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FUNCTIONAL ASPECTS OF EGYPTIAN CERAMICS IN THEIR ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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RED VASES AT DRA ABU EL-NAGA. TWO FUNERARY DEPOSITS

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The work of the Spanish Mission at Dra Abu el-Naga directed by J. Galán was inaugurated in 2002. Its primary objective is the study, restoration, and preservation of the rock tombs of Djehuty and Hery (TT 11 and TT 12, respectively) hewn into the foothill of Dra Abu el-Naga north. These tombs are very close to each other and they are today interconnected through a third one, -399-, whose owner is still unknown.¹

Whilst clearing the built complex erected above the rock-cut chapel of these tombs during the 2007 field season, two pottery deposits of red vases² were encountered. Each assemblage (labelled “Deposit A” and “Deposit B”) contains a relatively large number of vessels in Nile silt ware, most of them with a careful finish, that includes a lustrous smoothed shining surface in bright red colour. Both deposits were found just within the limit of the excavated area (Fig. 1), not far from the remains of the built façade of the tomb of Djehuty (TT 11). This artificial façade erected above this rock-cut chapel to increase the height of the natural façade carved into the hill up to 3 m height at the end of the courtyard. This built façade was erected over the transverse hall of the rock-chapel. Its surviving remains consist of incomplete lines of well squared limestone slabs which once formed a built rectangular revetment to hold back a concreted mass of sand, stones and mortar. While decayed today, this structure was

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¹ J.M. GALÁN, *The Tombs of Djehuty and Hery (TT 11-12) at Dra Abu el-Naga*, in J.C. GOYON and C. CARDIN (eds.), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 150)*, Leuven, 2007, p. 777-787; J.M. GALÁN, *Tomb-Chapels of the early XVIIIth Dynasty at Thebes*, in J. MYNAROVA and O. PAVEL (eds.), *Thebes. City of Gods and Pharaohs/Theby. Mesto bohů a faraonů*, Prague, 2007, p. 88-101; J.M. GALÁN, *Excavations at the Courtyard of the Tomb of Djehuty (TT 11)*, in *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta)*, Leuven, (in press).

² The denomination of the pottery types we are dealing with in this paper as “red vases” has been previously used by A. Seiler who equated them to the “red vases” quoted in the texts related to the ritual of the breaking of the vases: A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel. Die Keramik als Spiegel der Kulturentwicklung Thebens in der Zweiten Zwischenzeit (Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 32)*, Mainz, 2005, p. 120.

at the time of its building an impressive, but not extremely heavy, wall of about 1.85 m in width at its base and about 9.5 m in length, with an estimated height of 2.20 m, erected over the 3 m vertical wall carved into the hill.³ It was a massive and well finished structure, its limestone slabs bonded together with a gypsum mortar similar to the one attested in the mud-brick walls of the open courtyard of the same tomb. Despite its massive appearance the structure of the façade was not extremely heavy, as an excessive weight of this feature might have caused the roof of the chapel to crack or even collapse. Besides, it had the added advantage of costing less, avoiding the considerable expense of a great amount of stones, stone mason work and so forth. The surfaces of the standing façade were probably filled with gypsum plaster and smoothed before the application of any sort of gesso or colouring, and complemented with ceramic funerary cones.⁴

Its preserved remains are close to a modern mud-brick wall at its eastern side enhanced with masonry in its upper part located almost at the edge of the vertical façade carved into the hill. This wall was built by our team to replace an older one erected by the Antiquities Service between 1909 and the very beginning of 1913 in order to protect the tomb.⁵ The building process of this modern wall in the early years of the 20th century probably caused the destruction of the east side of the limestone of the built façade structure, which today is nearly lost on that side.

Whilst clearing this area, a street built on the hill slope was attested at the rear of the erected façade. This street is a hard, artificially compacted ground with a regular width of 0.82 m; its eastern edge arises at about 0.50 m westward from the rear of the remains of the built façade. The street runs towards the north-east, parallel to Djehuty's tomb façade, and follows to the north-east leading the way to the tombs on this level, via a descending three stepped stairway (Fig. 1).

Both pottery assemblages were found lying against the western edge of the street, at a distance of 2.0 m between them, behind the remains of the built façade, at its rear (Fig. 1). They seem to have been laid down as offerings for a tomb which still remains in the unexcavated area but

³ J.M. GALÁN, *Tomb-Chapels of the early XVIIIth Dynasty*, p. 95.

⁴ J.M. GALÁN, *Tomb-Chapels of the early XVIIIth Dynasty*, p. 95; J.M. GALÁN and F.L. BORREGO, *Funerary Cones from Dra Abu el-Naga (TT 11-12)*, in *Memnonia XVII* (2006), p. 198-200.

⁵ J.M. GALÁN, *The Tombs of Djehuty and Hery*, 785; J.M. GALÁN, *Early Investigations in the Tomb-Chapel of Djehuty (TT 11)*, in D. MAGEE, J. BOURRIAU and S. QUIRKE (eds.), *Sitting Beside Lepsius. Studies in Honour of Jaromir Malek at the Griffith Institute (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 185)*, Leuven, 2009, p. 168-169, fig. 10.

which is already known to us due to some holes broken open in the ceiling of Djehuty's rock-cut chapel by tomb robbers.

1. Deposit A

Deposit A was located about 0.85 m to the west from the remains of Djehuty's built tomb façade, namely behind it (Fig. 1). It was found under a conglomerate of earth and fragmentary limestone chips, which mainly corresponds to the scattered pieces of the hill's debris (Pl. 1). The pottery assemblage comprises three complete and one fragmentary round based slender bottles, and two fragmentary slender tapered jars or beakers (Fig. 2). Three of the bottles were found nearly complete, the other one and the beakers were broken into pieces. There was neither a pit, nor a hole dug to hold the vases; they do not seem to have been hidden away, and nothing but pottery was found in this deposit. Vessels and sherds were found lying in a thin layer of clean yellowish, fine sand which covered a ground surface wider than the deposit itself.

The vessels, all of them closed shapes, have been grouped into two categories: round based slender bottles (Fig. 2.a-d), and slender tapered jars, most commonly known as beakers (Fig. 2.e-f).

1.1. Round Based Slender Bottles

These bottles were made of alluvium Nile silt B2,⁶ all of them with divergent upper termination and modelled lip-rim, a medium long neck with concave contour and narrow aperture, slender body shape and round base (Fig. 2.a-d). Three of them (Fig. 2.a, c-d) show an accurate finish, with burnished red coated surface, the burnish made probably with a pebble⁷ in horizontal lines on the neck and shoulders and in vertical lines on the body (Pl. 2, first and second from the left). The inner upper part of their mouths and necks are also red coated. These bottles are mostly made in three pieces: the upper part of the body with the neck and mouth, the body itself and the base. These parts were carefully joined together

⁶ All the fabrics alluded to in this paper have been designated according to the nomenclature of the Vienna System, H.-Å. NORDSTRÖM and J. BOURRIAU, *Ceramic Technology: Clays and Fabrics*, in Do. ARNOLD and J. BOURRIAU (eds.), *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Pottery*, Fascicle 2, (*Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 17), Mainz, 1993, p. 168-186.

⁷ M.D. ADAMS, *Bottle*, in D.P. SILVERMAN (ed.), *Searching for Ancient Egypt. Art, Architecture, and Artifacts from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology*, Dallas Museum of Art, University of Pennsylvania Museum, Hong Kong, 1997, p. 212.

to build the vase, leaving on its outer surface slightly visible traces of the process.

These jars correspond to group BO1/IIR/c-d of R. Holthoer,⁸ a type which includes jars with slight differences in their body shape: slender or rather globular or egg-shaped, as well as in their finish, smoothed red coated, mostly but not always burnished. They have been attested mainly in funerary contexts in the region of Upper Egypt and in Nubia dated to the Second Intermediate Period and 18th Dynasty with a leaning towards the earlier part of this Dynasty.⁹ Examples have been found at Dra Abu el-Naga since the earliest archaeological investigations carried out in the area and illustrated in the relevant publications.¹⁰

A slender bottle with these characteristics was excavated in 1922 by C. Fisher, working for the Coxe Expedition, from tomb 44 in the Lower Cemetery at Dra Abu el-Naga.¹¹ This tomb consisted of a shaft and three chambers cut from the bedrock. It contained pottery from both the Middle and New Kingdoms, indicating use in both periods. In more recent works carried out by the German expedition at Dra Abu el-Naga, the same kind of bottles has been documented.¹² A large number of them, 45 specimens, were found in the tomb numbered K01.8,¹³ dated to the

⁸ R. HOLTHOER, *New Kingdom Pharaonic Sites, The Pottery (The Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia 5:1)*, Lund, 1977, p. 130-131, pls. 29, 60.

⁹ B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier. Part 6: New Kingdom Remains from Cemeteries R, V, S and W at Qustul and Cemetery K at Adindan (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition VI)*, Chicago, 1992, p. 84, type CJ-10bi-10biii, p. 242, fig. 83.a (from Tomb R 83), p. 354, fig. 169.h (from Tomb V 113), p. 372, fig. 186.a (from Tomb K 50), pl. 17.b-c.); D. ASTON, B. ASTON and D.P. RYAN, *Pottery from Tombs in the Valley of the Kings KV 21, 27, 28, 44, 45 and 60*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 6 (2000), p. 14-15, 27, no. 2 (from KV 21); E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 1: Architektur, Darstellungen, Texte, archäologischer Befund und Funde der Gräber QU 24 – QH 34p*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, 2008, p. 318, 320, fig. 31 QH 295, 345, fig. 9 29/5; E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 2: Architektur, Darstellungen, Texte, archäologischer Befund und Funde der Gräber QU 35 – QH 101*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, 2008, p. 951, fig. 41 QH 35m/66.

¹⁰ EARL OF CARNAVON and H. CARTER, *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes. A Record of Work done 1907-1911*, London – New York – Toronto – Melbourne, 1912, pl. 26.2 (pottery from Tomb No. 9).

¹¹ M.D. ADAMS, in D.P. SILVERMAN (ed.), *Searching for Ancient Egypt*, p. 212, no. 66.

¹² A. SEILER, *Bemerkungen zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches in Theben, Erste Ergebnisse der Bearbeitung der Keramik aus Areal H*, in D. POLZ and A. SEILER, *Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Dra' Abu el-Naga (Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 24)*, Mainz, 2003, p. 67-68, Abb. 26, ZN 01/404.

¹³ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, 93, fig. 43-45, 47.

Second Intermediate Period. The 45 slender bottles of this find show amongst them common features but also small differences in their body shape or in their finish, as Seiler has pointed out,¹⁴ and 11 of the 45 specimens found, have small round holes deliberately cut into their bodies.¹⁵

In Deposit A, three complete bottles of this type were found (Pl. 2). One of them (Fig. 2.a, Pl. 2, centre), with 8.3 cm rim diameter, 20.5 cm maximum height, and 10.7 maximum width, shows a smooth neck-transition and modelled lip-rim. This bottle has probably been manufactured in three pieces as seems to be suggested by visible traces on its outer surface, one at the lower extreme of its body, where a join to the base could be located, and the other at its upper part, where a join to the neck could be situated. The outer surface is red slipped and polished with vertical burnishing strokes on the body and horizontally on the neck and shoulders. Its body shows a small round hole. It has a good parallel in one of the bottles found at Dra Abu el-Naga by the German team.¹⁶

Quite similar, but smaller, is the vase illustrated in Fig. 2.b (Pl. 2, first from the right). This bottle, with 7.2 cm rim diameter, 18.5 cm maximum height, and 9.8 cm maximum width, also shows visible traces on its outer surface, with slight finger impressions which suggest that its hand smoothed and finished base was joined to the previously thrown body. Its outer surface is red slipped but not burnished (10R 6/6-6/8 light red) and, like the previous bottle, has an open hole this time located at its base.

The third complete bottle (Fig. 2.c; Pl. 2, first from the left) is a little bigger in size, with 9 cm rim diameter, 22 cm maximum height and 11.5 cm maximum width. Its outer surface is red slipped, carefully burnished (10R 6/6), with vertical burnishing strokes on the body, and a deliberately opened hole in the middle of its belly.

The upper part of an incomplete burnished and red slipped (10R 6/6) bottle was also uncovered in Deposit A (Fig. 2.d). The preserved fragment shows that this was the biggest bottle of the assemblage, with 10 cm rim diameter, 15 cm maximum height and 14 cm maximum width. Despite its bigger size, its shape and other characteristics match the rest of the bottles of the same assemblage. Neither remains of its body nor of its base were found, which means it came into the assemblage already broken.

¹⁴ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 120.

¹⁵ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 93, fig. 43-47.

¹⁶ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, fig. 43, ZN 02/201.

1.2. Slender Tapered Jars

These jars, most commonly known as beakers, were also found in Deposit A. This type tends to have a direct unmodelled rim and round base with its maximum body diameter close to it, i.e. in the lower third of the vessel height.¹⁷ As well as the slender bottles, these beakers have been attested in Dra Abu el-Naga since the beginning of the Egyptological investigation, located in funerary contexts dated to the Second Intermediate Period.¹⁸ This kind of jar has also been attested in more recent works carried out by the German Expedition in the area,¹⁹ and they are well represented in tomb K01.8, where 20 specimens were found, as well as in our deposit B, described below.

This type includes either vessels of accurate finish with smooth red coated and burnished surface, or red washed vessels hardly smoothed with rilling marks almost always visible. There are examples which include a black line painted around the rim.²⁰ In Upper Egypt and Nubia, these vessels are known in funerary but also in domestic contexts from the Second Intermediate Period and throughout the early 18th Dynasty up to the reign of Tuthmose III.²¹ It has been suggested that the type

¹⁷ R. HOLTHOER, *New Kingdom Pharaonic Sites*, p. 171-172: type WD/IR/0/g-h, 185/189:6, pls. 41, 68, 1; D.A. ASTON, *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes QI Teil I Corpus of Fabrics, Wares and Shapes (Die Grabungen des Pelizaeus-Museums Hildesheim in Qantir – Pi-Ramesse, 1)*, Mainz, 1998, p. 92, nos. 45-92; P. FUSCALDO, *Tell el-Dab'a X. The Palace District of Avaris, The Pottery of the Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (Areas H/III and H/VI) Part I: Locus 66*, Vienna, 2000, p. 64, 66-70, figs. 26-29; E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 2*, p. 1085, fig. 17 QH 89/194; E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 3: Architektur, Darstellungen, Texte, Archäologischer Befund und Funde der Gräber QU 102 – QH 209*, Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich, 2008, p. 1582, fig. 69 QH 105/348, 1647, 1656, fig. 4 QH 107/7.

¹⁸ MARQUIS OF NORTHAMPTON et alii, *Report on some Excavations in the Theban Necropolis during the Winter of 1898-99*, London, 1908, p. 40, pl. XXI, second row, third vase from the right; A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 86, fig. 37-40; EARL OF CARNAVON and H. CARTER, *Five Years' Explorations at Thebes*, pl. 26, 2 (from Tomb No. 9).

¹⁹ A. SEILER, *Bemerkungen zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches in Theben*, p. 67-68, fig. 26, ZN 01/84.

²⁰ J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery*, in *Egypt's Golden Age: the Art of Living in the New Kingdom 1558-1085 B.C. Catalogue of the Exhibition, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1982, p. 78-79, no. 52.

²¹ H.E. WINLOCK, *The Tomb of Queen Meryt-Amun at Thebes (Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition VI)*, New York, 1932 (ed. 1973), p. 31, fig. 17.f-g, pl. XXX.33; B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier*, p. 38, p. 81: Type CJ-1b, fig. 3.c, 171, fig. 26.a (from Tomb R 20), p. 377, fig. 190.f (from tomb K 65), pl. 15.c.; A. SEILER, *Hebua I. Second Intermediate Period and Early New Kingdom*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne 5* (1997), p. 28, pl. II, ZN 94/82 (from the fortress Tell el-Habua I, Nord-Sinai); J. BOURRIAU, *Beyond Avaris: The Second Intermediate*

derives from vessels of the late Middle Kingdom widely used in the Nile valley probably as containers to store small quantities of flour or fat.²² They have also been attested in the eastern Delta in late Second Intermediate Period and early New Kingdom domestic contexts.²³ Like the slender round based bottles, these beakers were also used as ritual vessels in funerary contexts and some examples from Dra Abu el-Naga have been drilled, probably for a ritual purpose.²⁴

Fragments of two incomplete Nile silt clay B2 beakers of this type were uncovered in Deposit A. Both have been partially restored, but only the upper part of their bodies, narrow at the top, and their mouths are preserved. The biggest one (Fig. 2.e; 15C/80-A-5) with 9 cm rim diameter, 11.5 cm maximum width, and 12.5 cm preserved height, shows a careful finish with smooth but not burnished red coated surface (10R 6/4). The other one (Fig. 2.f), smaller in size, with 7 cm rim diameter, 8.0 cm maximum width, and 5.0 cm preserved height, shows also a careful finish, with burnished, red coated surface (10R 6/6).

2. Deposit B

Much larger than Deposit A, Deposit B was found in front of the preserved south-west corner of the façade surmounting Djehuty's tomb, against the western edge of the street, mentioned above, 2.0 meters to the south of Deposit A (Fig. 1, Pl. 3). It was also located under a conglomerate of earth and fragmentary limestone chips, derived from the hill debris, without any pit or hole dug specifically to retain the assemblage. The vessels have been laid on a sandy layer, some of them lying alongside fragments of culms of halfa grass (*Desmontachya/Imperata*) and pieces of palm leaves (*Phoenix/Hyphaene*) which have been identified by Dr. Ahmed Fahmy, archaeobotanist to our expedition, who suggests these remains belong to strips of leaves from a palm weaved to make a basket.²⁵ As we have said before regarding Deposit A, this pottery

Period in Egypt Outside the Eastern Delta, in E.D. OREN (ed.), *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, Philadelphia, 1997: p. 165, p. 170, fig. 6.9, no. 4 (from Saqqara), p. 177, fig. 6.16, no. 11.

²² A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 117.

²³ D.A. ASTON, *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes QI*, p. 92; P. FUSCALDO, *Tell el-Dab'a X. The Palace District of Avaris*, p. 64, 66-70, figs. 26-29. D. Aston, personal communication, would now date this Qantir material to the reign of Tuthmosis III.

²⁴ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 117.

²⁵ Perhaps they are the remains of nets used to carry the vessels, as they have no handles but extremely smoothed surfaces. For vases with similar features and their related

assemblage and its related fragments of culms and leaves do not seem to have been hidden away but were simply left on the ground, which seems to have been previously covered with clean sand.

This deposit comprises a rather large number of well finished vessels of closed and open shapes, all of them made of Nile silt clay B2. There are nine complete or nearly complete round based slender bottles of the same type already described in Deposit A (Fig. 3.a-i, Pl. 4), four complete or nearly complete slender tapered jars or beakers (Fig. 4.a-d, f), fragments of another one (Fig. 4.e), sherds of incomplete jars and beakers (Fig. 5), and fragments of an incomplete bag-shaped jar which includes a fragmentary grotesque human face and other details modelled in clay (Fig. 6.a-c).²⁶ The open shapes are represented by a rather large round or flat based dish and two small bowls, one of them with an elaborate serrated rim (Fig. 6.d-f).

2.1. Closed Shapes.

2.1.1. Round Based Slender Bottles

All of them are made of Nile silt B2. According to their shape we can distinguish bottles with slender bodies (Fig. 3.a-f, h) and bottles of rather rounded body shape (Fig. 3.g, i).²⁷ Both groups show an accurate finish, with red coated surfaces burnished in horizontal lines on the neck and shoulders and in vertical lines on the body. The upper part of the inner mouth and neck of some of the bottles is also red coated. Traces of the joins of the different parts of which the bottles have been built are visible in most of them. Fragments of incomplete bottles were also found (Fig. 5.a-c).

Most of the bottles with slender bodies have been intentionally broken, with holes in their bodies. In the bottle 15C/80B-1 (Fig. 3.a) the hole has been opened in the middle of its body, just below its maximum diameter. A smaller hole, rounded and carefully made, has been opened in the body of the jar 15C/80B-4 (Fig. 3.d) at its maximum width. Bottle 15C/80B-3

nets, this time very well preserved, A.J. VELDMEIJER and J. BOURRIAU, *The Carrier Nets from a Burial at Qurna*, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 95 (2009), p. 209-222, pl. IV-V.

²⁶ It could be possible that these fragments correspond to more than one vase, but the similarities in clay and finish, as well as the different parts of the body shape where they can be placed, led us to believe in one single jar.

²⁷ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 93; interesting parallels for this rounded body bottle shape in E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 2*, fig. 135 QH 26/189, p. 364, p. 378, fig. 18 30/13, p. 391, fig. 12 QH 30/13.

(Fig. 3.c) shows, in the lower part of its body, just above the base, traces of an incipient hole that was not finally broken through. A more developed but still unfinished hole is clearly visible in the bottle 15C/80B-5 (Fig. 3.e); bottle 15C/80B-8 shows in the upper part of its body two circular and rather elongated scratches for incipient holes (Fig. 3.h. (a)), while on its opposite side, there is another quite similar scratch visible in the middle of its body (Fig. 3.h. (b)). These incipient but not finished holes are as a whole an interesting fact that we will consider later. There are two jars in this slender group (15C/80B-2 and 15C/80B-6, Fig. 3.b and f, respectively) that do not seem to have been intentionally broken, but we can not assert this fact as both bottles were found broken into pieces. They have been nearly, but not completely, restored from sherds because of the lack of some pieces.

The two bottles with rather rounded bodies show clear evidence of having been intentionally scratched. The biggest one (Fig. 3.g) has an open hole drilled in the middle of its body at its maximum width. Close to it there are traces of an incipient hole in a triangular shape, which was never finished. The smaller one (Fig. 3.i), shows in the upper part of its body a rather circular scratch made for an unfinished hole.

It is by no means clear if we are dealing here with aspects related to the ritual mind of the user of these vessels. It could be suggested that these bottles were once used as important paraphernalia of a performed ritual. They may have contained some sort of product which was consumed, probably using the beakers or bowls of the same deposit, while the ritual was in progress. When the ceremony was over, the assemblage of pottery vessels used at its performance could be left in the sacred land of the cemetery, perhaps in the same spot where the ritual had taken place. There, the vessels would be the proof and permanent reminders of such a performance. Probably the ritualized containers should not have been used ever again and the best way to avoid an undesired and profane reuse of them was to damage their bodies and make them unusable.

2.1.2. Slender Tapered Jars or Beakers

Four complete or nearly complete vessels of this kind (Fig. 4.a-c, f), and fragments of some incomplete ones (Fig. 4.d-e, Fig. 5.d-h), were found in Deposit B. Four of them (Fig. 4.a-e) are similar in shape and finish. They are made of Nile silt clay B2, with outer surfaces red coated but not burnished (10R 6/4). Four of them show visible traces of hand smoothing at their bases (Fig. 4.a, Fig. 5.e-g). As we have said before, beakers of this type have been found previously at Dra Abu el-Naga. The

German Expedition found a large number of them in a funerary context dated to the Second Intermediate Period, some of them with open holes in their surfaces, a peculiarity which is not attested in any of the beakers encountered in our Deposit B.

Another wide mouthed tapering beaker, slender but broader in shape than the previous ones, with a carefully modelled rim and hand smoothed round base (Fig. 4.f) was found in Deposit B. It is made of Nile silt clay B2, with smoothed red coated outer surface, not burnished (10R 6/4), without any open hole or scratches. Remains of a whitish wash are still covering zones of the outer surface of its modelled rim. A quite similar vase has been attested in a funerary context dated to the Second Intermediate Period at Dra Abu el-Naga. This latter specimen shows an open hole in the lower part of its body.²⁸

2.1.3. *Fragments of a Jar with Applied Modelled and Incised Decoration*

Two fragments of an incomplete bag-shaped Nile B2 jar thrown on the wheel, with modelled and incised decoration, was found in Deposit B. One of these sherds corresponds to the very much damaged neck and rim of the jar (Fig. 6.a-b). Its red coated outer surface is decorated with incised horizontal and wavy lines. Additional pieces of clay fashioned by hand were attached while still wet to the neck by external pressure. These small added pieces have been basically modelled in the shape of an eye, a nose, a mouth, and an ear to form a human face that is fragmentary today. There is also an additional rather elongated piece of clay added to the outer edge of the vessel's neck, which could be understood as the upper part of an arm or, perhaps, a raised hand now broken.

The second fragment (Fig. 6.c) is a sherd from the body of a jar. Its red coated surface (10R 6/6) is also decorated with incised lines in horizontal and wavy designs, and includes additional clay parts, an elongated one, perhaps resembling part of an arm, and a small preserved part of a curved shape. None of the added knobs to this second sherd reminds one specifically of human female features.

These two pottery fragments seem to be the remains of a fragmentary jar with added knobs of clay adapted to its outer surface in order to suggest the outward features of a human image, while the jar itself kept its primary function of a container.

During the early Middle Kingdom, certain bag-shaped jars were transformed into human shapes by the addition of hand-modelled elements to

²⁸ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 90-91, fig. 41. A wider similar vase in A. SEILER, *Bemerkungen zum Ende des Mittleren Reiches in Theben*, p. 67-78, fig. 26, ZN 01/418.

produce “mourner” or “Isis” vessels,²⁹ usually with female characteristics and always with the features of a human face roughly modelled by hand and applied to the surface of the vase before firing.³⁰ Some “mourner jars” are intended to stand with their opening down, having been transformed from a container into a ritual object used as a votive figurine, while others are simply bag-shaped containers with round bases and their peculiar addition of fairly modest amounts of clay to suggest a scarcely sculptural form. The sherds found in Deposit B seem to correspond to one of these last fragmentary “mourner” jars with bag-shaped body, intended to stand with their opening on top. The roughly depicted face at the fragmentary neck, as well as the added knob understood as a fragmentary raised hand on the same sherd, are similar to the modelled decoration exhibited on a vessel found at Dra Abu el-Naga by the German Expedition³¹ and to another vase kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.³²

A Middle Kingdom “mourner jar” is known with its opening down, which includes incised lines to suggest the garment worn by the mourner.³³ Aside from this example, no other incised motifs on these peculiar vases are known to me, neither in those used as votive figurines nor in those with their opening up. The pattern attested in the described Deposit B’s sherds and similar incised motifs were found, combined with added knobs or without them, on jars with slender body and modelled rim. Jars of this type as well as the bag-shaped ones with modelled decoration at their neck resembling in a simple way the features of a human face go back at least to the 12th Dynasty³⁴ and still occur throughout the Second Intermediate Period and early 18th Dynasty up to the

²⁹ J. BOURRIAU, *Pharaohs and Mortals. Egyptian Art in the Middle Kingdom (Exhibition organised by the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge 19 April to 26 June Liverpool 18 July to 4 September 1988)*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 94-95, no. 76; A. SEILER, “*Erhebe Dich, Vater? ..., Deine Milch dir, die in den Brüsten deiner Mutter Isis ist*”. *Zu Form und Funktion einer Gruppe anthropomorpher Gefäße aus der Nekropole von Dra Abu el-Naga/Theben*, in E. CZERNY, H. HUNGER, I. HEIN, D. MELMAN and A. SCHWAB (eds.), *Timelines. Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 149)*, vol. I, Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA, 2006, p. 321-322, Abb. 4-6.

³⁰ P.F. DORMAN, *Faces in Clay. Technique, Imagery, and Allusion in a Corpus of Ceramic Sculpture from Ancient Egypt (Münchner Ägyptologische Studien 52)*, Mainz, 2002, p. 14.

³¹ A. SEILER, *Erhebe Dich, Vater? ..., p. 321-322, fig. 4, ZN 99/94.*

³² DO. ARNOLD and J. BOURRIAU (eds.), *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Pottery, Fascicle 1 (Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 17)*, Mainz, 1993, p. 88, 91, fig. 100C.

³³ UCL 16126, in J. BOURRIAU, *Pharaohs and Mortals*, p. 94-95, no. 76.

³⁴ J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery, Egypt’s Golden Age*, p. 78, no. 50; J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery Figure Vases of the New Kingdom*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne 1* (1987), p. 86, pl. XXVI.1.

reign of Thutmose III. Despite the plastic decoration, the slender profiles of these jars were preserved throughout the time they were in use, retaining their characteristic shape and often their typical method of finishing, which in examples dated to the Second Intermediate Period/early 18th Dynasty includes incised motifs and/or horizontal or wavy lines.

Some of these jars include modelled arms applied to the neck and shoulder of the vessel, as well as forearms, hands and female breasts in the form of clay knobs adhering to the upper part of their bodies and necks.³⁵ One of them, with flat base, found at Esna in the early years of the 20th century, has a roughly modelled face and two arms applied to the neck. Forearms, hands and breasts in the shape of knobs of clay added to the upper part of its body. It includes a broken extension of circular shape modelled in clay and added to the outer edge of the vessel below its shoulders,³⁶ which seems to be quite similar to the circular shaped knob added to the fragmentary vessels of our Deposit B.

These slender vessels have been labelled “feminine-form jars”³⁷ and there are some examples which include a human face resembling, probably, a female deity³⁸ and have been related to milk, which is very nutritious.³⁹ There is, however, a recent find, a jar, uncovered in the courtyard of Tomb 33 at Qubbet el-Hawa (Aswan), which seems to evoke not a female image but a male one. This jar, a clear example of slender jars with modelled rim, is decorated with incised combed wavy and straight lines, and a human face, apparently male, attached to its neck but neither arms nor breasts.⁴⁰

³⁵ Examples are illustrated in G. BRUNTON, *Qau and Badari III* (British School of Archaeology in Egypt and Egyptian Research Account 50), London, 1930, pl. 27.100; D. DOWNES, *The Excavations at Esna 1905-1906*, Warminster, 1974, p. 48, Type 149 A (flat base); B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier*, p. 39-40, fig. 34, pl. 25, from Tomb R 29 of Qustul’s New Kingdom cemetery; J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery Figure Vases*, p. 86, pl. XXVI.2; G. LECUYOT, *La céramique de la Vallée des Reines. Bilan Préliminaire*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 4 (1996), p. 150-151, fig. 1, VdR 13; C. REGNER, *Keramik (Bonner Sammlung von Aegyptiaca 3)*, Wiesbaden, 1998, p. 190, no. 160, pl. 29.

³⁶ D. DOWNES, *The Excavations at Esna 1905-1906*, p. 28, Type 169, 48, 169A, dated to the early 18th Dynasty.

³⁷ B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier*, p. 39, type CJ-9.

³⁸ J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery Figure Vases*, p. 86; A. SEILER, *Erhebe Dich, Vater?...*, p. 317-320.

³⁹ J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery, Egypt’s Golden Age*, p. 78, no. 50, labelled “Milk vase”.

⁴⁰ M.J. LÓPEZ GRANDE and M. VALENTI COSTALES, *Qubbet el-Hawa (Asuán). Recipientes cerámicos con decoraciones incisas y plásticas hallados en el patio de la tumba QH 33*, in *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Egiptología* 18 (2008), p. 116-120, figs. 4-5, 15.a.

The discussed fragments from Deposit B seem to correspond to a Middle Kingdom bag-shaped “mourner jar”, but their decoration pattern of wavy and horizontal lines suggests a rather later date, to the Second Intermediate Period/early 18th Dynasty for the fragmentary jar. None of the preserved sherds includes any knob of clay which recalls a female breast, but a raised hand that evokes the well known mourner’s gesture. The preserved pieces are very scarce but they seem to point to a slightly later example of this specific vessel type, as the fabric and finish of its fragmentary remains fit well with the rest of the assemblage, which could be dated to the Second Intermediate Period/early 18th Dynasty.

2.2. *Open Shapes*

2.2.1. *Round or Flat Based Dish*

There is only a single example, consisting of a Nile B2 dish carefully turned, uncoated but smoothed (10R 6/4). It is incomplete, broken at its base (Fig. 6.f), with 31.0 cm rim diameter and 8.5 cm maximum preserved height. It belongs to a common type of dish and is widely attested from the Second Intermediate Period and the early 18th Dynasty⁴¹ up to the reign of Thutmose III.⁴²

2.2.2. *Flat Based Carinated Dish*

This gently carinated dish was made of Nile B2, with carefully serrated rim pinched with the fingers (Fig. 6.e). The exterior was red coated but not burnished (10R 6/4). The decoration consists of two bands of slightly incised parallel lines found inside, above the carination. It is irregular in height, from 4.7 cm to 5.5 cm, with 15.0 cm rim diameter and 5.0 cm base diameter.

This shape, either with flat or ring base, is known from the late Middle Kingdom and through the Second Intermediate Period to the early 18th Dynasty.⁴³ Similar serrated rims are seen on ring and flat based dishes found in funerary contexts at Dra Abu el-Naga by the German Expedition, dated to the 17th or early 18th Dynasties, some of them with incised decoration of wavy lines on their outer surface.⁴⁴ Similar dishes, usually provided with an elaborate incised decoration, dated to the late Middle

⁴¹ D.A. ASTON, *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes QI*, p. 89.

⁴² H.E. WINLOCK, *The Tomb of Queen Meryt-Amun at Thebes*, p. 29-30, fig. 16.k-m, pl. XXX.33; B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier*, p. 79, fig. 1.h Type CB-1d.

⁴³ J. BOURRIAU, *Beyond Avaris*, fig. 6. 15, no. 4-5, 12, 31.

⁴⁴ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 144-145, Abb. 64.

Kingdom have been found at Elephantine⁴⁵, and at Qubbet el-Hawa, (tombs 25/26 and 199) in contexts dated to the early New Kingdom.⁴⁶

2.2.3. *Bowl with Convex Sides and Inverted Rim*

This bowl was made of Nile B2 (Fig. 6.d). Its base is formed as a slight ring. Its maximum height is 5.3 cm, the rim diameter is 15.5 cm and the base diameter is 4.5 cm. This type of bowl is one of the most common vessels in the New Kingdom. A few of them have flat bases, but most of them are ring based. In small to medium-sizes, these bowls have red coatings and burnished interiors.⁴⁷ The discussed bowl is coated on its outer surface (10R 6/4), the interior is carefully burnished inside (10R 6/6) with straight lines in a triangular pattern.

Conclusions

The specific types of vessels which comprise both assemblages of pottery, as well as the holes deliberately cut into some of them, show us that these two Deposits were meant as offerings which involved some kind of magic ritual.

The rather restricted range of pottery types, among them the shiny red bottles most of them drilled with a hole or ritually “killed”, the fragmentary “mourner jar” and the dish with serrated rim, allow us to interpret the evidence as magical vessels which might have been used to provide the dead with the necessary supplies.⁴⁸ These pottery vases were probably understood as magical tools to be used alongside the recited words and spells and the prescribed gestures of the ritual while the performance was in progress; they might be the required sacred vessels with their red, shiny colour, on most of them, and their particular shapes.

⁴⁵ W. KAISER et alii, *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 55 (1999), p. 202-203, fig. 45.2.

⁴⁶ E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 1*, p. 185, p. 191, fig. 398 26/239, p. 200, p. 202, fig. 451 26/378; E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 3*, p. 1782, fig. 78 QH 110/195, p. 1902, p. 1894, fig. 97 QH 207/158.03, both decorated only on its outer surface. See also E. EDEL, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa bei Assuan. I. Abteilung, Band 3*, p. 1366, p. 1377, fig. 5 QH 99/129, QH 99/139, and M.J. LÓPEZ GRANDE and M. VALENTI COSTALES, *Qubbet el-Hawa (Asuán)*, p. 127-128, fig. 17.

⁴⁷ H.E. WINLOCK, *The Tomb of Queen Meryt-Amun at Thebes*, p. 29-30, fig. 16.f; B.B. WILLIAMS, *Excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan Frontier*, p. 35, Type CB-3, fig. 168.c; A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 143, fig. 63.

⁴⁸ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 120.

Ceremonies of the kind are evoked in funerary *corpora* such as the Pyramid Texts but also in four coffins from Meir.⁴⁹ In such funerary practices, offerings of food, pouring out libations, burning of incense and breaking of “the red” pottery vessels took place. When the ritual was over, the assemblage of pottery vessels used at its performance may have been left near by the tomb, perhaps in the same spot where the enactment had taken place. There, the vessels would be the proof and permanent reminders of such a performance. Probably the ritualized containers should not have been used ever again⁵⁰ and the best way to avoid an undesired reuse of these sacred vessels was to make their bodies unusable for further daily use by perforating them. The lustrous light red surface treatment of most of the jars is perhaps the most striking feature of both assemblages. The colour red symbolized adversity in ancient Egypt,⁵¹ perforating the bodies of the red jars and keeping the drilled vessels at the threshold of the tomb probably meant to defeat an adversary, a triumph that would endure for ever as long as the afterlife endures.

Most of the vessels of both deposits fall into the late Second Intermediate Period/early 18th Dynasty with many examples already having been found in the same area of our excavation and at other sites, mainly (the bottles and the fragmentary “mourner vase”) in Upper Egypt but also (the remaining shapes) in Lower Egypt.

From a chronological point of view, the pottery styles seen in both assemblages do not seem to have been short-lived. So, the bottles are clearly attested in the 17th and the early 18th Dynasties.⁵² Likewise, the beakers from both deposits and the largest bowl from Deposit B, have close parallels from the late Middle Kingdom and through the Second Intermediate Period to the reigns of the first pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty with significant examples in the Theban area.⁵³ A similar date might be given to the fragmentary “mourner jar” due to its bag-shaped body and the mourner’s gesture indicated by the raised hand. As it has been said before, despite these features, this peculiar vase includes the pattern of wavy and horizontal incised lines, a motif that combined with modelled decoration evokes human images, mainly of feminine features. This type seems to have been most popular just from the late Second Intermediate

⁴⁹ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, p. 170-171.

⁵⁰ R.K. RITNER, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice (Studies in Ancient Egyptian Civilization 54)*, Chicago, 1993, p. 148-150.

⁵¹ R.K. RITNER, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, p. 178.

⁵² A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, Faltafel 8, 3-8.

⁵³ A. SEILER, *Tradition & Wandel*, Faltafel 6.

Period/early 18th Dynasty up to the time of Thutmose III, as suggested by the decoration of certain slender jars. This date, the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, seems to be valid for the small bowl with ring base, and could also be given to the dish with serrated rim, a rather peculiar vase that seems to have been inspired by older types known since the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period. This dish, with its peculiar design, as well as the modelled jar, involves a more elaborate process of manufacture. Both should not be considered part of the ordinary ceramic repertoire and fall into a separate category that can be understood as a minor funerary art, doubtlessly created for a specific purpose as items of mortuary equipment or ritual funerary functions.⁵⁴

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⁵⁴ P.F. DORMAN, *Faces in Clay*, p. 4.

- P.F. DORMAN, *Faces in Clay. Technique, Imagery, and Allusion in a Corpus of Ceramic Sculpture from Ancient Egypt* (Münchner Ägyptologische Studien 52), Mainz, 2002.
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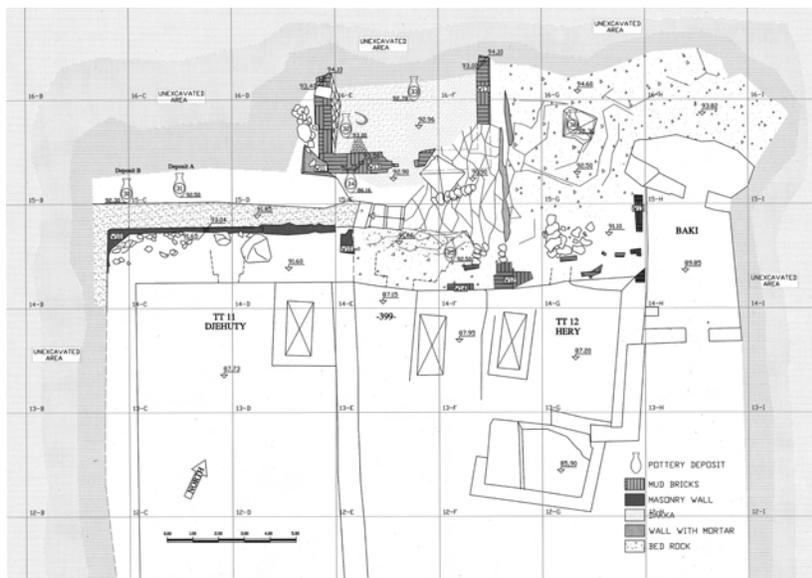


Fig. 1. Plan with the location of Deposit A and Deposit B above Dejhuty's (TT 11) rock-cut chapel, not far from the remains of its built façade (drawn by C. Cabrera).

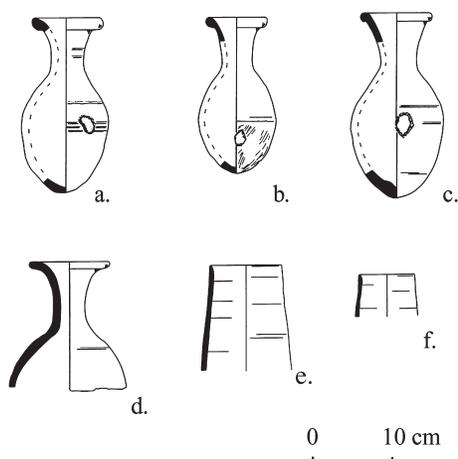


Fig. 2. Pottery vessels from Deposit A: a) 15C/80A-1; b) 15C/80A-4; c) 15C/80A-3; d) 15C80A-2; e) 15C/80-A-5; f) 15C/80A-6 (drawings inked by M. Valenti).

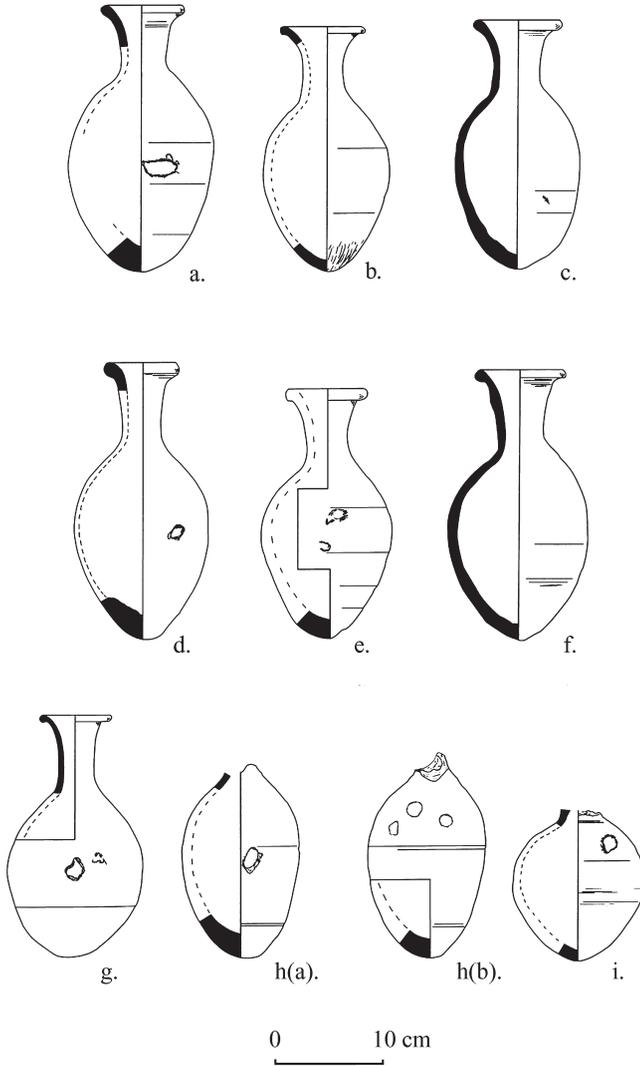


Fig. 3. Round based slender bottles from Deposit B: a) 15C/80B-1; b) 15C/80B-2; c) 15C/80B-3; d) 15C/80B-4; e) 15C/80B-5; f) 15C/80B-6; g) 15C/80B-7; h) 15C/80B-8; i) 15C/80B-9 (drawings inked by M. Valenti).

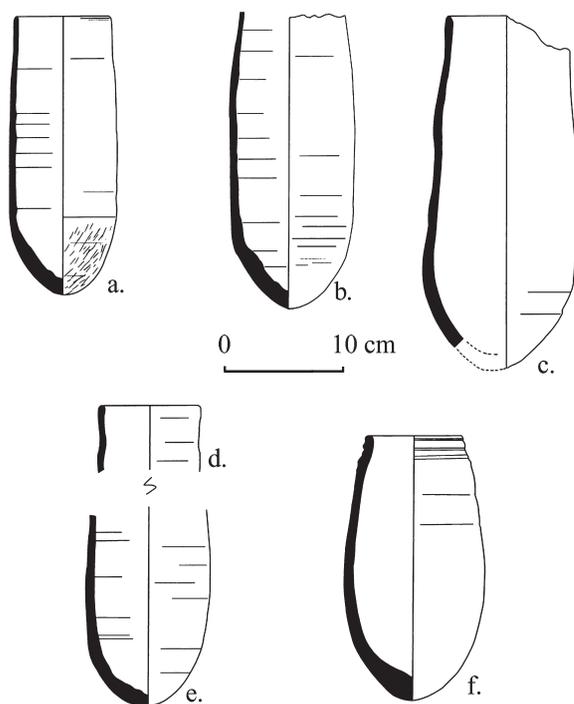


Fig. 4. Tapered jars or beakers from Deposit B: a) 15C/80B-20; b) 15C/80B-21; c) 15C/80B-22; e) 15C/80B-23; f) 15C/80B-25 (drawings inked by M. Valenti).

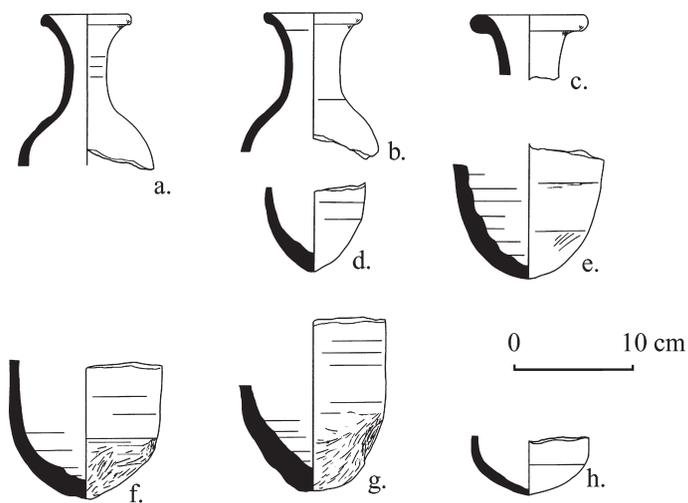


Fig. 5. Fragments of incomplete vessels from Deposit B: a) 15C/80B-10; b) 15C/80B-11; c) 15C/80B-14; d) 15C/80B-13; e) 15C/80B-15; f) 15C/80B-17; g) 15C/80B-18; g) 15C/80B-19 (drawings inked by M. Valenti).

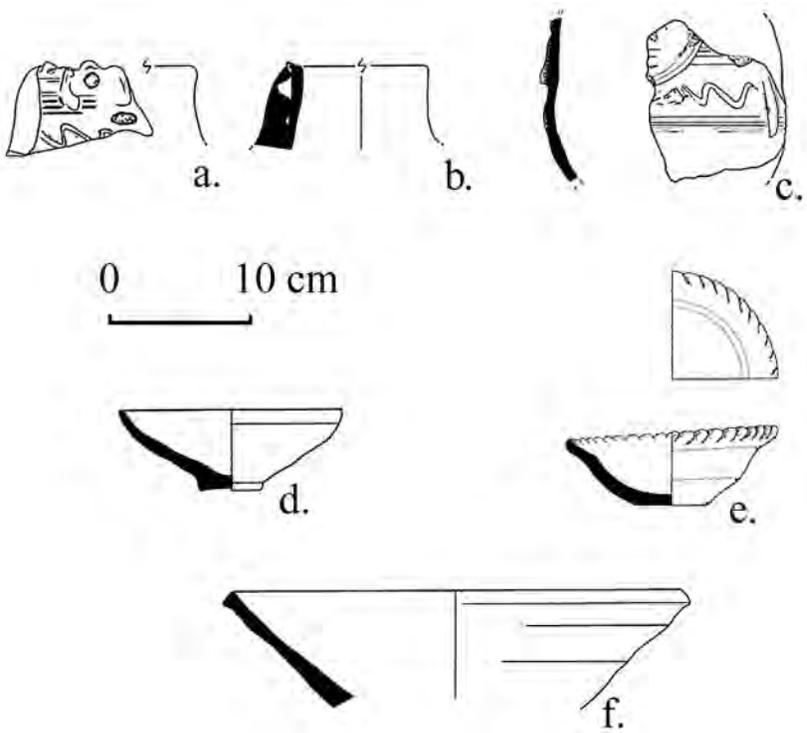
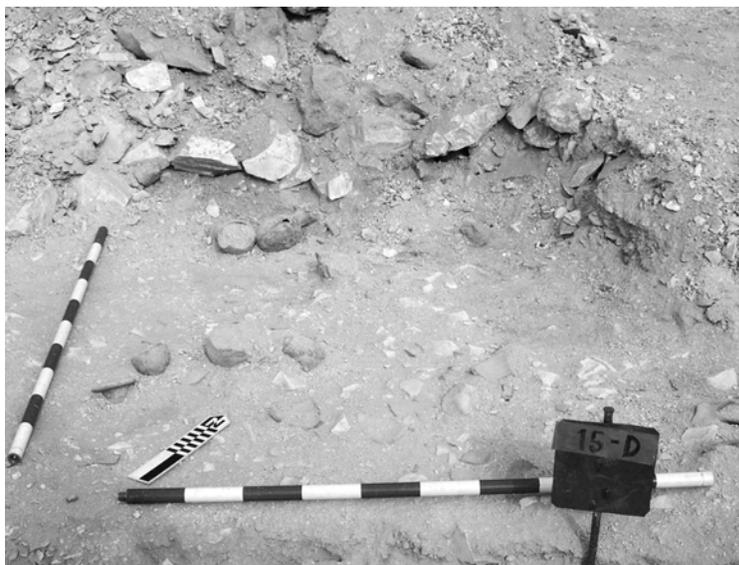


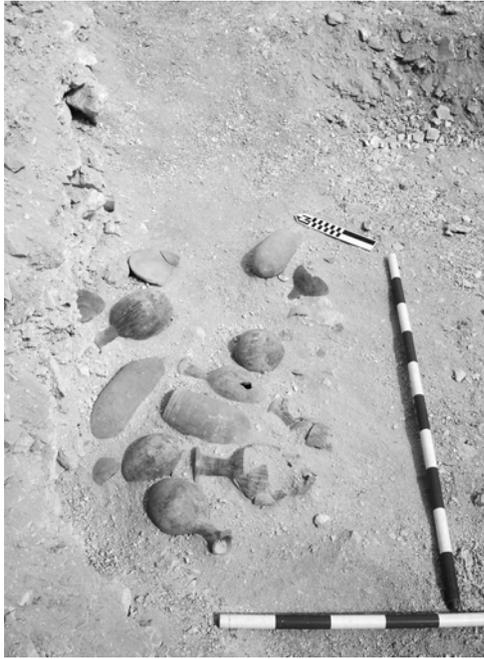
Fig. 6. Fragments of an incomplete jar (a-c) and open shapes from Deposit B:
 a-b) 15C/80B-26,1; c) 15C/80B-26,2; d) 15C/80B-27; e) 15C/80B-28;
 f) 15C/80B-29 (drawings inked by M. Valenti).



Pl. 1. Deposit A was found under an earthen conglomerate of fragmentary limestone chips, which mainly corresponds to the scattered pieces of the hill's debris.



Pl. 2. Three Roundbased Slender Bottles from Deposit A. They show an accurate finish, with burnished red coated surface and have small round holes deliberately opened in their bodies.



Pl. 3. Deposit B was found in front of the south-west preserved corner of the surmounting Djehuty's tomb façade, 2 meters to the south of Deposit A.



Pl. 4. Vessels from Deposit B.