

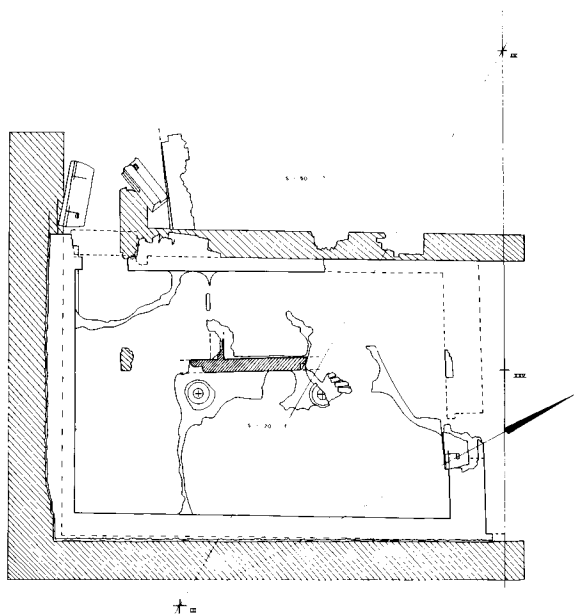
# THE NUBIAN PUBLICATION PROJECT

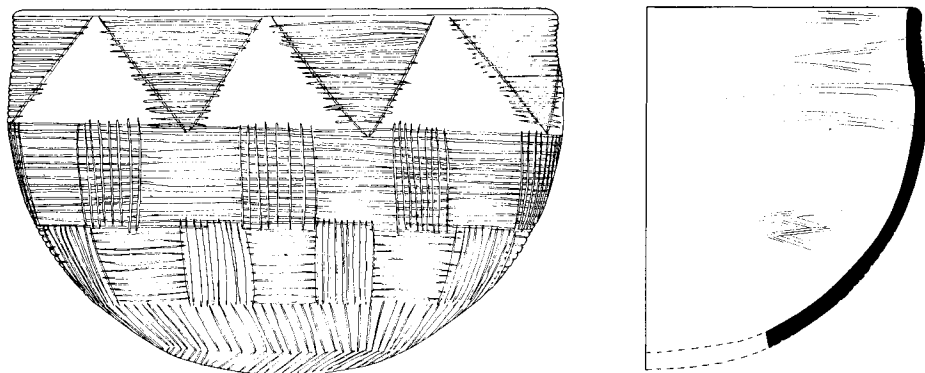
**BRUCE · B · WILLIAMS**

**T**he fifth volume published by the project appeared this year, *The A-Group Royal Cemetery at Qustul: Cemetery L*, joining Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition volumes I, II, and V, as well as *Ancient Textiles from Nubia*, as OINE III. The archaeological community can now examine independently some of the most remarkable contexts found in the Nile Valley. The next volume, OINE IV, was advanced by selection of an editor and the completion of photoreduction.

As the bulk of manuscripts for the concession at the southern end of Egyptian Nubia were completed, work on Serra East and its contributions to knowledge intensified. The site was a fortress only in the late Twelfth and early Thirteenth Dynasty, when it protected the east bank of Egypt's Nubian frontier zone from the formidable desert-

● A plan of a reception hall in the residence of the rulers of Teh-khet. Almost nothing was known of the local princes' residences in early New Kingdom Nubia before the excavation at Serra East. This pillared hall, with its reused stone door jambs and thresholds, was built in imitation of Egyptian structures. The small partitions in the center are later additions. Plan by James Knudstad.





- *An incised bowl of the Medjay culture from a quarry dump outside Serra Fortress. This pottery is evidence to identify a new phase in Nubia's cultures. By Lisa Heidorn.*

dwelling Medjay people. Members of this very group were employed in the fortress itself and staffed its patrols; they left evidence of their presence behind in their very special pottery. This year, materials from Serra East produced new evidence for an internal chronology of this pottery in two phases, one about 1800–1750 B.C., the other about 1650–1550 B.C. The earlier vessels appeared with a great deal of contemporary Egyptian pottery in debris that filled older clay quarries near the fort, and these comprise some of the most important late Middle Kingdom contexts south of the capital (near el-Lisht) itself and they offer much new evidence for chronology and regional variation in Egyptian archaeology of the period.

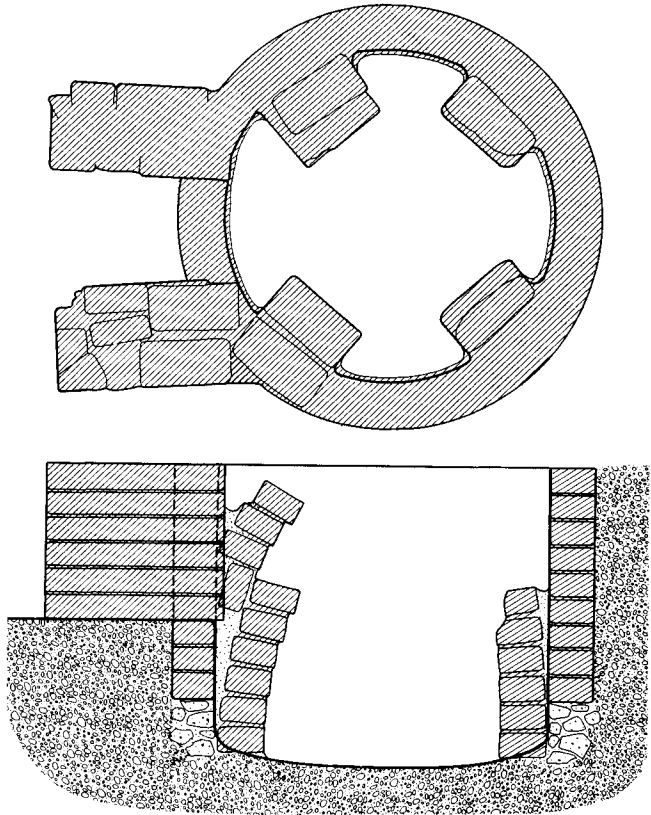
In the second phase, Serra was probably not a complete fortress, although its structure may have been substantially intact. Only some rubble wall foundations remain from added structures, although pottery of the Medjay and from Kerma, deep in Sudan, remains to tell us that Serra was an outpost of the Kushite empire that expanded to Egypt's borders between 1650 and 1550 B.C.

Although its destruction might have been earlier, it is most likely that the fortress' northern wall was burned about 1550 B.C. as Egypt expanded again to capture an even greater empire in Nubia than before. Serra did not disappear in this change but entered the most interesting period of its ancient existence, as the seat of important local rulers who served the Egyptian pharaohs, the Princes of Teh-khet. The Expedition found part of their residence in the fortress, a columned hall with reused stone door-jambs which must have been an inner audience or reception hall. The early princes were buried outside the fort

under a series of tomb structures, the earliest ones round tumuli, the later ones pyramids. Although the two last princes of the line, Amenemhat and Djehutyhetep, were buried under pyramids some distance to the south, at Debeira, their retainers and administrators continued to use a cemetery in a wadi just east of Serra Fortress.

The rather large area that belonged to Teh-khet included extensive date palm plantations, as it did even in modern times before the High Dam. However, Serra was not just a center for agricultural administration. Industry had existed there since the Middle Kingdom. Kilns in the fortress had been used to fire a wide range of pottery vessels, as we know from unfired fragments and deformed "wasters." Industrial installations are not common in Egyptian archaeology, and pottery kilns from Egypt's great ages are even less common, so the discovery of actual kiln structures with evidence of the products is an archaeological event. In fact, a tradition of pottery manufacturing continued into

• *Plan (above) and section (below) of a kiln in Serra Fort. Pottery kilns are not common in the debris of Egyptian towns. Kilns at Serra were remarkable because fragments of unfired pottery and deformed "wasters" also occurred. Drawing by James Knudstad, inked by Lisa Heidorn.*



the New Kingdom at Serra, for deformed and overfired pieces of this period were scattered about the fort. These included surprisingly elaborate vessels, some burnished or painted.

Pottery was not the only industry at Serra, for copper was worked there as it was in other fortresses, and we have remains of crucibles, pottery hobs used to hold the crucibles in the furnace, and possibly even the furnace itself.

The major work this year was pottery. Vast amounts were recovered in the rescue, and retained, and the classification will make a contribution to an archaeological framework for Nubia and Upper Egypt, but the large task of recording the sherds has just begun.

After a year teaching in China and excavating in Egypt, Lisa Heidorn returned to the project, not only as its artist, but as a major contributor. In this capacity, she has made exciting discoveries in material from yet another Nubian site which will be the subject of a more detailed report in the future.