

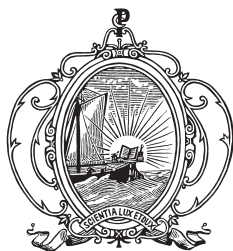
ORIENTALIA LOVANIENSIA  
ANALECTA  
————— 204 —————

# UNDER THE POTTER'S TREE

Studies on Ancient Egypt  
Presented to Janine Bourriau  
on the Occasion of her 70th Birthday

edited by

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UITGEVERIJ PEETERS en DEPARTEMENT OOSTERSE STUDIES  
LEUVEN – PARIS – WALPOLE, MA  
2011

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## THE EARLY OLD KINGDOM AT NUWAYRĀT IN THE 16TH UPPER EGYPTIAN NOME

Marleen DE MEYER, Stefanie VEREecken, Bart VANThUYNE,  
Stan HENDRICKX, Lies OP DE BEECK and Harco WILLEMS

When, after a period of hibernation of almost ten years, the Dayr al-Barshā project was reactivated in 2002, we had to begin from scratch. For one thing, we had hardly any basis in ceramic analysis. If we have nonetheless succeeded in advancing in this domain, this is due to no mean extent to the efforts of Janine; and of course Peter French. Under the rather trying conditions of the first campaigns, they made great efforts to familiarize us with modern methods and techniques of pottery analysis. And still, they sometimes join our team, offering a kind of master classes to our ceramicists. The following pages are a token of friendship and gratitude to both of them.

Nuwayrāt is a little known necropolis in the 16th Upper Egyptian Nome (the Oryx Nome), located 8 kilometres north of Bānī Ḥasan on the east bank of the Nile.<sup>1</sup> Two different types of tombs are encountered at the site: rock tombs that are arranged in two long rows above one another and that consist of small rock-cut chapels with one or more shafts in them (pl. 1); and on the foothills below these rock tombs burials underneath a circular superstructure consisting of rough limestone boulders (pl. 3).<sup>2</sup>

Whilst at Bānī Ḥasan in 1902–1904, Garstang also devoted some of his time to Nuwayrāt.<sup>3</sup> He excavated about one hundred tombs there, not

<sup>1</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie der Region zwischen Mallawi und Samalut*, Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Beihefte 30 (Wiesbaden, 1981), 64 and map 1.

<sup>2</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 190-99; H. WILLEMS, *Les Textes des Sarcophages et la démocratie. Éléments d'une histoire culturelle du Moyen Empire égyptien. Quatre conférences présentées à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, mai 2006* (Paris, 2008), 18-19 and pl. I.

<sup>3</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt as Illustrated by Tombs of the Middle Kingdom. A Report of Excavations Made in the Necropolis of Beni Hassan During 1902–3–4* (London, 1907), 15, 26-30 and pl. II; J. GARSTANG, 'Excavations at Beni-Hasan in Upper Egypt (Second Season)', *Man: A Monthly Record of Anthropological Science* 4 (1904b), 97-99, 97; B. PORTER and R. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, vol. IV, Lower and Middle Egypt (Oxford, 1934), 163.

specifying whether this number covers only rock tombs or also the burials underneath stone circles. He separates the rock tombs into two groups: a small southern group which he dates to the 3rd Dynasty “or even earlier” (pl. 4),<sup>4</sup> and a large northern group which he dates to the “IVth Dynasty or thereabouts”, his plan suggesting a date in “III and IV Dyns.”.<sup>5</sup> For the circular graves he indicates a date in the 3rd Dynasty.

Unfortunately, none of these excavations has ever been published, and next to nothing is known about the funerary equipment from these tombs. Garstang based his dating of the rock tombs on the small size and simple architectural construction of the chapels and shafts, and on the fact that the interments in the earliest rock tombs at the site were in oval pottery vessels.<sup>6</sup> These pottery coffins were closed off with a domed lid, underneath which the deceased was placed in a heavily contracted position. This type of burial is very similar to those encountered underneath the circle graves that are located in front of the rock tombs on the foot-hills.<sup>7</sup>

Kessler<sup>8</sup> contends the early dating of the rock tombs by Garstang and claims that Nuwayrāt has all the characteristics of a typical later Old Kingdom rock necropolis in Middle Egypt, comparing it in particular to the Old Kingdom rock tombs at Dayr al-Barshā and al-Shaykh Saʿīd.<sup>9</sup> In addition Kessler states that on the surface at Nuwayrāt pottery dating to the 4th to 6th Dynasties is spread out, without, however, providing any concrete examples of the pottery he refers to. During the 2006 campaign of the K.U.Leuven mission to Dayr al-Barshā, a site walk was carried out at Nuwayrāt in order to investigate this problem.

## 1. Rock tombs

The rock tombs are strung along the hill in a horizontal layer that clearly follows one stratum of limestone, with a few tombs clustered in a second layer above (pl. 1). Kessler<sup>10</sup> already noted a chronological

<sup>4</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs*, pl. II.

<sup>5</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs*, 15 and pl. II.

<sup>6</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs*, 26-28; fig. 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 192.

<sup>9</sup> For the Old Kingdom rock tombs at al-Shaykh Saʿīd, see N. DE G. DAVIES, *The Rock Tombs of Sheikh Saïd* (London, 1901). For the Old Kingdom rock tombs at Dayr al-Barshā, see M. DE MEYER, *Old Kingdom Rock Tombs at Dayr al-Barshā. Archaeological and Textual Evidence of their Use and Reuse in Zones 4 and 7* (Doctoral dissertation Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2008).



north-south development of the necropolis. The northernmost tombs are very small in size and the available floor space is almost entirely taken up by the burial shaft. Further towards the south, the tomb chapels grow larger with an entrance in the north and a room that extends to the south, creating an L-shaped ground plan.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally this plan is doubled, resulting in an east-west corridor that leads to two rooms each holding their own shafts.<sup>12</sup> In the western wall near the shafts a simple false door is sometimes carved into the rock, and one of the larger tombs even bears remains of painted decoration.<sup>13</sup>

Kessler's dating of these rock tombs in the late Old Kingdom is for a large part based on a comparison to the rock tombs at Dayr al-Barshā and al-Shaykh Sa'īd.<sup>14</sup> However, the architectural differences outweigh the similarities between the tombs in these three necropoleis. The L-shaped ground plan of Nuwayrāt is not found at Dayr al-Barshā, where the entrance is generally located in the centre of the façade. The entrance door to the rock tombs at Nuwayrāt is very wide, resulting in an almost square opening (pl. 2), which is not the case at the other two sites. None of the rock tombs at Nuwayrāt shows traces of rock-cut statues, which are in evidence at the other sites even in a number of tombs that do not belong to persons of the highest layers of the provincial administration. However, the biggest difference can be observed in the shaft construction. Since the subterranean layout of the tombs at al-Shaykh Sa'īd is not known, we compare only to Dayr al-Barshā. The shafts there that are dated to the 6th Dynasty based on funerary equipment and ceramics, all follow a similar pattern. They are square in ground plan (about 1 × 1 m), and at a depth of on average 3 to 4 m but sometimes deeper a burial chamber is situated either in the eastern or the western shaft wall, always with an extension to the south. While no sections or ground plans of the subterranean parts of the tombs of Nuwayrāt have ever been published, personal observation confirms that this layout is not found there. Instead the shafts are very shallow (ca. 2 m deep or less) and lead to a burial chamber, which according to Kessler<sup>15</sup> is situated to the west when visible. In this way the burial chamber is located closely underneath the simple false door that is sometimes present in the western wall of the

<sup>10</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 192.

<sup>11</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 193, fig. 4-6.

<sup>12</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 194, fig. 7.

<sup>13</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 367, pl. V.1.

<sup>14</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 192.

<sup>15</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 193.

tomb chapel. This type of shallow shaft construction rather reminds one of the earliest rock tombs at Giza (reign of Khafra-Menkaura)<sup>16</sup> and is not observed at Dayr al-Barshā.

To compare the rock tombs of Nuwayrāt to those at Dayr al-Barshā and al-Shaykh Saʿīd is valid in so far as all three sites have a large number of rock tombs, but the details of the architecture are clearly different and therefore the dating of Nuwayrāt should not be based on such a comparison. An interesting observation is that the rock tombs at Nuwayrāt do not seem to form a continuous row, but that in some instances a void occurs in between clusters of tombs. These clusters of rock tombs seem to relate to the clusters of rock circle tombs lower on the hill. These likewise show gaps in between grouped tombs. While no detailed map of the necropolis exists to visualise this, perhaps the rock tombs and the circle tombs form meaningful clusters together.

## 2. Rock circle tombs

On the slope of the hill, below the rock tombs, numerous circles made of larger and smaller boulders can be seen (pl. 3). They occur over the same distance as the rock tombs and in the southern part of the site, they even continue beyond, all in all over a length of close to 1 km. The width of the area with rock circles varies rather strongly, between about 50 and 100 m. All of the stone circles are beyond any doubt the result of human activity and many are surrounded by potsherds and fragments of human bone. No worked stones have been observed and all of the blocks must have been picked up in the immediate vicinity, on the hill slope towards the tombs. Although stone circles are present all over the area, they are not evenly dispersed. This seems unrelated to the particularities of the rugged landscape because the circles are present both on the ridges and in the gullies between them. The burials tend to be concentrated in clusters. Usually there is a central grave around which several more burials are arranged. Sometimes twin burials occur, where the coffins are buried closely together within the stone circle. Individual rock circle burials are also noted.

The centre of the rock circles generally consists of a rectangular, circular, or oval, open area in which a pottery coffin or pot burial was

<sup>16</sup> P. JÁNOSI, *Giza in der 4. Dynastie. Die Baugeschichte und Belegung einer Nekropole des Alten Reiches. 1. Die Mastabas der Kernfriedhöfe und die Felsgräber*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Denkschriften der Gesamtkademie 30 (Vienna, 2005), 326.

located (pl. 5). Most have been disturbed and this must be due to plundering in antiquity and/or unsystematic excavation by Garstang. There is also clear evidence for recent disturbance in this area, probably linked to land reclamation projects at the desert edge in the immediate vicinity of the rock circle tombs. Only in some instances a partial stone cover remains.

Several fragmented pottery coffins are exposed and these are oblong-shaped, whereas Garstang found similar coffins in the nearby rock tombs. These coffins were intended to hold contracted burials. No fragments of pottery coffin lids have so far been observed among the rock circles, though they may have existed because fragments of pottery coffins have been noticed with a groove on top of the rim, perhaps intended for keeping a lid in position. Garstang also recorded pot burials near the southern rock tombs where the body lay “under a large inverted pottery vessel which covered or contained them”.<sup>17</sup> Inverted pot burials were seen elsewhere at the site as well (see pl. 6). Pottery coffin and pot burials are common in the 3rd and 4th Dynasties,<sup>18</sup> although pot burials remain in use until the late Old Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

Sherds from pottery coffins are the most frequently encountered class of ceramic across the terrain. There are fragments of large vats, many of which have a restricted upper section. Such large vats are well known for the Old Kingdom and were used for brewing.<sup>20</sup> Two types of rims have been distinguished,<sup>21</sup> although a more profound investigation will most probably show that more variation existed. The first type has a rounded or sub-rounded lip rim and consists of a separate coil of clay added to the vessel. Parallels occur frequently during the early Old Kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Burial Customs*, 27-28.

<sup>18</sup> J. GARSTANG, *Tombs of the Third Egyptian Dynasty at Reqaqnah and Bet Khallaf* (London, 1904), 51-57; T.E. PEET and W.L.S. LOAT, *The Cemeteries of Abydos*, Egypt Exploration Fund Memoir 35 (London, 1913), 20-22; A.M. DONADONI ROVERI, *I sarcofagi Egizi dalle origini alla fine dell'Antico Regno* (Rome, 1969), 31-40; S. HENDRICKX, ‘La nécropole de l’Est à Adaiïma. Position chronologique et parallèles’, *Archéo-Nil* 8 (1998), 105-128; E. CRUBÉZY, T. JANIN and B. MIDANT-REYNES, *Adaiïma II. Le nécropole prédynastique* (Cairo, 2002); L. COTELLE-MICHEL, *Les sarcophages en terre cuite en Egypte et en Nubie: de l’époque prédynastique à l’époque romaine* (Dijon, 2004), 57-59, 212-229.

<sup>19</sup> S.J. SEIDLMEYER, *Gräberfelder aus dem Übergang vom Alten zum Mittleren Reich. Studien zur Archäologie der Ersten Zwischenzeit*, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens 1 (Heidelberg, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion im Alten Reich. Ikonographie und Archäologie eines Gebrauchsartikels*, Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens 14 (Heidelberg, 1998), 191-199.

<sup>21</sup> D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion*, 198-199.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion*, Abb. 14a. 3-5, 14b. 8-9.

The second type of rim continues the contour of the vessel but is separated from it by an incised line and a flat top. It is equally well known for the Old Kingdom.<sup>23</sup> As a variation of the latter type, the outer contour of the rim is, in a number of cases, slightly convex.<sup>24</sup> Some of the vats were spouted, for which again many parallels can be found in the early Old Kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

An identical situation is found in zone 8 at Dayr al-Barshā, over an even larger area. Excavation and survey in the spring of 2009-2010 has shown that at that site stone circle burials in jars, reed baskets, and small wooden coffins also occur. Funerary goods are very limited and consist mainly of pottery. In some burials remains of textile wrappings are preserved. Preliminary excavation results also indicate that besides adults, many children were buried in the rock circle cemetery.

Besides the cemeteries at Nuwayrāt and Dayr al-Barshā, hardly any parallels are known. In Upper Egypt, only a small 2nd Dynasty cemetery at al-Kāb can be mentioned.<sup>26</sup> A possible variant can be found at Naja al-Dayr where similar pottery coffins have been found in pit burials which were frequently surrounded and covered with rough stones.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Pottery

In total 17 pottery fragments were analyzed, described and drawn on the spot.<sup>28</sup> The numbering of the pottery fragments refers to the different locations where they were collected: numbers beginning with N1 were scattered in between the northernmost rock circle tombs, those beginning with N2 were found a little bit further south on the hill in front of the entrances of the central rock tombs (see pl. 1).

<sup>23</sup> E.g. D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion*, Abb. 14a. 2; 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion*, Abb. 14b. 12.

<sup>25</sup> D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion*, Abb. 15.

<sup>26</sup> S. HENDRICKX, D. HUYGE and E. WARMENBOL, 'Un cimetière particulier de la deuxième dynastie à Elkab', *Archéo-Nil* 12 (2002), 47-54.

<sup>27</sup> A.C. MACE, *The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga-ed-Dêr* II. University of California Publications, Egyptian Archaeology 3 (Leipzig, 1909); G.A. REISNER, *A Provincial Cemetery of the Pyramid Age: Naga-ed-Dêr* III, University of California Publications Egyptian Archaeology 6 (Berkeley, 1932). Larger rock circle tombs are known from Upper Egypt, at for example al-Kāb and Hierakonpolis, but these are made of slabs of sandstone and are of far more recent date: I. RALSTON, 'Exploring the Secret of the Gebel', *Nekhen News* 14 (2002), 19-20, 19-20; G. PYKE, 'Ceramic Evidence from the Tumulus Cemetery', *Nekhen News* 14 (2002), 20-21.

<sup>28</sup> We express our gratitude to inspector Ḥasan Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Ghannī for facilitating this work.

Type: Bowl with inner ledge rim and flat base (fig. 1)

Six fragments of bowls with inner ledge rim and flat base were found. This type of bowl already appears during the Early Dynastic Period,<sup>29</sup> and remains popular in pottery assemblages, both in funerary and settlement contexts, from both Upper and Lower Egypt.<sup>30</sup> The typo-chronological evo-

<sup>29</sup> W.M.F. PETRIE, *Medum* (London, 1892), pl. XLVI, L 26 a-b; Naqāda, tomb 26, date unknown: E.J. BAUMGARTEL, *Petrie's Naqada Excavation: a Supplement* (London, 1970), pl. XI0; Ballās, tomb 208, Naqada III: W.M.F. PETRIE, *Koptos* (London, 1896), pl. V; the tomb of Khasekhemui at Abydos: E.-M. ENGEL, 'Abydos. Umm el-Qa'ab, Grab des Chasechemui', *Bulletin de Liaison du Groupe International d'Etude de la Céramique Egyptienne* 21 (Cairo, 2000), 50-58, 28, Abb. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Tall al-Far'īn-Buto, 2nd-3rd Dyn.: U. HARTUNG, P. BALLETT, F. BÉGUIN, J.D. BOURRIAU, D. DIXNEUF, A. VON DEN DRIESCH, P. FRENCH, R. HARTMANN, T. HERBICH, C. KITAGAWA, P. KOPP, G. LECUYOT, M.-D. NENNA, A. SCHMITT, G. SENOL, A. SENOL, 'Tell el-Fara'īn-Buto', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 63 (2007), 69-166, Abb. 11.2-3; Elephantine, 2nd-3rd Dyn.: W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, M. BOMMAS, T. HIKADE, F. HOFFMAN, H. JARITZ, P. KOPP, W. NIEDERBERGER, J.-P. PÄTZNICK, B. VON PILGRIM, C. VON PILGRIM, D. RAUE, T.I. RZEUSKA, S. SCHATEN, A. SEILER, L. STALDER and M. ZIERMANN, 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 55 (1999), 173-190, 180, Abb. 37.6, Abb. 39.5-7; al-Kāb, 3rd Dyn. mastaba (unpublished); 3rd Dyn.: S. HENDRICKX and M. EYCKERMAN, 'The 1955 Excavation of an Early Old Kingdom Storage Site at Elkab', in: W. CLAES, H. DE MEULENAERE and S. HENDRICKX (eds.), *Elkab and Beyond. Studies in Honour of Luc Limme*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 191 (Leuven-Paris-Walpole, 2009), 1-30, no. 8, fig. 18, 3rd Dyn. (?); L. OP DE BEECK, with the collaboration of F. DEPUYDT, L. MOELANTS and F. ROLOUX, 'Early Old Kingdom Pottery from Excavations to the North of the Great Enclosure Wall at Elkab', in: W. CLAES, H. DE MEULENAERE and S. HENDRICKX (eds.), *Elkab and Beyond: Studies in Honour of Luc Limme*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 191 (Leuven, 2009), 49-74, fig. 4.5; 4th Dyn.(?): J.E. QUIBELL, *El Kab*, British School of Archaeology in Egypt 3 (London, 1898), pl. XII.27/34/37/39; Saqqāra, 3rd-4th Dyn.: T.I. RZEUSKA, 'West Saqqara 2001, The Pottery', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 13 (2002), fig. 1, K.01-52/5; al-Tārif, 4th Dyn.: A. EGGBRECHT, 'Frühe Keramik aus El-Tārif', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 30 (1974), 171-188, 178, Tf. 51a; Maidūm, early 4th Dyn.: W.M.F. PETRIE, *Medum*, pl. XXXI.25; Dahshūr, early 4th Dyn: R. STADELMANN, N. ALEXANIAN, 'Die Friedhöfe des Alten und Mittleren Reiches in Dahschur', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 54 (1998), 293-317, 300, Abb. 3.15; 307, Abb. 6.3/8; Saqqāra, 3rd Dyn.: J.E. QUIBELL, *The Tomb of Hesy. Excavations at Saqqara (1911-12)* (Cairo, 1913), pl. XXVII.21; Halwān: C.E. KÖHLER, *Helwan I. Excavations in the Early Dynastic Cemetery Season 1997/98. Studien zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altägyptens* 24 (Heidelberg, 2005), pl. 24.10-13; Giza, 4th Dyn.: K. KROMER, *Siedlungsfunde aus dem Frühen Alten Reich in Giseh. Österreichische Ausgrabungen 1971-1975*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Denkschriften der Gesamtkademie 136 (Vienna, 1978), Taf. 23.1; G.A. REISNER, *A History of the Giza Necropolis II* (Cambridge, 1955), 84, fig. 75, no. 69; early 4th Dyn.: A. WODZINSKA, 'Preliminary Ceramic Report', in: M. LEHNER and W. WETTERSTROM (eds.), *Giza Reports, The Giza Plateau Mapping Project Volume 1: Project History, Survey, Ceramics, and Main Street and Gallery III. 4 Operations* (Boston, 2007), 279-324, 297, fig. 11.30; Abū Rawwāsh, 4th Dyn.: S. MARCHAND and M. BAUD, 'La Céramique Miniature d'Abu Rawash', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 96

lution of the bowl with inner ledge rim is well known from material analyzed at Elephantine where the internal rim seems to broaden over time, as the vessel becomes shallower.<sup>31</sup> From the 4th Dynasty on, a tendency to a more open and flaring shape can be observed at several sites.<sup>32</sup>

The Nuwayrāt bowls with inner ledge rim are all made in a Nile C fabric according to the Vienna system,<sup>33</sup> and wherever the flat base is preserved, typical scraping marks are clearly observable on the outside. The vessels show no further surface treatment, except for a layer of self-slip on both inside and outside. Despite the fact that only a few examples were analysed, there seems to be a large (Rx around 17cm) and a smaller sub-type (Rx around 12cm). The shape of N1/1, N1/4 and N2/1 is very similar to the ones found at Elephantine in *Bauschicht* VIII.1,<sup>34</sup> although the latter are much larger in size. Exactly the same shape as that of N1/1 is also attested at the nearby site of Dayr al-Barshā (M427/1), where it was discovered during the 2002 survey in the area of the rock circle tombs in Zone 8.<sup>35</sup> Bowl N1/7 leans more towards the older shapes of Elephantine as it is deeper and has a smaller inner ledge.<sup>36</sup> One example,

(1996), 255-286, 278, n. 53, fig. 8, no. 20-21; Tall El-Farā'in / Buto, 3th-4th Dyn.: T. VON DER WAY, K. SCHMIDT, E.C. KÖHLER, 'Tell el Farā'in – Buto', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 45 (1989), Abb. 9.2; Sadd al-Kaffāra, early 4th Dyn.: G. DREYER and H. JARITZ, 'Die Arbeiterunterkünfte am Sadd el-Kafara', in: *Der Sadd el-Kafara: die älteste Talsperre der Welt*, Leichtweiss-Institut für Wasserbau der Technischen Universität (Braunschweig, 1983), Abb. 7.a.

<sup>31</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht', 173-190, 183; "tieferer Ansatz der Innenleiste".

<sup>32</sup> Dahshūr: D. FALTINGS, 'Die Keramik aus den Grabungen an der nördlichen Pyramide des Snofru in Dahschur. Arbeitsbericht über die Kampagnen 1983-1986', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 45 (1989), 133-154, 138, Abb. 3b; Abū Rawwāsh: S. MARCHAND and M. BAUD, 'La Céramique Miniature d'Abu Rawash', 278, fig. 8; Giza: G.A. REISNER, *A History of the Giza Necropolis* II, fig. 115; A. WODZINSKA, 'Preliminary Ceramic Report', 279-324, 304, fig. 11 (30 CD32A), K. KROMER, *Siedlungsfunde aus dem Frühen Alten Reich in Giseh*, Tf. 23.1,5; al-Shaykh Sa'īd: H. WILLEMS, S. VEREECKEN, L. KUIJPER, B. VANTHUYNE, E. MARINOVA, V. LINSSEELE, G. VERSTRAETEN, S. HENDRICKX, M. EYKERMANN, A. VAN DEN BROECK, W. VAN NEER, J. BOURRIAU, P. FRENCH, CHR. PEETERS, V. DE LAET, S. MORTIER, Z. DE KOONING, 'An Industrial Site at al-Shaykh-Sa'īd/Wādī Zabayda' *Ägypten & Levante* 19 (2009) 310-311, fig. 10. Sadd al-Kaffāra, early 4th Dyn.: G. DREYER and H. JARITZ, 'Die Arbeiterunterkünfte am Sadd el-Kafara', Abb. 7 (a).

<sup>33</sup> H.-Å. NORDSTRÖM and J. BOURRIAU, 'Ceramic Technology: Clays and Fabrics', in: DO. ARNOLD and J. BOURRIAU (eds.), *An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Pottery*, Sonderdruck des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 17 (Mainz, 1993), 173-174.

<sup>34</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht', 173-190, Abb. 39.5-7.

<sup>35</sup> L. OP DE BEECK and S. HENDRICKX, 'Deir al-Barsha Pottery Survey', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* (In press).

<sup>36</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht', Abb. 37.3.

N1/8, stands out because of its particular shape, as the inner ledge is much larger than on the ones mentioned before. All this taken together makes a date in the late 3rd to early 4th Dynasty very plausible. A later date can be ruled out as the examples from the mid 4th Dynasty from al-Shaykh Sa'īd<sup>37</sup> and Giza<sup>38</sup> are characterised by a more flaring and shallow shape.

Diagnostic	Fabric	Rx	H	R-Ledge	Surf. Treat.
N1/1	Nile C	18	5,6	1,4	Self-slip
N1/4	Nile C	12,5	3,8	0,8	Self-slip
N1/7	Nile C	12	5,5	0,7	Self-slip
N1/8	Nile C	17	4,5	1,2	Self-slip
N2/1	Nile C	16,5	5,2	1	Self-slip

Type: Beer jar (fig. 2)

Two examples were found of beer jars with a so-called “*Kragenhals*”, formed by a ledge on the outside of the rim. This type is well-known from the site of Elephantine where it appears from the late 2nd Dynasty onwards, into the beginning of the 4th Dynasty, with its *floruit* clearly during the 3rd Dynasty,<sup>39</sup> which is confirmed by many parallels all over the country.<sup>40</sup> Several examples were also found in the mastabas of the 3rd and 4th Dynasties at Saqqāra.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> W. WILLEMS et al., ‘An Industrial Site at al-Shaykh-Sa'īd/Wādī Zabayda', *Ägypten & Levante* 19 (2009), 310-311, fig. 10.

<sup>38</sup> A. WODZINSKA, ‘Preliminary Ceramic Report’, 297, fig. 11.30.

<sup>39</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., ‘Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht’, 181, Abb. 37.8, 38.3.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Kāb, 3rd Dyn. unpublished; Abydos: W.M.F. PETRIE, *Abydos* II, Egypt Exploration Fund Memoir 24 (London, 1903), pl. XLIII, 80; Qāw, 3rd Dyn.: G. BRUNTON, *Qau and Badari I*, British School of Archaeology in Egypt 44 (London, 1927), pl. XXIV, 68F3-4; Bayt Khallāf, 3rd Dyn.: J. GARSTANG, *Mahāsna and Bêt Khallāf*, Egyptian Research Account 7 (London, 1902), pl. XXI, 29; Maidūm, 3rd Dyn.: W.M.F. PETRIE, E. MACKAY and G.A. WAINWRIGHT, *Meydum and Memphis* III, British School of Archaeology in Egypt 18 (London, 1910), pl. XXXVI, 63; Dahshūr, 4th Dyn.: D. FALTINGS, ‘Die Keramik aus den Grabungen an der nördlichen Pyramide des Snofru in Dahschur’, 133-154, 138, Abb. 3b, R. STADELMANN and N. ALEXANIAN, ‘Die Friedhöfe des Alten und Mittleren Reiches in Dahschur’, 293-317, 300, Abb. 3.11; 307, Abb. 6.11-17. For an overview on the typology of beer jars see also D. FALTINGS, *Die Keramik der Lebensmittelproduktion im Alten Reich*, 221, Abb. 16.10, 11, 14, 18, 38, 39, 40, 41, 46.

<sup>41</sup> H. GHALY, ‘Ein Friedhof von Ziegelmastabas des Alten Reiches am Unasaufweg in Saqqara’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 50 (1994), 57-69, 66, Abb. 5; T.I. RZEUSKA, ‘West Saqqara 2000, The Pottery’, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 12 (2001), 138-147, 39, fig. 1.1-3.

The two beer jar fragments found at Nuwayrāt are both made in a Nile C fabric and have a thin layer of self slip, caused by the shaping and finishing of the vessels with wet hands. A row of fingerprints is still clearly visible on the inside of N1/2. The rim diameter of the jars lies around 10 cm, which seems to be a regular size for this type of vessel.<sup>42</sup>

Diagnostic	Fabric	Rx	H	Sx	R-Ledge	Surf. Treat.
N1/3	Nile C	9	7,6	14,2	2,5	self-slip
N1/2	Nile C	10	5,8	15	2,5	self-slip

Type: Maidūm bowl (fig. 3)

Six fragments could be determined as coming from Maidūm bowls, and although no parts of the bases are preserved, different subtypes can be recognized according to the shaping of the shoulder (rounded or carinated), the height and the different position of the rim and shoulder ( $Rx < Sx$  or  $Rx = Sx$ ).

N1/6, N2/5 and N2/4 are all fairly deep Maidūm bowls with a well-developed neck and the maximum diameter located on the shoulder. The combination of these features rather points to an Early Old Kingdom date,<sup>43</sup> which is confirmed by parallels from different sites such as Tall al-Far‘īn<sup>44</sup>, al-Kāb<sup>45</sup> and Elephantine,<sup>46</sup> dating to the late 2nd, 3rd and 4th Dynasties. Similar shapes were also found at Dayr al-Barshā<sup>47</sup> scattered around the stone circle tombs.

N1/8 and N1/9 on the other hand, represent a later tradition of Maidūm bowls as the shallow shape in combination with the sharp shoulder is a typical feature of 4th and 5th Dynasty bowls.<sup>48</sup> The round-shouldered bowl N1/5 with its maximum diameter on the shoulder and the outwards recurved rim is a subtype that already appears in the early Old Kingdom but remains popular until the end of it.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., ‘Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht’, Abb. 36.7, 37.8, 38.3.

<sup>43</sup> L. OP DE BEECK, ‘Possibilities and Restrictions for the Use of Maidum-Bowls as Chronological Indicators’, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 7 (2004), 239-280, 270.

<sup>44</sup> U. HARTUNG et al. ‘Tell el-Fara’in-Buto’ Abb. 11.8 and 11.9: 2nd-3rd Dyn.

<sup>45</sup> L. OP DE BEECK, ‘Possibilities and Restrictions’, 248, Fig. 3.15, 25, 16, 22-23; S. HENDRICKX and S. M. EYCKERMAN, ‘The 1955 Excavation of an Early Old Kingdom Storage Site at Elkab’, fig. 16: 3rd-4th Dyn.

<sup>46</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., ‘Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht’, Abb. 39.1-2: late 3rd Dyn.

<sup>47</sup> L. OP DE BEECK, ‘Restrictions of the Use of Maidum-Bowls as Chronological Indicators’, *Chronique d’Égypte* 75 (2000), 7, fig. 1.

<sup>48</sup> L. OP DE BEECK, ‘Possibilities and Restrictions’, 270.

<sup>49</sup> L. OP DE BEECK, ‘Possibilities and Restrictions’, 267-268: type B3b1.



The presence of both the early and the transition to a later Old Kingdom tradition of Maidūm bowl shapes confirms the dating of the pottery into the late 3rd-early 4th Dynasty.<sup>50</sup>

Diagnostic	Fabric	Rx	H	Sx	Surf. Treat.	
N1/5	Marl A1	20,6	4,5	22	polished in & out	red slip in & out
N1/6	Nile B1	16	4	17	polished in & out	red slip in & out
N1/8	Nile B1	21,6	3,6	22	polished in & out	red slip in & out
N1/9	Nile B1	22,6	3,5	23,6	polished in & out	red slip in & out
N2/4	Marl A1	15	6,6	17	polished in & out	red slip in & out
N2/5	Nile B1	14,5	5,7	17,2	polished in & out	red slip in & out

Type: storage jar with pronounced rim (fig. 4)

Storage jars in Marl A1 are represented in the Nuwayrāt survey assemblage by two rim sherds. Both fragments are just large enough to show an angled transition from body to neck, which is very characteristic for the Old Kingdom. The rim is in both cases pronounced, but the one on N2/2 has a more triangular shape while the rim of N2/3 is finished in a more rounded way. Both jars were carefully smoothed and there are no traces of use observable on the rim, which could indicate that these were made for a funerary purpose only.

This type of storage jar is also part of the traditional pottery corpus of the Old Kingdom and is found on many sites throughout the country, in funerary contexts as well as in settlement sites. The fact that this type of jar does not seem to evolve much during the Old Kingdom, makes it difficult to use it for exact dating, but the angled transition from body to neck does not appear in the late Old Kingdom. In Elephantine for example, this type of storage jar already appears in the earliest layers and is still present in the corpora of the 4th Dynasty.<sup>51</sup> The same shape as N2/3 was also discovered at Tall al-Farā'in-Buto,<sup>52</sup> where it can be dated to the late 2nd-3rd Dynasty.

<sup>50</sup> For more on the use of Maidūm bowls as chronological indicators and parallels from other sites, see L. OP DE BEECK, 'Possibilities and Restrictions'.

<sup>51</sup> W. KAISER, F. ARNOLD, et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht', Abb. 36.6, Abb. 40.5.

<sup>52</sup> U. HARTUNG et al., 'Tell el-Fara'in-Buto', Abb. 12.3.

Diagnostic	Fabric	Rx	H	Neck	Surf. Treat	
N2/2	Marl A1	8	6,3	10	Not used, smoothed	Self-slip?
N2/3	Marl A1	9,2	4,2	10	Not used, smoothed	Self-slip?

#### 4. Conclusion

The pottery we sampled clearly dates to the 3rd Dynasty to early 4th Dynasty. This largely confirms Garstang's early dating for the cemetery, as against Kessler's proposal for a date in the 5th and 6th Dynasties. Our sample is admittedly small, but during our visits to the site we never encountered 5th to 6th Dynasty pottery anywhere, except in one location to be mentioned below. On the whole, the material is very homogeneous. Of course, the amount of potsherds here described in detail is far too small to detect possible chronological trends within the 3rd-4th Dynasty time frame. Such a trend is however likely, as it was shown that the size and complexity of the rock tomb chapels evolves from a very small and simple model in the north of the site to a far larger model with different chambers, sometimes decorated with false doors and painting, in the central part. No pottery was sampled in the southern half of the site in 2006. Its southernmost extremity was, in fact, not even reached then. However, during a visit in 2009, this part was briefly inspected. As was shown below, Garstang considers these tombs the earliest of the whole site, apparently predominantly based on the presence of very simple burials under inverted pots there. Although the burial with a pottery coffin he illustrates in his fig. 15 must be of early Old Kingdom date, there is no apparent reason why it should be earlier than the other tombs at the site. In fact, the rock tombs here in many cases look more recent, with rectangular chapel rooms with axially located entrance doors. Also some Maidūm sherds seen here are of later Old Kingdom date.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, pot burials such as were found here by Garstang, in fact continue until as late as the late Old Kingdom.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that some 3rd-4th Dynasty burials may be deposited here, but that this part of the site remained in use until later in the Old Kingdom. There is no reason to assign any of the burials to as early as the 2nd Dynasty, as Garstang seems to do.

<sup>53</sup> Since we had no permission to pick up sherds for analysis, and our visit was only brief, we are unable to provide any more detailed description of this material.

<sup>54</sup> S.J. SEIDLMAYER, *Gräberfelder*, 148.

The similarities of the ceramic corpus and the distribution pattern of both rock tombs and stone circle tombs suggest strongly that both tomb types are contemporary. This in turn renders it likely that a social ranking is present in this cemetery: some dead were buried in rock-cut tombs, others in (much simpler) rock circle tombs. Although the two tomb types have much in common in terms of funerary equipment, it seems as though one part of the community had a very simple kind of funerary culture, while at least some owners of the rock tombs had a degree of familiarity with developing customs in the residence. This is borne out by the presence of false doors and occasionally decoration here. It is tempting to explain this diversity in terms of a rural community of which the elite adopted a more sophisticated kind of funerary apparel, whereas the burial of the rest of the population displays the characteristics of a folk culture.

It has been shown that this folk culture, of which the rock circle tombs are the hallmark, also occurs at Dayr al-Barshā. Interestingly, at the latter site no contemporary rock chapels are present, perhaps suggesting the presence of a settlement with less access to the funerary culture of the residence. Stated otherwise, the Dayr al-Barshā cemetery might reflect a “normal” rural settlement in Middle Egypt, while the one in Nuwayrāt would exemplify a community with emergent supraregional connections. Although one can, on present evidence, only speculate about what may have motivated such connections, some suggestions can be made.

It is clear that direct involvement of the royal court with the region where Nuwayrāt is located, became very strong in the course of the 3rd Dynasty, because a miniature pyramid was established precisely at Zawīyat al-Mayyīfīn, ten kilometres further north, in the later 3rd Dynasty.<sup>55</sup> While it is still unclear what the purpose of these 3rd Dynasty miniature

<sup>55</sup> See H. WILLEMS et al., ‘An Industrial Site at al-Shaykh-Saʿīd/Wādī Zabayda’, 18, for the date and references to further literature. S.H. AUFRÈRE, ‘L’origine de l’albâtre à la 1re dynastie d’après les inscriptions des vases provenant des galeries de la pyramide à degrés’, *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* 103 (2003), 1-15 has argued that Zawīyat al-Mayyīfīn already occupied a privileged place since the 1st Dynasty, when it would have become a key provider of calcite alabaster to the court. However, both the dating and interpretation of the ink jottings on stone vases found under the Djoser pyramid, on which Aufrère bases his interpretations, are incorrect (see I. REGULSKI, ‘Second Dynasty Ink Inscriptions from Saqqara paralleled in the Abydos Material from the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH) in Brussels’, in: S. HENDRICKX, R.F. FRIEDMAN and K.M. CIAŁOWICZ (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 138 (Leuven, 2004), 949-970). Nevertheless it remains a not unlikely possibility that the importance of Zawīyat al-Mayyīfīn rested to no mean extent on the availability of good quality calcite alabaster there.

pyramids was, it stands to reason that they were royal cult places. The only miniature pyramid for which a context is known is the one at Elephantine. As Seidlmayer<sup>56</sup> has shown, this pyramid belonged to a royal domain from the time of king Huni, of the later 3rd Dynasty. It is not unlikely that the pyramid in Zawīyat al-Mayyītīn had a similar function, and therefore that there was a royal domain here.

A short while later, the list of royal domains in the so-called Valley Temple of the rhomboidal pyramid of Snofru lists five such institutions in the 16th Upper Egyptian nome.<sup>57</sup> It is important to note that no other nome in Egypt at this time is associated with so many royal domains. One of the five may well have existed at Zawīyat al-Mayyītīn. Another domain in the region was named Menat-Snofru. There can be little doubt that the place name Menat-Khufu, which designated a settlement in the same nome, belongs to the same domain which was reinstated (and given a new name) under Khufu. Kessler has argued that this domain lay south of Bānī Ḥasan, in front of the mouth of the wādī where the Speos Artemidos is located. During his investigations in the area, Kessler noticed a number of tombs here that are of the same type as the rock tombs of Nuwayrāt, and he suggested that these tombs belonged to the elite of the domain of Menat-Khufu.<sup>58</sup> If this interpretation is correct, there is some likelihood that the similarly fashioned rock tombs at Nuwayrāt also belong to the elite of a royal domain. This also enables us to attain greater specificity on the nature of the social differentiation at the site.

To round off this study we will try to place the Nuwayrāt tombs in wider perspective. In the current literature on early Old Kingdom architecture, Middle Egypt constitutes a blank spot. In this regard the miniature pyramid at Zawīyat al-Mayyītīn stands out in splendid isolation. We now begin to see that this pyramid fits into a wider picture. But more evidence can be added.

Recent study of the Dayr al-Barshā project in al-Shaykh Saʿīd has led to the discovery of an early 4th Dynasty stone working site that, in terms of material culture, has close similarities with the late 3rd Dynasty royal domain at Elephantine.<sup>59</sup> This was probably a royal domain created for

<sup>56</sup> S.J. SEIDLMEYER, 'Town and State in the early Old Kingdom. A View from Elephantine', in: J. SPENCER (ed.), *Aspects of Early Egypt* (London, 1996), 119.

<sup>57</sup> A. FAKHRY, *The Monuments of Sneferu at Dahshūr. The Valley Temple I. The Temple Reliefs* (Cairo, 1961), 39-42.

<sup>58</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 197-198.

<sup>59</sup> H. WILLEMS et al., 'An Industrial Site at al-Shaykh-Saʿīd/Wādī Zabayda' *Ägypten & Levante* 19 (2009), 293-331.

the production of calcite alabaster. It seems that this new domain was instated during the reign of king Khufu. Arguably, the well known calcite alabaster quarries at Hatnub, where the first inscriptional evidence dates back to the same king, also formed part of a royal domain.<sup>60</sup>

Ten kilometres north of al-Shaykh Sa'īd, in Dayr Abū Hinnis, our team in 2009 discovered a small cemetery of which the most important tomb was a small trapezoid mastaba orientated North-South, containing two tomb shafts, and having one or two offering niches in the eastern façade. It clearly follows the model of the large mastabas at Giza. Even though nothing is known about the owner, this observation suggests he must have been a member of an early Old Kingdom rural elite with connections to the national residence. The possibility that a royal domain existed nearby cannot be proved, but is not unlikely either.

Some 20 km North of Zawīyat al-Mayyitīn, and 2 km south of Tihna al-Jabal, are the Fraser tombs. Ny-ka-ankh, the owner of the two most lavishly decorated tombs at the site, held the titles of chief priest in the temple of Hathor of Ra-inet and supervisor of a domain. His tomb dates to the very beginning of the 5th Dynasty, but it is possible to link other tombs at the site to his father and grandfather. Like Ny-ka-ankh, they were also the owners of large, rock-cut mastabas clearly inspired by the mastabas constructed around that time at Giza. It is moreover possible that some of the mastabas at the site are of even earlier date. There is no proof that these ancestors of Ny-ka-ankh were already in charge of royal domains, but considering that such a domain was clearly there early in the 5th Dynasty, this possibility should not be ruled out either.<sup>61</sup> The Fraser tombs are somewhat later than those discussed before, but it should be noted that the town of Ra-inet, to which they belong, has not yet been localized. According to Kessler, the town was not identical with Tihna, but rather with Nazlat al-Shurāfa, some kilometres further south. Even though this site has been ravaged already in Antiquity by quarry activity, there is still evidence for Old Kingdom tombs.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See for a more extensive argumentation H. WILLEMS et al., 'An Industrial Site at al-Shaykh-Sa'īd/Wādī Zabayda', 325.

<sup>61</sup> The date of the Tihna tombs is much debated. Our interpretation rests upon a study to be published elsewhere H. WILLEMS, 'Zum sozialen Hintergrund der Bestimmungen des Ny-k3-'nh bei Tihna al-Jabal', in: H.-W. FISCHER-ELFERT (ed.), *Festschrift Deilef Franke* (in press).

<sup>62</sup> D. KESSLER, *Historische Topographie*, 225-252. Kessler tends to date these tombs much later in the Old Kingdom, but this is based on his acceptance of Goedicke's late dating of the Fraser tombs. For the inadequacy of this see H. WILLEMS, 'Zum sozialen Hintergrund'.

There is no need to stress the patchy nature of the evidence, but the least that can be said is that Middle Egypt is no longer a blank spot on the map of early Old Kingdom Egypt. It can be argued that more or less regularly spaced sites that were probably (linked to) royal domains existed: Nazlat al-Shurāfa - Zawīyat al-Mayyitīn - Bānī Ḥasan south - Dayr Abū Hinnis - al-Shaykh Saīd - Hatnub. In between there were sites like Dayr al-Barshā, where, judging from the funerary culture, no clear interference from the residence is apparent. Our reinvestigation of Nuwayrāt, which will be intensified in the coming years, thus not only helps to settle the debate of its date, but also enables us to explain the social differentiation apparent in the tombs there.

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## Abbreviations

Rx:	rim diameter
Sx:	diameter on the shoulder
Mx:	maximum diameter
H:	height
R-Ledge:	distance from rim to ledge
Surf. Treat.:	surface treatment

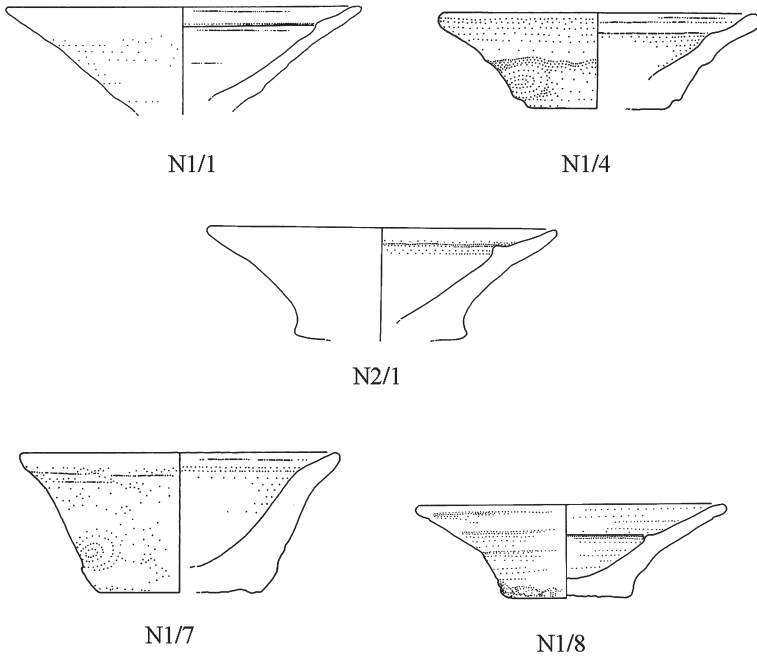


Fig. 1. Bowl with inner ledge rim and flat base. Scale 1:4.

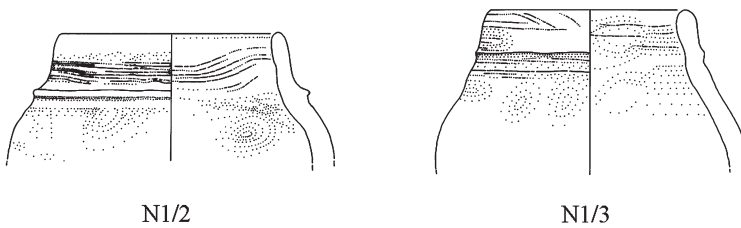


Fig. 2. Beer jar. Scale 1:4.

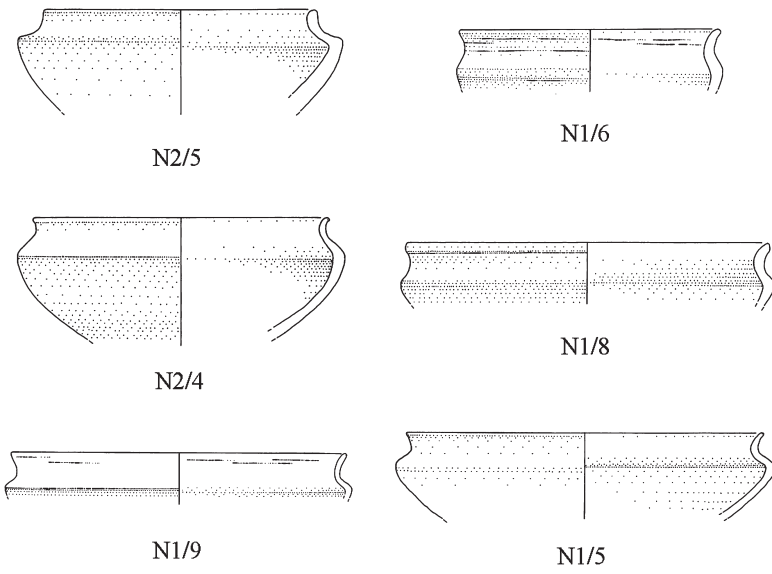


Fig. 3. Maidūm bowl. Scale 1:4.

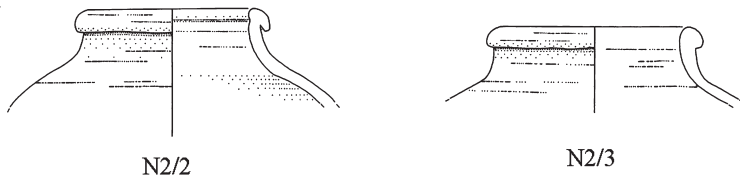


Fig. 4. Storage jar with pronounced rim. Scale 1:4.



Pl. 1. General view of the northern part of the necropolis of Nuwayrāt showing the double row of rock tombs (Photo MDM). The material from N2 is located in a gully with debris from the rock tombs above.



Pl. 2. One of the rock tombs at Nuwayrāt, showing the almost square entrance door, and the onset of a shaft in the southern part of the small tomb chapel. (Photo MDM).



Pl. 3. The northern rock tombs and rock circle graves (photo SH).



Pl. 4. The southern rock tombs (photo SH).



Pl. 5. Oblong pottery coffin (photo BVT).



Pl. 6. Remains of an inverted pot burial (photo BVT).