

## FESTIVAL POTTERY FROM NEW KINGDOM EGYPT: THREE CASE STUDIES

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Like in almost every past and present society,<sup>1</sup> feasting behaviour has had a considerable impact on the material world of Ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Festivals were important aspects within the Ancient Egyptian life cycle and affected all kinds of social strata. Numerous evidence attesting to the popularity of festivals and feasting has survived particularly from the New Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Material evidence for festivals in New Kingdom Egypt

Despite the major impact of feasting for societies, archaeological evidence for festivals is very often elusive.<sup>4</sup> In Egypt, large numbers of architectural features have persisted and allow the identification of feasting spaces – the interrelationship of temples, causeways, avenues, way-stations and rock inscriptions formed the sacred landscape

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. DIETLER and B. HAYDEN, *Digesting the Feast — Good to Eat, Good to Drink, Good to Think: An Introduction*, in M. DIETLER and B. HAYDEN (eds.), *Feasts. Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, Washington, 2001, p. 1. For general aspects of feasts see also V. TURNER (ed.), *Celebration. Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, Washington, D.C., 1982; W. GEBHARDT, *Fest, Feier und Alltag. Über die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit des Menschen und ihre Deutung (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 22, Soziologie)*, Frankfurt am Main, 1987 and U. SCHULTZ (ed.), *Das Fest. Eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, München, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest*, in J. ASSMANN (ed.), *Das Fest und das Heilige. Religiöse Kontrapunkte zur Alltagswelt (Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen 1)*, Gütersloh, 1991, p. 105-122; B.J. KEMP, *Ancient Egypt — Anatomy of a Civilization*, London, 2002, 8th reprint, p. 201-217; L. MESKELL, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt*, Princeton — Woodstock, 2005, paperback edition, p. 168-177.

<sup>3</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Der schöne Tag — Sinnlichkeit und Vergänglichkeit im altägyptischen Fest*, in W. HAUG and R. WARNING (eds.), *Das Fest (Poetik und Hermeneutik 14)*, München, 1989, p. 3-28; J. ASSMANN, *Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest*; C.J. BLEEKER, *Egyptian Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal (Suppl. to Numen 13)*, Leiden, 1967; A.J. SPALINGER, *Three Studies on Egyptian Feasts and their Chronological Implications*, Baltimore, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> For possible archaeological traces of festive activities see B. HAYDEN, *Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting*, in M. DIETLER and B. HAYDEN (eds.), *Feasts*, p. 40-41, Tab. 2.1.

of Egyptian towns<sup>5</sup> – but feasting activities are more challenging to assess.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of Ancient Egypt, textual sources and the pictorial record are highly important to establish the possible meaning of material remains.<sup>7</sup> The material correlates for Egyptian festivals include architectural features, various objects (stelae, ostraca, cosmetic spoons etc.) and especially vessels (pottery, stone, faience). Find associations and textual references may help to specify the festive atmosphere of such remains, but more often the interpretation is ambiguous. In the case of pottery, most vessels may have held several functional meanings within a variety of spheres.<sup>8</sup>

The main reason why it becomes complicated to isolate specific activities from the archaeological record is that these are embedded in a general festive and ritual domain with overlapping borders. Festivals were understood as the incorporation of both the world of the living and the dead and the establishment of a kind of contact zone between these two spheres.<sup>9</sup> Thus, within the festive sphere, a large variety of cultural concepts were united – a merging of ritual, religious, mortuary and social activities did occur. According to Assmann, Egyptian festivals represented a clear break with the tedium of daily life.<sup>10</sup> The question arises whether it is possible to identify material remains as markers of this break from everyday life.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. B.J. KEMP, *Ancient Egypt*, p. 201-209; J. ASSMANN, *Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest*, p. 109-113; F. ARNOLD, *Pharaonische Prozessionsstraßen. Mittel der Machtdarstellung unter Königin Hatschepsut*, in E.-L. SCHWANDNER and K. RHEIDT (eds.), *Macht der Architektur – Architektur der Macht, Bauforschungskolloquium in Berlin vom 30. Oktober bis 2. November 2002 veranstaltet vom Architektur-Referat des DAI*, Mainz, 2004, p. 13-23.

<sup>6</sup> Special festive areas within domestic quarters are also hard to identify, although there have been some studies on functional aspects of domestic space in the last years, cf. in particular A. STEVENS, *Private Religion at Amarna (British Archaeological Reports International Series 1587)*, Oxford, 2006; N. KLEINKE, *Female Spaces: Untersuchungen zu Gender und Archäologie im pharaonischen Ägypten (Göttinger Miszellen Beihefte 1)*, Göttingen, 2007; A. KOLTSIDA, *Social Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Domestic Architecture (British Archaeological Reports International Series 1608)*, Oxford, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur im Asasif. Eine Untersuchung der spätezeitlichen Befunde anhand der Ergebnisse der österreichischen Ausgrabungen in den Jahren 1969-1977 (Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts 34)*, Vienna, 2010, p. 482, tab. 32 for the exemplary evidence for the Beautiful Festival of the Valley.

<sup>8</sup> A. STEVENS, *Private Religion at Amarna*, p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Der schöne Tag*, p. 14-15; L. MESKELL, *Private Life*, p. 170. See also L. MESKELL, *Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt, Material Biographies Past and Present*, Oxford – New York, 2004, p. 72-73 for festivals as “transitional moments.”

<sup>10</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Der schöne Tag*, p. 3-28; L. MESKELL, *Private Life*, p. 170-171.

The thesis that will be presented here is that the popularity of festivals in the New Kingdom can be traced in pottery as well.<sup>11</sup> This article is a case study of blue painted pottery at three Upper Egyptian sites – Elephantine, Umm el-Qaab and South Abydos – essentially an inquiry into find contexts and possible meanings of this particular material.

## 2. The blue painted pottery of New Kingdom Egypt

The diagnostic properties of blue painted pottery of the New Kingdom are the blue colour, a large range of decorative, mostly floral motifs, fancy shapes and a rather short lifespan (from the mid-18th Dynasty until late Ramesside times).<sup>12</sup> The primary source for both, decoration and elaborated forms, were flowers and various types of plants. Very often the decoration clearly was inspired by real flowers (e.g. blue lotus) and floral wreaths which were used to decorate ceramic vessels during festive occasions.<sup>13</sup>

The key finding places of blue painted pottery are urban centres like Thebes, Memphis, Amarna and Gurob.<sup>14</sup> Blue painted pottery was

<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom: the Case of Elephantine*, in P. KOUSOULIS (ed.), *Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Department of Mediterranean Studies, Rhodes 22-29 May 2008 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta)*, Leuven, [forthcoming]. For a possible connection of pottery vessels with jubilees of the king at Malqata and Karnak see C.A. HOPE, *Some Remarks on Potmarks of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty*, in A. LEAHY and J. TAIT (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Egypt in Honour of H. S. Smith*, London, 1999, p. 121-146.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, in E. BROVARSKI, S.K. DOLL and R.E. FREED (eds.), *Egypt's Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom*, Exhibition Catalogue, Boston, 1982, p. 88-90; C.A. HOPE, *Blue Painted and Polychrome Decorated Pottery from Amarna: A Preliminary Corpus*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 2 (1991), p. 17-92; D.A. ASTON, *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes Q I. Teil 1, Corpus of Fabrics, Wares and Shapes (Forschungen in der Ramses-Stadt. Die Grabungen des Pelizaeus-Museums Hildesheim in Qantir-Pi-Ramesse 1)*, Mainz, 1998, p. 56-57 and p. 354-355; C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery (Shire Egyptology 5)*, Princes Risborough, 2001, 2nd edition, p. 26-27 and p. 43-44.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. BOURRIAU, *Umm el-Ga'ab. Pottery from the Nile Valley before the Arab Conquest*, Exhibition Catalogue, Cambridge, 1981, p. 79; C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom – Three Studies*, Burwood, 1989, p. 8; C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery*, p. 26. The importance that flowers and floral motifs held during feasts in Ancient Egypt is well attested, cf. J. DITTMAR, *Blumen und Blumensträuße als Opfergabe im alten Ägypten (Münchener Ägyptologische Studien 43)*, München – Berlin, 1986, p. 117-123; Z. SAYED MOHAMED, *Festvorbereitungen: die administrativen und ökonomischen Grundlagen alt-ägyptischer Feste (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 202)*, Freiburg, 2004, p. 102-105.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, p. 88-90; C.A. HOPE, *Some Remarks on Potmarks of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty*, p. 121-146; D.A. ASTON, *Qantir 1*, p. 56-57 and p. 354-355; C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery*, p. 26-27 and p. 43-44.

commonly thought to be related to the context of a royal residence, thus the name “*palace pottery*”<sup>15</sup> was established.<sup>16</sup> New excavations at settlement and temple sites as well as in cemeteries and cultic centres (e.g. Saqqara, South Abydos, Umm el-Qaab, Thebes and Elephantine) have produced additional material that underscores the broader distribution and greater variability in use of this distinctive ware.<sup>17</sup>

To conclude, the specific functions of blue painted pottery are in some respects still unclear, despite its popularity. According to both decoration and finding places, blue painted vessels seem to have functioned primarily within a sphere that recalled domestic, cultic and festive aspects.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Three case studies: Elephantine, South Abydos and Umm el-Qaab

#### 3.1. *Blue painted pottery from Elephantine*

The first case study will treat material from Elephantine. As blue painted pottery from the island was already presented elsewhere,<sup>19</sup> the following is an outline of the preliminary results including the 2010 season.

##### *Outline of site character and material*

During the New Kingdom, Elephantine comprised both domestic quarters and several cultic installations, including the well-known temples of the local gods, Khnum and Satet.<sup>20</sup> The island marked the Southern

<sup>15</sup> W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part II: The Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (1675-1080 B.C.)*, Cambridge, MA, 1959, p. 247.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom*, p. 16, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. P. LACOVARA, “*Cat. 106. Squat jar with handles*”, in R.E. FREED, Y.J. MARKOWITZ and S.H. D’AURIA (eds.), *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun*, Exhibition Catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1999, p. 236.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery*, p. 50: “Elaborately decorated vessels, such as those from the New Kingdom, may have been reserved for use on festive occasions”.

<sup>19</sup> For the state of research in 2007 see J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik des Neuen Reiches von Elephantine*, in *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine*, 33./34./35. *Grabungsbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 64 (2008), p. 121-131; J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom*.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. KREKELER, VIII. *Untersuchungen im Stadtgebiet nordwestlich des späten Chnumtempels*, in *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine*, 15./16. *Grabungsbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 44 (1988), p. 170-174; A. KREKELER, IV. *Stadtgebiet nordwestlich des Chnumtempels, späteres Neues Reich bis Spätantike*, in *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine*, 17./18. *Grabungsbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 46 (1990), p. 209-224; A. KREKELER, VIII. *Stadtgebiet nordwestlich des Chnumtempels, spätes Neues Reich bis Spätantike*, in *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine*, 19./20. *Grabungsbericht*, in

border to Nubia during most of Pharaonic history.<sup>21</sup> The highly developed New Kingdom administration of Nubia and the strong links between Thebes and Elephantine have both left visible traces in the area. Numerous rock inscriptions in the First Cataract Area give prosopographical details about the administrative staff of the local priesthoods and the Nubian administration, as well as secure evidence for local festivals and major celebrations.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to recent excavations by the Swiss Institute in cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute Cairo, evidence for blue painted ware at Elephantine was very limited.<sup>23</sup> In 2008, the still small corpus made up a total of 75 fragmentary vessels. This was enlarged to 164 pieces in 2009, covering less than two percent of the diagnostic pottery of the period of the New Kingdom. At present, the total number is 333 sherds and fragments – thus, the number was more than doubled in a single excavation season and quadrupled in only three years within an excavation history of 39 seasons.<sup>24</sup> This clearly illustrates the limited stage to which archaeological layers of the heyday of blue painted pottery, the late 18th and 19th Dynasties, have been excavated on the island until today.

*Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 49 (1993), p. 170-181; C. VON PILGRIM, X. *Die Wirtschaftsbezirke des Chnumtempels im Neuen Reich und in der Spätzeit, in Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. 25./26./27. Grabungsbericht, in Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 55 (1999), p. 118-124; B. and C. VON PILGRIM, II. *Area II: Domestic Quarters of the New Kingdom*, in D. RAUE et al., *Report on the 36<sup>th</sup> Season of Excavation and Restoration on the Island of Elephantine*, p. 7 [online, [http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik\\_ele36\\_rep\\_en.pdf](http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik_ele36_rep_en.pdf)]; C. VON PILGRIM, 2. *Area II: Domestic Quarters of the New Kingdom*, in D. RAUE et al., *Report on the 37<sup>th</sup> Season of Excavation and Restoration on the Island of Elephantine*, p. 6-7 [online, [http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik\\_ele37\\_rep\\_en.pdf](http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik_ele37_rep_en.pdf)]. For the temple of Khnum in the New Kingdom see M. BOMMAS, *Der Tempel des Chnum der 18. Dynastie auf Elephantine*, PhD. Thesis, Heidelberg, 2000 [published online in 2003, <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/3383/>].

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. KAISER, s.v. "Elephantine", in K. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1999, p. 283-289.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. S.J. SEIDLMAYER, *New Rock Inscriptions on Elephantine Island*, in Z. HAWASS (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists Cairo 2000*, Vol. 1, Cairo, 2003, p. 443-445; A. GASSE and V. RONDOT, *Les inscriptions de Séhel (Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire* 126), Cairo, 2007, passim; J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 119-121.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. D.A. ASTON, *Elephantine XIX, Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period (Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 95)*, Mainz, 1999, p. 19-21 (3 blue painted vessels).

<sup>24</sup> The database of the New Kingdom pottery includes a total of 10624 diagnostic sherds and 247 blue painted sherds (2.3%).

The primary setting of blue painted pottery from Elephantine was within substantial dump layers at the southern part of the site (Area XIV), close to the town enclosure (251 pieces).<sup>25</sup> Within individual houses, blue painted ware appeared only in small numbers (53 pieces), but this is at least partly due to the limited state of preservation and research.<sup>26</sup> 29 blue painted sherds are surface finds and were recovered from *sebbakh*.

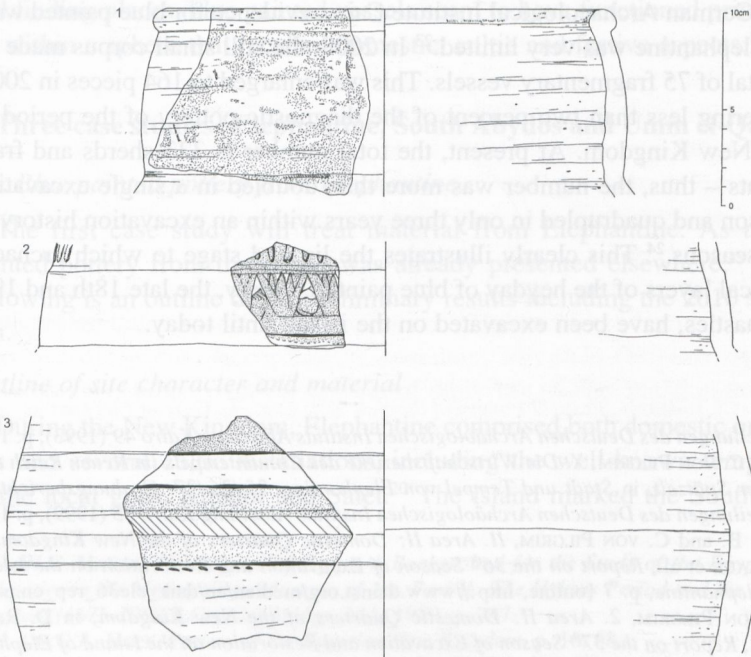


Fig. 1: Blue painted pottery from Elephantine: Large storage vessels.

1. Exc.-No. 39801H/k-054; 2. Exc.-No. 35603M/d-02;

3. Exc.-No. 19604Q/a-012.

<sup>25</sup> For Area XIV see C. VON PILGRIM, 4. *Area XIV: Town Enclosure*, in D. RAUE et al., *Report on the 37<sup>th</sup> Season of Excavation and Restoration on the Island of Elephantine*, p. 9-10 [published online in 2009, [http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik\\_ele37\\_rep\\_en.pdf](http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik_ele37_rep_en.pdf)].

<sup>26</sup> In both contexts – the domestic quarters as well as the recently documented dump layers – the total amount of blue painted ware within the diagnostics is less than at sites like Malqata and Amarna. Blue painted sherds made up only 0.3% of the material from Bauschicht 9 and 1.0% of Bauschicht 8 outside of Area XIV (status of 2008); within the dump in Area XIV blue painted ware was a bit more common, it made up 1.6% of Bauschicht 9 and 8 (status of 2010).

The majority of the blue painted pottery from Elephantine features linear patterns comparable to the material at Qantir,<sup>27</sup> and can consequently be dated to the Ramesside period. Only a small number originates from the late 18th Dynasty.<sup>28</sup> The most common fabrics of blue painted ware at Elephantine are Nile B2 and Nile D2; Marl clay fabrics are rare and probably date to the mid 18th Dynasty.<sup>29</sup> Funnel-necked jars, storage jars (Fig. 1) and especially ovoid jars and beakers are frequently attested; in addition, there is a small amount of dishes and lids (Fig. 2) as well as a group of ornamental or figural vessels (Fig. 2.1).

### *Ornamental blue painted vessels from Elephantine*

A special style of decoration is vertical grooves or the fluting of zones around the neck and the bodies of blue painted vessels. This style is rare at Amarna,<sup>30</sup> but well known from Ramesside contexts (Qantir, Saqqara and Thebes).<sup>31</sup> Due to recent work in New Kingdom layers, 34 examples are currently known from Elephantine (cf. Fig. 1.2).

The most remarkable vessel with fluting is Exc.-No. 16101G-08. This upper part of an amphora shows a short band of vertical grooves around its neck, the negative of an appliqué at its front side and two ornamental handles, decorated on one side only. The vessel was thus provided with a “front” and a “back” and clearly had an ornamental value.<sup>32</sup> It finds its best parallel in a complete amphora unearthed at Qantir and dated to the early 19th Dynasty.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* 1, p. 354-419.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. BUDKA, XII. *Zur Keramik des Neuen Reiches – Erste Beobachtungen anhand des Materials aus der Oststraße B II*, in *Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine*, 31/32. *Grabungsbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 61 (2005), p. 105-106.

<sup>29</sup> J. BUDKA, 6. *The New Kingdom-Pottery from Elephantine*, in D. RAUE et al., *Report on the 37<sup>th</sup> Season of Excavation and Restoration on the Island of Elephantine*, p. 11-12 [online, [http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik\\_ele37\\_rep\\_en.pdf](http://www.dainst.org/medien/en/daik_ele37_rep_en.pdf)]; J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 121-122.

<sup>30</sup> P. ROSE, *The Eighteenth Dynasty Pottery Corpus from Amarna (Egypt Exploration Society Excavation Memoir 83)*, London, 2007, p. 28-29.

<sup>31</sup> D. A. ASTON, *Qantir* 1, p. 414 with notes 231-234 and no. 1408 (jug).

<sup>32</sup> J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 108-115, figs. 12-14; J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom* (with figures of the vessel). Cf. as a similar ornamental vessel the amphora MFA 64.9, see C.A. HOPE, in E. BROVARSKI, S.K. DOLL and R. E. FREED (eds.), *Egypt's Golden Age*, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup> L. HABACHI †, *Tell el-Dab'a I. Tell el-Dab'a and Qantir. The Site and its Connection with Avaris and Piramesse*, ed. by E.-M. ENGEL, (*Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 2), Vienna, 2001, cat. 150, fig. 92, pl. 49D.

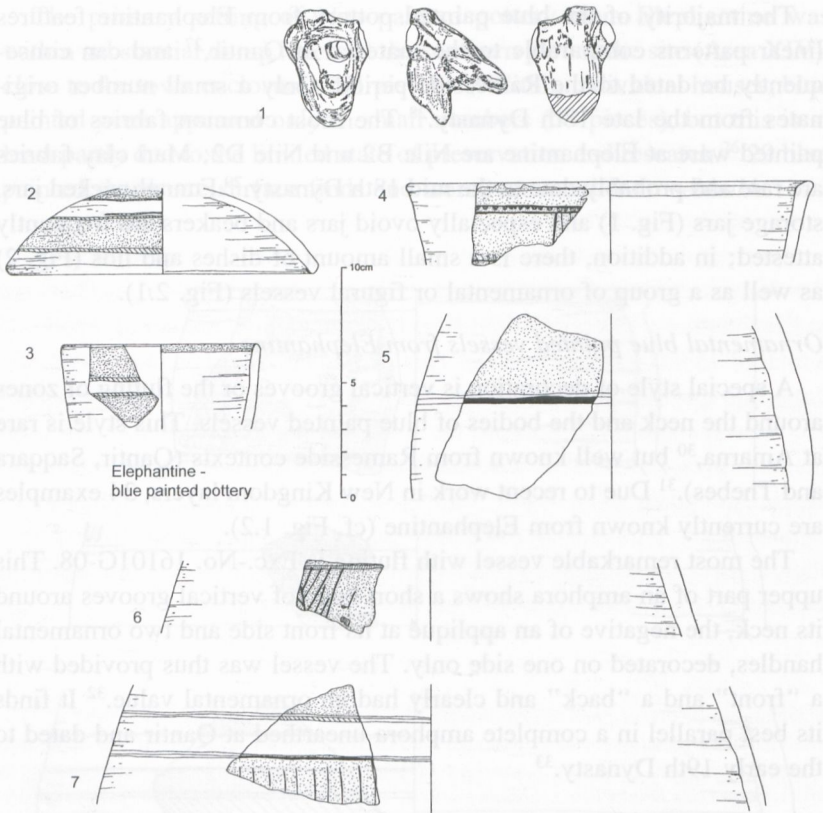


Fig. 2: Various types of blue painted pottery from Elephantine. 1. ibex head, Exc.-No. 39801M/d-022; 2. Exc.-No. 39801H/g-018; 3. Exc.-No. 39802O/l-033; 4. Exc.-No. 36000-04; 5. Exc.-No. 30100-01; 6. Exc.-No. 36602O/e-03; 7. Exc.-No. 36602P/a-06.

The missing appliqué of Exc.-No. 16101G-08 can be safely reconstructed as the head of an ibex or gazelle,<sup>34</sup> which is well known as applied decoration on blue painted pottery at Thebes, Amarna and Abydos.<sup>35</sup> Since 2010, there also is definite evidence at Elephantine: Exc.-

<sup>34</sup> The reconstruction by D.A. ASTON, *Elephantine XIX*, p. 19, note 57 'with a luted Hathor head' does not correspond to the actual traces of the applications on 16101G-08.

<sup>35</sup> See J. BOURRIAU, *Umm el-Ga'ab*, p. 39, cat. 57; C.A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, p. 88; C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom*, p. 97, 100. It was once believed that this type of application was restricted to Malqata and Amarna, but recently ibex appliques have been found in Qantir (D.A. ASTON, *Qantir 1*, p. 400-401, no. 1418), Abydos (J. BUDKA, *The Oriental Institute Ahmose and Tetisheri Project at Abydos 2002-2004: The New Kingdom Pottery*, in *Ägypten und Levante* 16 (2006), p. 108, fig. 17) and



No. 39801M/d-022 (fig. 2.1) is the head of a gazelle or ibex with traces of blue paint. Like for Exc.-No. 16101G-08, the specific identification of the animal is unclear. Since no beard is visible, a gazelle might be more likely than an ibex. The motif of the gazelle is connected to various deities like Anukis, Hathor and Reshep<sup>36</sup> and symbolises regenerative aspects, among others.<sup>37</sup> The ibex does seem to hold similar qualities. In addition, the ibex is connected with the New Year.<sup>38</sup> Vessels with ibex appliqués might have fulfilled a function within the sphere of the New Year's festival.<sup>39</sup>

The most striking detail of the amphora Exc.-No. 16101G-08 is the applied decoration in the shape of two free-standing, two-dimensional figures of bound prisoners that are only fragmentarily preserved.<sup>40</sup> Foreigners and bound prisoners are very common motifs in the decorative arts of the New Kingdom<sup>41</sup> and appear frequently on palace floors,<sup>42</sup> but I know of no parallels for modelled, free-standing captives attached

Elephantine (Exc.-No. 39801M/d-022, see fig. 2.1). For the symbolism and parallels of gazelle and ibex figures on pottery vessels see also A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 181-182.

<sup>36</sup> For associations with the Canaanite god Reshep and a possible Syrian influence see C.A. HOPE, in E. BROVARSKI, S.K. DOLL and R.E. FREED (eds.), *Egypt's Golden Age*, p. 90.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 58-59.

<sup>38</sup> See C. LEITZ, *Die Nacht des Kindes in seinem Nest in Dendera*, in *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 120 (1993), p. 161 with note 142.

<sup>39</sup> See J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom*. Although it is not possible to reconstruct a general cause for the so-called tributes in the New Kingdom, the bringing of foreign gifts that frequently includes ibex vessels is at least twice connected with the Festival of the New Year, see S. HALLMANN, *Die Tributszenen des Neuen Reiches (Ägypten und Altes Testament 66)*, Wiesbaden, 2006, p. 287. So-called cosmetic spoons, also attested as ibex-shaped, were sometimes used as votives on the occasion of the New Year's Festival, see A. LOHWASSER, *Ein Nordländer im Südland. Zu einem ägyptischen Spendenöffel aus dem Sudan*, in *Der Antike Sudan* 18 (2007), p. 186 and A. LOHWASSER, *Eine Gabe zum Neuen Jahr: der Salblöffel Inv.-Nr. 3131*, in *Isched, Journal des Aegypten Forum Berlin* 1 (2007), p. 5-8.

<sup>40</sup> For details and figures see J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 108-111, figs. 13-14; J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. e.g. S. PETSCHER and M. VON FALCK (eds.), *Pharao siegt immer. Krieg und Frieden im Alten Ägypten*, Exhibition Catalogue, Hamm, 2004, p. 51; A. LOHWASSER, *Ein Nordländer im Südland*, p. 179-188 (so-called cosmetic spoons in the shape of foreigners).

<sup>42</sup> In Malqata, Amarna, and possibly Memphis prisoners are part of the design of painted pavements; the examples in Amarna are the best preserved ones and the closest parallels for the Elephantine pieces, see F.J. WEATHERHEAD, *Painted Pavements in the Great Palace at Amarna*, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992), p. 191, fig. 5 and F.J. WEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings (Egypt Exploration Society, Excavation Memoir 78)*, London, 2007, p. 20, fig. 17; from Qantir and Medinet Habu comes a large number of faience tiles that commonly depict bound prisoners (cf. J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 111).

to pottery vessels.<sup>43</sup> Aside from the comparison to wall paintings, somehow related pottery and faience figurines have been found at Amarna. Several fragments of painted statuettes of foreigners (both the Northern and the Southern type) were unearthed in the Central City and elsewhere in Amarna.<sup>44</sup> These seem to be independent artefacts that were not attached to pottery vessels. Nevertheless, their appearance might be seen in connection with the prisoner motif on the wall paintings and probably held a similar symbolism. But most importantly, figures of kneeling or standing captives are common as supplements for vessels which are presumably of metal and are depicted in both temple and tomb decoration.<sup>45</sup>

These two-dimensional representations suggest that the two captives of Exc.-No. 16101G-08 were formerly applied to the foot of the amphora.<sup>46</sup> In general, the Elephantine amphora may be seen as an embodiment of a metal vessel in clay.<sup>47</sup> It is comparable to complex votive vessels depicted as offerings to Amun and the king in tomb and temple scenes. These representations are mostly connected with foreign tributes<sup>48</sup> and the vessels in question show non-Egyptian attributes.

The parts of Exc.-No. 16101G-08 have been found in debris above living quarters to the south of the Khnum temple.<sup>49</sup> A provenience from the temple, probably from some kind of storeroom, is therefore likely. A similar context within the temple sphere may be suggested for the remarkable vessel Exc.-No. 39801M/a-020, which is as yet only partly excavated. It is a large, ornamental bowl with two decorative handles in the shape of lotus flowers and applied decoration. Only faint traces of blue paint have survived, and the reconstruction of the now lost base still remains open. The upper part of the bowl is decorated with deep grooves

<sup>43</sup> But note the extraordinary pilgrim vase Berlin 13155 (J. BOURRIAU, *Pottery Figure Vases of the New Kingdom*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), pl. 27.2; mid-18th Dyn.): its handles are shaped as the legs of two prisoners.

<sup>44</sup> A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 93-95, Fig. II.3.16.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 112-114; J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery of the New Kingdom*. That such elaborated vessels made of metal probably have inspired blue painted pottery with applied decoration was already suggested by P. LACOVARA, in *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun*, Boston, 1999, p. 236, cat. 103.

<sup>46</sup> For more details see J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 112-114.

<sup>47</sup> For the thesis that pottery vessels with ibex heads are copies of the metal examples see J. BOURRIAU, *Umm el-Ga'ab*, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> As a recent study see S. HALLMANN, *Die Tributzene des Neuen Reiches*, passim.

<sup>49</sup> See C. VON PILGRIM, *Elephantine XVIII, Untersuchungen in der Stadt des Mittleren Reiches und der Zweiten Zwischenzeit* (*Archäologische Veröffentlichungen* 91), Mainz, 1996, p. 67.

that end in applied closed lotus blossoms. As is well known from both metal vessels and blue painted vessels, this piece represents the fertile Nile marshes.<sup>50</sup> According to parallels from temple reliefs, the existence of a lid with a modelled figure as a handle (e.g. a striding bull or a frog) seems likely.<sup>51</sup>

Several other fancy shapes of blue painted vessels were discovered within the dump material, but are not yet recorded in total. One piece is similar to the bound prisoners of amphora Exc.-No. 16101G-08. Ornamental bowls in open work design are attested,<sup>52</sup> and several fragments suggest figural attachments to the rims of vessels.<sup>53</sup> Exc.-No. 39801S/e-03 recalls so-called cobra bowls known from Amarna and Qantir.<sup>54</sup>

In general, blue painted pottery from Elephantine seems to cover a large spectrum of meanings, from storage and consumption to feasting and religious acts.

### 3.2. South Abydos – Ahmose Tetisheri Project

The second case study comes from the southern part of Abydos where large building activities can be attributed to King Ahmose.<sup>55</sup> The study of the blue painted pottery from South Abydos is part of the Ahmose Tetisheri Project, directed by S. Harvey.<sup>56</sup> A preliminary report on the New Kingdom pottery, including selected pieces of blue painted ware, has already been published.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>50</sup> H. SCHÄFER, *Altägyptische Prunkgefäße mit aufgesetzten Randverzierungen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Goldschmiedekunst (Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens 4)*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 28-34.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. H. SCHÄFER, *Altägyptische Prunkgefäße*, p. 37, figs. 100-101; p. 41, figs. 112-113.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Blue Painted and Polychrome Decorated Pottery from Amarna*, p. 22-23, figs. 2 c-d.

<sup>53</sup> For examples from Amarna see A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 177-178, fig. II.8.12 (see also below, South Abydos).

<sup>54</sup> D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* 1, p. 402-403, nos. 1423-1428; A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 175-176.

<sup>55</sup> S.P. HARVEY, *The Cults of King Ahmose at Abydos*, PhD. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1998; S.P. HARVEY, s.v. "Abydos, South – Early 18th Dynasty Monuments", in K. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1999, p. 107-109. S.P. HARVEY, *New Evidence of Abydos for Ahmose's Funerary Cult*, in *Egyptian Archaeology* 24 (2004), p. 3-6. See also Ch. BARBOTIN, *Âhmosis et le début de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie*, Paris, 2008, passim.

<sup>56</sup> I am very grateful to Stephen P. HARVEY, not only for inviting me to work on the ceramic material deriving from his excavations, but also for sharing interesting thoughts about festivals and functional aspects of ceramic material with me.

<sup>57</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmose and Tetisheri Project*, p. 105-109, figs. 15-18.

*Outline of site character and material*

Activities at South Abydos continued throughout the New Kingdom and the memorial cult of Ahmose, the founder of the 18th Dynasty, lasted until the Ramesside period.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the abundant evidence for blue painted pottery at the site did not come as a surprise. The phases of intense use attested at the site of Ahmose's pyramid and temples correspond perfectly with the cultic activities at Umm el-Qaab, at the tomb of Osiris and reflect the general heyday of New Kingdom Abydos.<sup>59</sup>

At the site of the temple complex of Ahmose at South Abydos, blue painted pottery was discovered in considerable quantities at the Ahmose-Nefertari building (Temple A), especially in excavation units 18, 19, 24 and 25. In addition, some blue painted sherds have been found in excavation unit 21, the area around the eastern outer wall of the pyramid temple. From the adjoining excavation unit 22, covering part of Temple C (Ahmose-Nefertari), a small amount of blue painted ware was recovered. Additional material comes from the area around the entrance and the northern front of Temple A (operation 27 and 18/25).<sup>60</sup> It may be stressed that blue painted sherds were not restricted to the temple complex but that the ware occurs in small numbers in zones attached to the pyramid area, which are thought to have had a domestic and industrial function.<sup>61</sup>

At present, including the survey of the ceramic material conducted in 2010, 173 blue painted pieces have already been studied in detail and are processed in the database.<sup>62</sup> For most of the fragments a dating to the 19th Dynasty, especially to the reigns of Seti I and Ramesses II, as well as in smaller numbers to the late 18th Dynasty, can be proposed.<sup>63</sup>

The majority of the blue painted vessels at South Abydos are made of Nile clay, but a few sherds of Marl were discovered as well (Fig. 3.4). The most common blue painted wares are Nile B2 cream or white coated,

<sup>58</sup> Cf. S.P. HARVEY, *The Cults of King Ahmose at Abydos*, passim.

<sup>59</sup> For Abydos in the New Kingdom cf. recently D. O'CONNOR, *Abydos. Egypt's First Pharaohs and the Cult of Osiris*, Cairo, 2009, p. 105-119.

<sup>60</sup> For these temple buildings see S. P. HARVEY, *New Evidence for Ahmose's Funerary Cult*, p. 3-6.

<sup>61</sup> For these zones cf. S.P. HARVEY, s.v. "Abydos, South", p. 108; to the east of the complex bakeries and possibly kilns are located; some blue-painted sherds were found there in 2006 and 2010.

<sup>62</sup> To date, this is 17% of the diagnostic material processed in the database (a total of 1021 pieces).

<sup>63</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmose and Tetisheri Project*, p. 105-108. This holds also true for the new material from excavations in 2006 and 2010.

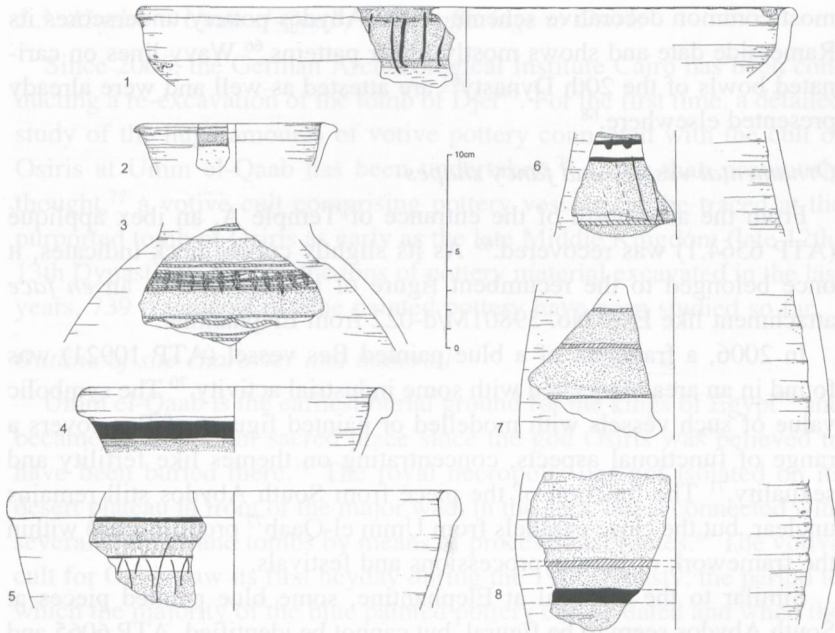


Fig. 3: Selection of blue painted pottery from South Abydos. 1. ATP 1148;  
 2. ATP 14138.1; 3. ATP 6481.6; 4. ATP 5645.2/5661.1; 5. ATP 6005.1;  
 6. ATP 6258.4; 7. ATP 5335.2; 8. ATP 4015.31.

Nile B2 red coated, Nile D2 cream coated and Marl A2 uncoated with painted decoration.<sup>64</sup>

A large variety of both restricted and open forms was found (Fig. 3): plates, dishes, bowls, stemmed bowls, beakers, lids, bottles and various types of jars (primarily ovoid and funnel-necked). Blue painted necked jars appear frequently within the material at South Abydos and find parallels at Amarna (late 18th Dynasty).<sup>65</sup> The most common types are funnel-necked jars, storage jars and especially ovoid jars (Figs. 3.6-8). More unusual forms like ornamental bowls, small beakers, pot stands and slender bottles are known as well.

In general, the blue painted pottery from South Abydos complements the Ramesside corpus of this ware as it was documented in Qantir. The

<sup>64</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmose and Tetisheri Project*, p. 105.

<sup>65</sup> For example ATP 5645.12 corresponds to C.A. HOPE, *Blue Painted and Polychrome Decorated Pottery from Amarna*, fig 4g; ATP 5488.1 to *IBID.*, figs. 6b-e and ATP 4267.2, a funnel necked jar with a floral decorative scheme on the neck to *IBID.*, fig. 8e. ATP 4015.31 is similar to *IBID.*, fig. 5g.

most common decorative scheme of the Abydos pottery underscores its Ramesside date and shows mostly linear patterns.<sup>66</sup> Wavy lines on carinated bowls of the 20th Dynasty<sup>67</sup> are attested as well and were already presented elsewhere.<sup>68</sup>

### *Ornamental vessels and fancy shapes*

From the area north of the entrance of Temple A, an ibex appliqué (ATP 6564.1) was recovered.<sup>69</sup> As its slightly curved neck indicates, it once belonged to the recumbent figure of an ibex, not to an *en face* attachment like Exc.-No. 39801M/d-022 from Elephantine.

In 2006, a fragment of a blue painted Bes vessel (ATP 10921) was found in an area associated with some industrial activity.<sup>70</sup> The symbolic value of such vessels with modelled or painted figures of Bes covers a range of functional aspects, concentrating on themes like fertility and sexuality.<sup>71</sup> The function of the piece from South Abydos still remains unclear, but the close parallels from Umm el-Qaab<sup>72</sup> propose a use within the framework of barque processions and festivals.

Similar to the material at Elephantine, some blue painted pieces at South Abydos seem to be figural, but cannot be identified. ATP 6065 and others were once attached in some way to pottery vessels, but their exact shape and context remains unclear. As at Amarna and Elephantine, some may have been rim applications in the form of animal or human figures (see above).<sup>73</sup> ATP 212 may be described as the end of a “boomerang”-shaped object. Its lower part is almost flat, whereas the upper part is rounded and painted with red and blue lines. Although its function is not clear, the fragment might have been an appliqué of a blue painted vessel.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>66</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmoese and Tetisheri Project*, p. 108. Cf. also D.A. ASTON, *Qantir 1*, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> D.A. ASTON, *Qantir 1*, p. 355.

<sup>68</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmoese and Tetisheri Project*, p. 108-109, fig. 18.

<sup>69</sup> J. BUDKA, *Ahmoese and Tetisheri Project*, p. 107-108, fig. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Personal communication Stephen P. Harvey: In Operation 47 where the Bes sherd was found, a kiln or hearth provides evidence for production in this area.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 31-33 for Bes-images on jewellery and amulets; *IBID.*, p. 168-169 for vessels with Bes-images.

<sup>72</sup> Several blue painted Bes vessels were discovered at Umm el-Qaab – for a piece from the tomb of Qa'a see E.-M. ENGEL, *Das Grab des Qa'a in Abydos*, PhD. Thesis, Göttingen, 1997, p. 710-712, fig. 338 (mentioning another fragment from the tomb of Dewen on p. 710). The Bes vessel fragments from Umm el-Qaab will be published by the author of the present paper within the framework of the Research Cluster 4 “Sanctuaries and Rituals” of the German Archaeological Institute.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Amarna, A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 177-178, fig. II.8.12. rim decoration etc.

<sup>74</sup> Blue painted cobra fragments belonging to “cobra bowls” are comparable in shape; cf. D.A. ASTON, *Qantir 1*, p. 402-403, fig. 5.05 and above.

### 3.3. Abydos – Umm el-Qaab, votive offerings to Osiris

Since 2006, the German Archaeological Institute Cairo has been conducting a re-excavation of the tomb of Djer<sup>75</sup>. For the first time, a detailed study of the huge amounts of votive pottery connected with the cult of Osiris at Umm el-Qaab has been undertaken.<sup>76</sup> Other than previously thought,<sup>77</sup> a votive cult comprising pottery vessels can be traced at the purported tomb of Osiris as early as the late Middle Kingdom (late 12th-13th Dynasties). Among the tons of pottery material excavated in the last years, 739 fragments of blue painted pottery have been studied so far.

#### *Outline of site character and material*

Umm el-Qaab is the earliest burial ground for the kings of Egypt<sup>78</sup> and became an important sacred place since the god Osiris was believed to have been buried there.<sup>79</sup> The royal necropolis lies not isolated on its desert plateau in front of the major wadi in the area, but is connected with several temples and tombs by means of processional routes.<sup>80</sup> The votive cult for Osiris saw its first heyday during the 19th Dynasty, the period to which the majority of the blue painted pottery can be dated and when the major temples in the area were built – the temples of Seti I and Ramesses II as well as the Osireion.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Cf. U. EFFLAND, *Funde aus dem Mittleren Reich bis zur Mamlukenzeit aus Umm el-Qaab*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 62 (2006), p. 131-150; U. EFFLAND, J. BUDKA and A. EFFLAND, *Studien zum Osiriskult in Umm el-Qaab/Abydos – Ein Vorbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 66 (2010), 19-91.

<sup>76</sup> J. BUDKA, V. *Die Keramik des Osiriskults: Erste Beobachtungen zu Formen, Datierung und Funktion*, in *Studien zum Osiriskult in Umm el-Qaab/Abydos – Ein Vorbericht*, in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 66 (2010), 35-69.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. B.J. KEMP, s.v. "Abydos", in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* I, Wiesbaden, 1975, p. 37: "No proper study of the offering pottery has been made, but it seems to date mainly from the 18th to 26th Dyns".

<sup>78</sup> G. DREYER, s.v. "Abydos, Umm el-Qa'ab", in K. BARD (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, p. 109-114; D. O'CONNOR, *Abydos*, p. 137-157.

<sup>79</sup> G. DREYER, s.v. "Abydos, Umm el-Qa'ab" p. 112; D. O'CONNOR, *Abydos*, p. 89-91.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. K. EATON, *The Ritual Functions of Processional Equipment in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos*, PhD. Thesis, New York University, New York, 2004, passim, S.P. HARVEY, *The Cults of King Ahmose at Abydos*, p. 88-92 and p. 446-448. For some aspects of the interrelationship of the natural, cultural and cultic landscapes at Abydos see also D. JEFFREYS, *Regionality, Cultural and Cultic Landscapes*, in W. WENDRICH (ed.), *Egyptian Archaeology (Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology)*, Malden, MA – Oxford, 2010, p. 111-113, fig. 6.3

<sup>81</sup> Some activity can already be reconstructed for the late 18th Dynasty, probably the Post-Amarna period; some of the blue painted material might date to this era.

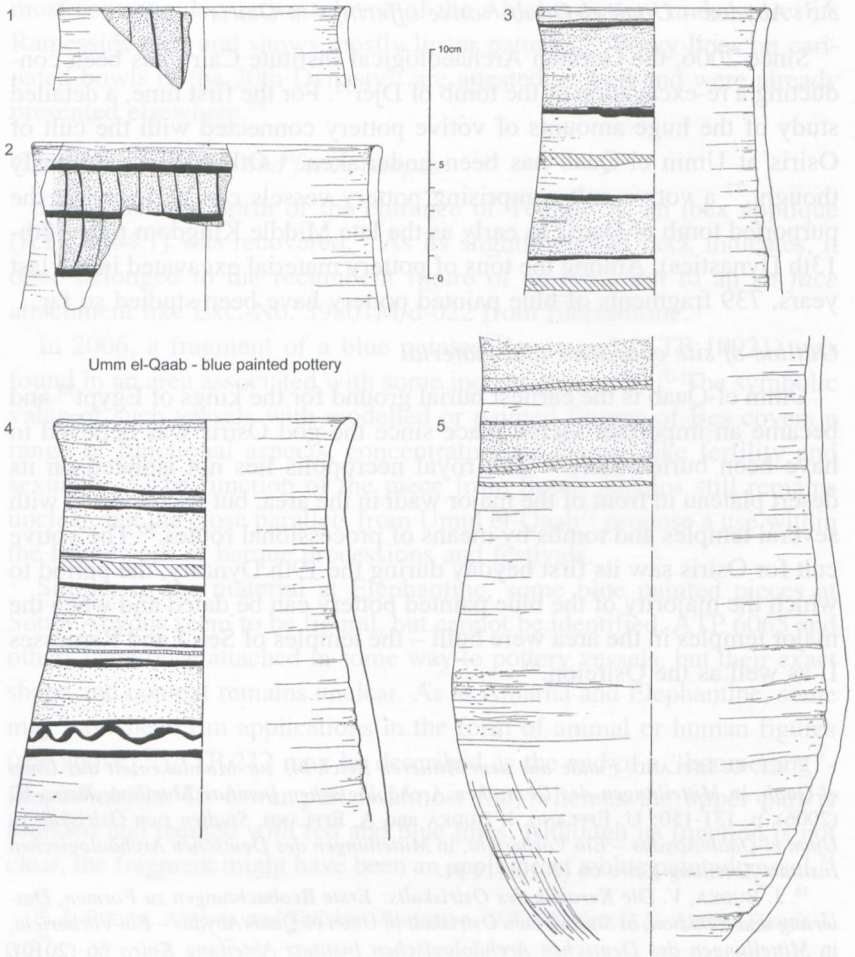


Fig. 4: Blue painted ovoid jars from Umm el-Qaab. 1. BV 521, O-HNW-2;  
 2. BV 520, O-HO+B15-5/15; 3. BV 501, P(2); 4. BV 502, O-KK-NW-8;  
 5. BV 550, HR 11.

Among the 739 sherds and fragments of blue painted pottery from Umm el-Qaab, recorded until 2009, 593 are wall fragments and 145 rim sherds; a single sherd attests the base of a vessel. Fabrics and wares are very similar to those from South-Abydos, thus primarily Nile clay fabric variants B2 and D2 were used (see 3.2). As was mentioned above, the majority of the material is already Ramesside in date and shows linear patterns of decoration.



Open forms like dishes and lids are very rare at Umm el-Qaab. The most common type is not the funnel-necked jar.<sup>82</sup> The primary forms of blue painted pottery offered at the tomb of Osiris are ovoid jars (Fig. 4). These are typical votive pottery forms, functionally connected with drinking offerings. Most of them show silty remains in the interior, and thus they resemble so-called beer jars. Because of these residues it can be safely assumed that the jars fulfilled a function as drinking vessels, embedded in cultic activities for Osiris. Very good parallels can be found in both Qantir and South Abydos (Fig. 3.7-8).<sup>83</sup>

More unusual types include a tall-necked bottle with a ledge below the rim (Fig. 5.3) and small, tubular pot stands (Figs. 5.1-2). The latter are blue painted on uncoated ware (Fig. 5.2) or show a linear red decoration on a white washed surface (Fig. 5.1).

#### 4. Overlapping characteristics of the material: Sacred landscape, temples and festivals

One of the possible contexts for the blue painted pottery presented thus far seems to be temple cult on the occasion of barque processions. Clear

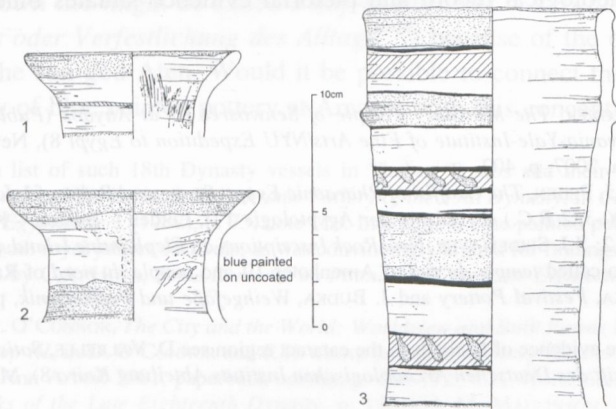


Fig. 5: Various blue painted vessels from Umm el-Qaab. 1. SU 201, O-HNOO-C6; 2. SU 202, O-HN-BO; 3. FA 70, O-KK-NW-5.

<sup>82</sup> Although this shape is attested and AMÉLINEAU found two intact vessels, cf. U. EFFLAND, *Funde aus dem Mittleren Reich bis zur Mamlukenzeit*, p. 137.

<sup>83</sup> D.A. ASTON, *Qantir I*, p. 344, nos. 1185-1186 (undecorated) and nos. 1248, 1312-1320 and 1436-1437 (blue painted); J. BUDKA, *Ahose and Tetisheri Project*, p. 106, figs. 15.4-5 (blue painted).

evidence comes from the complex built by Ahmose for the cult of Osiris and the royal family at South Abydos, where blue painted pottery was especially common in cultic installations for Ahmose-Nefertari. The relevant cult was particularly carried out during major festivals which were celebrated with barque processions from Kom es-Sultan in the North to South Abydos, while Umm el-Qaab and the Osireion played an active role as well. J. Wegner recently compared the festive activities within the sacred landscape of Abydos, which can be traced as early as the Middle Kingdom, to the Theban Festival of the Valley.<sup>84</sup>

At Elephantine, most of the blue painted pottery can be dated to the 19th Dynasty, primarily to the reigns of Ramesses II and his predecessor, Seti I. A smaller group of vessels was produced during the reign of Amenhotep III up to the late 18th Dynasty. Other categories of monuments found on the island flourished during these specific periods as well: rock inscriptions<sup>85</sup> and small way-stations.<sup>86</sup> Both types of monuments are connected with festive processions and cultic activities, particularly in connection with the worship of the triad of the cataract, the Nile Festival, and the cult of Amun.<sup>87</sup>

Memphis<sup>88</sup> and Thebes<sup>89</sup> provide further evidence that blue painted pottery was possibly connected with cultic activities in the temple sphere. The archaeological record and pictorial evidence situates blue painted

<sup>84</sup> J. WEGNER, *The Mortuary Temple of Senwosret III at Abydos (Publications of the Pennsylvania-Yale-Institute of Fine Arts/NYU Expedition to Egypt 8)*, New Haven – Philadelphia, 2007, p. 402.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. A.J. PEDEN, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt. Scope and Roles of Informal Writings (c. 3100-332 B.C.) (Probleme der Ägyptologie 17)*, Leiden – Boston – Köln, 2001, p. 84 and 112; S.J. SEIDLMAYER, *New Rock Inscriptions on Elephantine Island*, p. 443-445.

<sup>86</sup> The so-called *temple du sud* of Amenhotep III and *temple du nord* of Ramesses II; see J. BUDKA, *Festival Pottery* and J. BUDKA, *Weihgefäße und Festkeramik*, p. 119 with references.

<sup>87</sup> For the evidence of festivals in the cataract region see D. VALBELLE, *Satis et Anoukis (Sonderschrift des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo 8)*, Mainz, 1981, p. 121-126.

<sup>88</sup> C.A. HOPE, *Some Memphite Blue-painted Pottery of the Mid-18th Dynasty*, in J. PHILLIPS et al. (eds.), *Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Near East. Studies in Honour of Martha Rhodes Bell*, Vol. II, San Antonio, Texas, 1997, p. 249-286.

<sup>89</sup> E.g. from Karnak, see C.A. HOPE, *New Kingdom Painted Pottery from Karnak North*, in *Bulletin de Liaison du Groupe Internationale d'Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 19 (1996), p. 31; C.A. HOPE, *Karnak North: Painted Ceramics of the New Kingdom*, in *Bulletin de Liaison du Groupe Internationale d'Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 20 (1997), p. 29 or from Houses of Millions of years on the Theban westbank, M.C. GUIDOTTI and F. SILVANO, *La ceramica del tempio di Thutmosi IV a Gurna (Biblioteca di Studi Egittologici 3)*, Pisa, 2003, figs. 10-15.

vessels within the framework of the Beautiful Feast of the Valley, both in temples and tombs.<sup>90</sup>

### 5. Amarna – an exceptional case?

The key sites for the appearance of blue painted pottery are of course Malqata and Amarna. Thus, the find contexts at these two sites will be briefly mentioned for reasons of comparison. The case of Malqata is probably connected with its function as a venue of the Sed festivals of Amenhotep III.<sup>91</sup> Blue painted material from the site is abundant and very similar to the pottery from Amarna, but as yet not completely published.<sup>92</sup>

Blue painted pottery has been excavated in primary domestic contexts at Amarna, but it is attested all over the city – in domestic, industrial, administrative and religious quarters, in elite houses as well as in the workmen's village.<sup>93</sup> It is especially this distribution which led scholars to the observation that blue painted ware is neither restricted to certain social strata nor to special buildings.<sup>94</sup> However, one might also argue that the case of Amarna is exceptional and as such related to the fundamental changes of religious practice during this era. According to a theory put forward by J. Assmann, the primary motto of both the king and the town life might be called a day-to-day-feast (*“Veralltäglicung des Fests oder Verfestlichung des Alltags”*<sup>95</sup>) because of the omnipresence of the sun god Aten. Would it be possible to connect the use and frequency of blue painted pottery at Amarna with this concept?

<sup>90</sup> For a list of such 18th Dynasty vessels in Theban Tombs and their context see M. BELL, *Regional Variation in Polychrome Pottery of the 19th Dynasty*, in *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), p. 73, note 118. In addition, blue painted pottery can be associated with royal jubilee festivals, as was convincingly argued for findings at Malqata and Karnak by C.A. HOPE, *Some Remarks on Potmarks of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty*, p. 121-146.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. D. O'CONNOR, *The City and the World: Worldview and Built Forms in the Reign of Amenhotep III*, in D. O'CONNOR and E.H. CLINE (eds.), *Amenhotep III, Perspectives of His Reign*, Ann Arbor, 2001, paperback edition, p. 160-172; C.A. HOPE, *Some Remarks on Potmarks of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty*, p. 130-133. M. MALLINSON, *The Sacred Landscape*, in R.E. FREED, Y.J. MARKOWITZ and S.H. D'AURIA (eds.), *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun*, p. 72.

<sup>92</sup> See C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom*, p. 7-9, figs. 9-13; C.A. HOPE, *Some Remarks on Potmarks of the Late Eighteenth Dynasty*, p. 130-133, fig. 6; note also the renewed excavation and survey work at the site within the last years, lately directed by P. LACOVARA (see <http://imalqata.wordpress.com/>).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 168-182, 184; P.J. ROSE, *The Eighteenth Dynasty Pottery Corpus*, passim.

<sup>94</sup> See C. A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, p. 88.

<sup>95</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest*, p. 118.

As was shown recently by A. Stevens, archaeological material from domestic contexts covers in general a large spectrum of meanings. A “religious” sphere has to be taken into account as well and it may be stressed that blue painted vessels were included in Stevens’ study of ‘private religion at Amarna’.<sup>96</sup>

I would like to highlight another aspect that might be of significance for the functionally diverse use of blue painted ware. At both sites, Malqata and Amarna, there are strong links between the decoration of the vessels and wall paintings of residential, representative, and cultic buildings.<sup>97</sup> For some of the wall paintings at Amarna, it has been reasonably suggested that the designs are the visual expression of Akhentaten’s hymn to the Aten.<sup>98</sup> As such, the decoration of the floors and walls of palaces, houses and chapels<sup>99</sup> illustrates the day-to-day-feast at Amarna, according to Assmann the main concept of living within the Horizon of Aten.<sup>100</sup> The thesis is that the same holds true for blue painted pottery: it was particularly popular in Amarna because of the abundant references in the city to regeneration, rebirth and the transformation of the extraordinary to the mundane.

## 6. Zeitgeist, taste and emotional value?

As the amphora Exc.-No. 16101G-08 from Elephantine illustrates, some blue painted vessels clearly had a symbolic value, probably with several semantic layers. References to metal vessels, to temple votive

<sup>96</sup> A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 167-184.

<sup>97</sup> S. HILLER, *Spätminoische Pyxiden aus SM II/III A:1 und die Fresken aus dem Palast von Amenophis III. in Malkata (Theben West)*, in E. CZERNY et al. (eds.), *Timelines. Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak*, vol. II (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 149.2), Leuven – Paris – Dudley, MA, 2006, p. 149-165, pl. V.

<sup>98</sup> For the designs of the palace pavements as highly symbolized reflection of the cosmos see: D. O’CONNOR, *City and Palace in New Kingdom Egypt*, in *Cahiers de Recherche de l’Institut de Papyrologie et d’Égyptologie de Lille* 11 (1989), p. 78; D. O’CONNOR, *Mirror of the Cosmos: The Palace of Merenptah*, in E.L. BLEIBERG (ed.), *Fragments of a Shattered Visage, The Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ramesses the Great (Monographs of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology* 1), Memphis, Tenn., 1993, p. 184; F.J. WEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings*, p. 349.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. B.J. KEMP, *Wall Paintings from the Workmen’s Village at el-Amarna*, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 65 (1979), p. 47-53; F.J. WEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings*, passim; F.J. WEATHERHEAD and B.J. KEMP, *The Main Chapel at the Amarna Workmen’s Village and its Wall Paintings (Egypt Exploration Society Excavation Memoir* 85), London, 2007.

<sup>100</sup> J. ASSMANN, *Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest*, p. 117-119; J. ASSMANN, *Stein und Zeit, Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten*, München, 1991, p. 200-237.

offerings, to foreign tributes, to several deities and the large sphere around the theme regeneration underline a very complex meaning.

The colour blue also may have had a symbolic value — it does not indicate pottery as material in the first place, faience and glass are fairly more characteristic for this colour scheme. Here it is interesting that these two products are well known from contemporary sites, especially from residences and palaces.<sup>101</sup> Would it be possible that this preference for blue was a matter of taste and an expression of a specific *Zeitgeist*?<sup>102</sup> Even if the archaeological evidence is unlikely to yield precise answers to this, it is relevant to consider such ideas in an archaeological analysis. This holds especially true for the gamut of emotions which can possibly be associated with objects used in various contexts, in different social strata and that cannot be kept apart from culture and society in general.<sup>103</sup>

The unique characteristics of blue painted pottery suggest that specific emotions were connected with such vessels (e.g. because of its specialised production resulting in a high demand and a restricted supply,<sup>104</sup> highly symbolical motifs on multiple levels, associations with gods and ideas etc.). For example, the use of a blue painted lotus goblet as found in the workmen's village at Amarna<sup>105</sup> as a drinking vessel might very well have the potential for its user to associate a drink from this "good china" of Amarna with something special, maybe even to connect it with a feast like a royal banquet.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Cf. P.T. NICHOLSON, *Brilliant Things for Akhenaten, The Production of Glass, Vitreous Materials and Pottery at Amarna Site O45.1* (Egypt Exploration Society Excavation Memoir 80), London, 2007. The production of glass and blue painted pottery is linked by the use of cobalt for pigment making and colouring of both glass and pottery, see *IBID.*, p. 153.

<sup>102</sup> See C.A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, p. 88 ("The impetus for its manufacture undoubtedly lay in the taste for elaboration during an age of luxury"). One might stress that the late 18th Dynasty is known as the most colourful period of Egyptian art and as a heyday of multicoloured glass and faience; see A. KOZLOFF, *The Malqata/El-Amarna Blues: Favourite Colours of Kings and Gods*, in E. GORING, N. REEVES and J. RUFFLE (eds.), *Chief of Seers, Egyptian Studies in Memory of Cyril Aldred (Studies in Egyptology)*, London, 1997, p. 178-192.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. S. TARLOW, *Emotion in Archaeology*, in *Current Anthropology* 41, no. 5 (2000), p. 713: "... it is vitally important for us to incorporate a consideration of emotional values and understandings into our archaeologies but that emotions cannot be separated from other aspects of social and cultural meaning and experience."

<sup>104</sup> For the preferential access to the main product for pigment making, cobalt from the Egyptian Oases, and its consequences for production see P.T. NICHOLSON, *Brilliant Things for Akhenaten*, p. 157-158.

<sup>105</sup> C.A. HOPE, *Blue Painted and Polychrome Decorated Pottery from Amarna*, p. 28; P.J. ROSE, *The Eighteenth Dynasty Pottery Corpus*, p. 74-75, SE 7.1; A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 184.

<sup>106</sup> For specific aspects that turn a banquet into a feast see L. GREEN, *Some Thoughts on Ritual Banquets at the Court of Akhenaten and in the Ancient Near East*, in

In general, the aesthetic qualities of blue painted vessels are highly valued in the eyes of modern Egyptologists – but can we trace aspects of its approval in the mind of the Ancient Egyptians?<sup>107</sup> The colour blue and the common floral motifs seem to refer to the blue lotus with its connotation to rebirth<sup>108</sup> and to more general creative aspects.<sup>109</sup>

## 7. Summary

As was already highlighted by C. A. HOPE, there is a very high variability attested for the use of blue painted pottery covering all kinds of social strata and various find contexts.<sup>110</sup> Blue painted vessels are known to have had an ornamental value; they were used as ritual equipment in chapels and temples,<sup>111</sup> as mortuary accompaniments in tombs as well as for domestic activities within palaces, elite households and workmen's villages. This high level of diverse usage may, however, follow a common general theme. The thesis is that blue painted pottery was associated in a general sense with festive occasions and ceremonial activities like rejuvenation, regeneration and rebirth – aspects which formed important issues not only in funerary and cultic contexts but also within settlements.<sup>112</sup>

G.N. KNOPPERS and A. HIRSCH, *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford (Probleme der Ägyptologie 20)*, Leiden, 2004, p. 205. For a possible 'particular ceremonial significance' of such goblets see also A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 184. It is especially noteworthy that goblets like the ones in ceramic are also attested in metal and faience.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. A. KOZLOFF, *The Malqata/El-Amarna Blues*, p. 185 for aesthetic aspects of blue, its complex symbolism and also technical aspects of its pigments and production (here: glass and faience).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. P. LACOVARA, "cat. 103. Amphora with gazelle and ankhs", in R.E. FREED, Y.J. MARKOWITZ and S.H. D'AURIA (eds.), *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1999, p. 236.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. F.D. FRIEDMAN, *Notions of Cosmos in the Step Pyramid Complex*, in P. DER MANUELIAN (ed.), *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson*, vol. I, Boston, 1996, p. 337-351, especially p. 343. Cf. also the so-called Nun-bowls in faience (E.-Ch. STRAUSS, *Die Nunschale – Eine Gefäßgruppe des Neuen Reiches (Münchener Ägyptologische Studien 30)*, München – Berlin, 1974) that show similar motifs like blue painted pottery, share the same symbolic colour and probably fulfilled similar functional aspects.

<sup>110</sup> C. A. HOPE, *Blue-Painted Pottery*, p. 88.

<sup>111</sup> See e.g. the private chapels in the vicinity of the workmen's village at Amarna: P.J. ROSE, *Pottery from the Main Chapel*, in B.J. KEMP (ed.), *Amarna Reports III (Occasional Publications 4)*, London, 1986, p. 99-117: together with cultic pottery like pot stands and incense burners, serving vessels and others blue painted jars appear in considerable numbers.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 323-329.

For a short time, the blue painted ceramic ware formed an integral component of the material culture of the New Kingdom, both of the domestic equipment and of the votive offerings for temples and sanctuaries. Similar to painted wares in various cultural contexts around the world, it may have 'served as the good china of the day'.<sup>113</sup> As such, blue painted pottery was employed in daily activities that in turn received a special connotation because of the particular, manifold character of the ware. Thus, the presence of blue painted or other "exotic" vessels in domestic settings do not necessarily point towards a comfortable lifestyle or high status of its inhabitants,<sup>114</sup> but rather on the presence of religious/cultic/festive activities.<sup>115</sup>

In sum, the short lifespan and the popularity of blue painted pottery may be linked not only to the Zeitgeist of the New Kingdom but especially to the contemporary heyday of Ancient Egyptian festive culture.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> A. WONDERLEY, *Material Symbolics in Pre-Columbian Households: The Painted Pottery of Naco, Honduras*, in *Journal of Anthropological Research* 42, no. 4 (1986), p. 506 in his analysis of Mesoamerican material from A.D. 1200-1540 (a case study from Honduras).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. P.J. ROSE, *The Pottery from Gate Street 8*, in: B.J. KEMP (ed.), *Amarna Reports IV (Occasional Publications 5)*, London, 1987, p. 132-143, especially p. 137.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. A. STEVENS, *Private Religion*, p. 282-284; N. KLEINKE, *Female Spaces*, p. 75-76.

<sup>116</sup> As a parallel from later times the so-called Upper Egyptian Hadra-ware may be named – its decoration with floral motifs as well as its find positions in Western Thebes refer to a festive atmosphere as background for these vessels; see J. BUDKA, *Bestattungsbrauch und Friedhofsstruktur*, p. 479. For the Upper Egyptian Hadra-ware in general see G. SCHREIBER, *Late Dynastic and Ptolemaic Painted Pottery from Thebes (4th-2nd c. BC) (Dissertationes Pannonicae Ser. III, Vol. 6)*, Budapest, 2003, passim.

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