Nubian Publication Project

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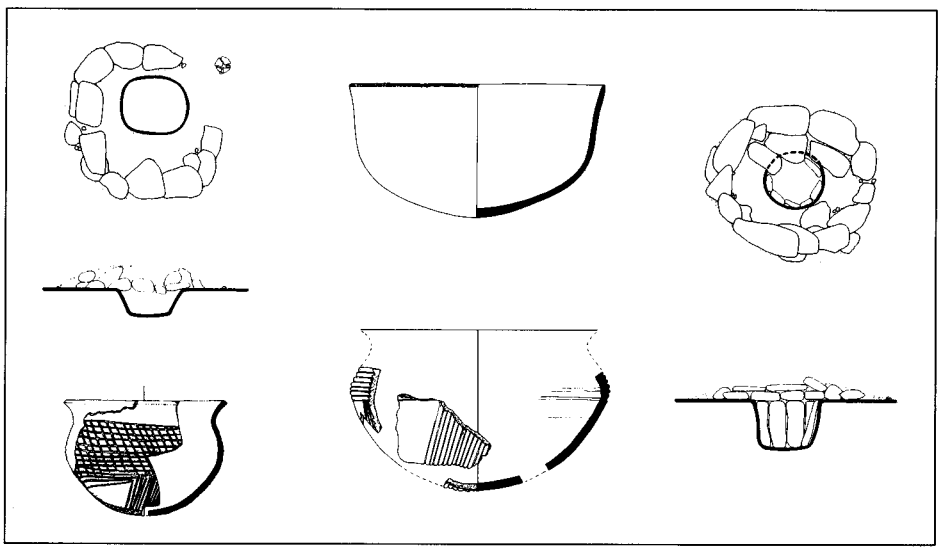
The publication of OINE IV continued the publishing of the Oriental Institute's large-scale excavations between Abu Simbel and the Sudan border. This volume presents a variety of material, beginning with a small but significant body of Neolithic material from a cave-shrine in the rocky bluff behind Adindan. Ancillary installations to the great tombs of Cemetery L, tombs of "courtiers" and perhaps some ordinary folk, and storage pits all date to the A-Group, which ended just as Egypt's First Dynasty was founded. Finally, two tombs at Adindan offered new evidence to date a small number of graves and sites in Lower Nubia to the period after A-Group, throwing light on one of the region's most frustrating and mysterious periods. Another such period, about the middle of the first millennium, was illuminated last year in these pages by Lisa Heidorn's report on Dorginarti. In the coming year, we hope for the appearance of a small volume (OINE VII) that will date many sites to the period just before Dorginarti, the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (c. 740-656 B.C.). This has been one of the emptiest pages in Lower Nubia's archaeology, despite the fact that it was the most glorious age of Kush. The sites are fairly small and diverse, but they make up a regional pattern of considerable interest, concentrated in the area from the southern end of the Second Cataract to Qustul.

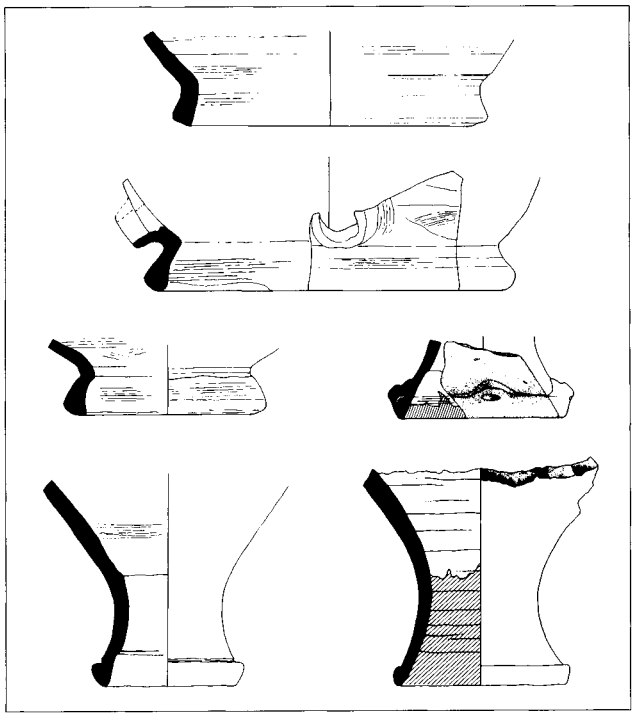
Nubia often seems to present an archaeology of fragments. Small groups of material carefully gathered and documented in recent times can be connected to evidence previously disregarded, and often summarily recorded and dispersed, to identify new phases. Sometimes, fragments from the 1960s rescue can be linked to new discoveries far afield. Such an event occurred this year, during preparation of a chapter on several small cemetery clusters near the fortress of Serra East, excavated and recorded by James Knudstad and Otto Schaden in 1964. They all were dated to the earlier second millennium B.C. and could readily be identified as Pan Graves, archaeological evidence of the famous Medjay, who both threatened the security of Egypt's border zone in the area, and served Egypt as soldiers and police. However, one cluster, Cemetery D, contained pottery that dated to the mid-first millennium B.C. The cemetery and its contents are now isolated in Lower Nubia, but they could be related to cemeteries and pottery now

appearing in surveys and excavations far to the south in the Eastern Desert, even near the Ethiopian border. A far-flung and enduring tradition begins to emerge from obscurity.

◆ Research and writing for OINE X, funerary remains at Serra East, and XI, Serra Fortress, continued this year, with a small part presented at the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt. This reflects on a problem that has been a continuing source of contention in Egyptian archaeology, the regionalization of Egyptian pottery production, especially in the Middle Kingdom. Attempts to correlate widely separated sites in Egypt have been obstructed by the assumption that the pottery types differed in each region, or that there was a sort of "time lag" that delayed the appearance of new types as they travelled progressively outwards from a presumed center. Surprisingly enough, the assumption is difficult to check. For important periods, materials definitely dated by historical evidence are difficult to come by, or are badly mixed. Radiometric techniques do not yet work within the narrow tolerances of accuracy needed to check relatively small differences in time. One of the most difficult periods has been the late Middle Kingdom, between c. 1850 and 1750 B.C., when Egypt built a string of forts near the Second Cataract to defend its territory in Nubia against the rising power of Kush to the south. Until the last few years, the period had yielded few reliably-dated bodies of representative material, but recent excavations near Egypt's capital encountered large dumps that could be dated with real confidence. As it turns out, the pottery from these dumps almost exactly parallels that from quarry dumps at Serra of the same date (*Oriental Institute Annual Report*,1986-87). There were some interesting elaborations at Serra to give a bit of regional flavor, but no time lag. Most interesting of all, we know from unfired sherds and wasters, as well as the kilns, that pottery was actually produced at the fort. The limited



First-Millennium Meded tombs.



Jars from a quarry dump.

needs of a fortress, which could hardly support a full-time pottery industry, and the nearly exact reproduction of types, separated by hundreds of miles, indicate that the simpler vessels were produced by itinerant craftsmen who travelled long distances to do their work, like other members of the garrison communities.

◆ Challenging as it is, the research activities of identifying and evaluating important aspects of the work in Nubia is only the beginning of the publication process. Apart from writing, editing on volumes IV, VII, and VIII (Meroitic Remains from Qustul and Ballana) required a great deal of attention. One demanding task, production of actual reduced illustrations for volumes VII, VIII, and IX, was essentially completed by Lisa Heidorn. A volunteer, Greer Hawley, made substantial progress in a campaign to identify and sort a large mass of Christian (c. A.D. 1100-1200) pottery from a town built in Serra Fortress.