Zibelius 1972: 6).

Keeping this background in mind the finds at Wadi Shaw 82/52 could lead to the tempting conclusion that at least some of the Nubian peoples belonging to the cultural background of the A-Group during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties were living at Wadi Shaw in the eastern Sahara, and these peoples later could have participated in forming the archaeological C-Group culture. This would give history a rather dramatic course in which Wadi Shaw would appear as a place of refuge and a peaceful oasis in the middle of the



desert. But, of course, the study of one single site does not provide an adequate data-base to describe the course of developments sufficiently. Moreover comparable studies from other sites of Wadi Shaw are lacking.

Previously only sporadic preliminary reports referred to red-polished black-topped ware from Wadi Shaw. W. Schuck made mention of several sherds from site 82/33 similar to rippled ware and thereby signalled clear connections to the A-Group (Schuck 1988: 145; Schuck 1989:426). E. Cziesla studied the finds from site 82/36 from Wadi Sahal, which could be dated to the first half of the second millennium BC. These include red-polished, black-topped ware partially with rippled surface (Cziesla 1986: 144). U. Francke discovered sherds of a red-polished black-topped ware on the analysis of the finds from Camp 49, placing them close to the C-Group. Other sherds had a bouton-impressed decoration similar to that of the Kerma culture (Franke 1986: 138). These finds were dated to the first half of the second millennium BC.

All this suggests a settlement at Wadi Shaw in which red-polished pottery was the rule rather than the exception. This would speak for a more continuous development there. If we turn our gaze to the north and look upon the studies by Hobler and Hester (1969) in the Dungul Oasis in Egypt, it indicates that there, too, C-Group finds appear far outside the Nile valley, although A-Group is not present. Clearly, the point to be made here is, as Smith suggested already in 1966, that the finds from the eastern Sahara offer new possibilities for solving the problem of the archaeological hiatus between the A- and C-Groups.

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