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# Sommaire

Carte..... VIII

Préface ..... IX

## I. CLASSEMENT GÉOGRAPHIQUE DES DÉCOUVERTES ..... I

Mikaël PESENTI avec une introduction de P. WILSON

1. Saïs (Sa el-Hagar), prospection 2000.  
Les amphores grecques archaïques..... 3

Catherine DEFERNEZ

2. Remarques à propos du mobilier récent  
découvert sur le site de Tell el-Herr (saison 2010) ..... 19

Robert SCHIESTL

3. Pottery from Pyramids of the 13th Dynasty  
in the Dahshur Region: Survey in Dahshur 2006..... 51

Sylvie MARCHAND avec une introduction de P. DAVOLI

4. Prospection céramique de 2010 des environs de Dimah (Fayoum).  
Habitats et nécropoles de l’Ancien Empire à la Basse Époque..... 63

**Lies Op De BEECK, D. DEPRAETERE**

5. Pottery Collected when Surveying Ancient Quarries  
at Deir al-Barsha .....77

**Anna POŁUDNIKIEWICZ, Alexandra KONSTANTINIDOU**

6. Bawit – Church “D”. Ifao - Louvre ..... 91

**Bettina BADER**

7. Herakleopolis Magna - Ehnasya el-Medina, Autumn 2003 .....101

**Bettina BADER**

8. Herakleopolis Magna – Ehnasya el-Medina, Autumn 2006 ..... 113

**Aurélia MASSON, Mohamed NAGUIB, Mahmoud SHAFEY**

9. Overview of the Ceramic Productions  
from the Luxor Town Mound .....125

**Rosemary LE BOHEC, Marie MILLET**

10. Karnak. Le temple d’Amon.  
Étude de la poterie et des contextes stratigraphiques  
de la cour nord du IV<sup>e</sup> pylône..... 147

**Antigone MARANGO**

11. La présence grecque dans la vallée thébaine  
avant l’époque ptolémaïque. Le témoignage de la céramique.....171

**Karin N. SOWADA**

12. Ceramics from New Kingdom Tombs at Dra Abu el-Naga,  
Seasons 1990-2005.....185

**Lyla PINCH BROCK**

13. The Pottery from the So-Called «Tomb of Queen Tiye» .....195

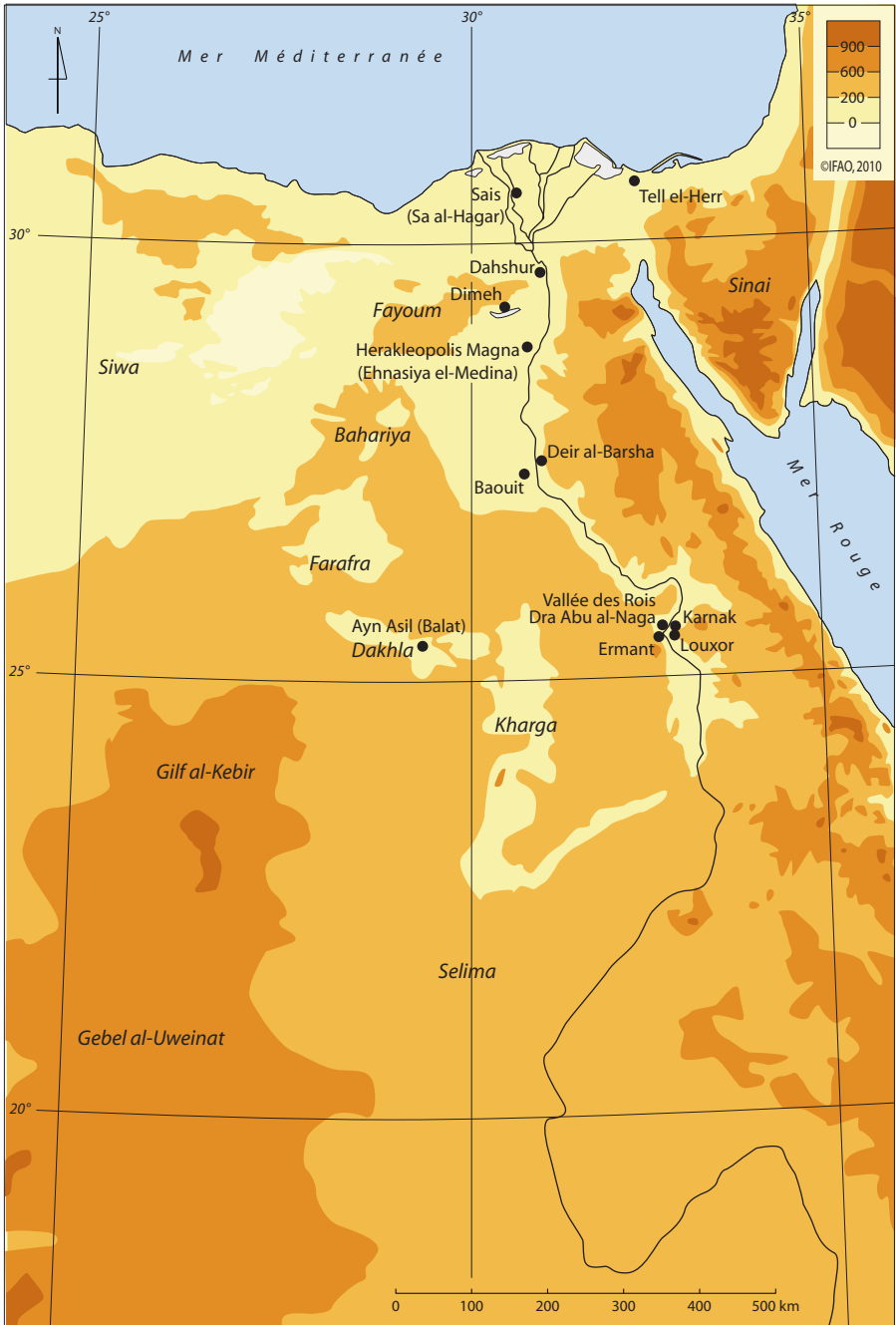
**Romain DAVID**

14. Ermant aux époques byzantine et arabe (IV<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> s.).  
L'apport de la céramique .....209

**Valérie LE PROVOST**

15. Une production céramique originale  
de la Première Période intermédiaire à Ayn Asil.  
Un vase sphérique à deux goulots ..... 219

**II. INDEX CHRONOLOGIQUE (par n° d'article) ..... 233**



## 8. Herakleopolis Magna – Ehnasya el-Medina, Autumn 2006

**T**HE autumn of 2006 saw another season of excavation and study of pottery at Ehnasya el-Medina, the ancient Herakleopolis Magna.

The excavation was conducted by the Spanish team of the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid under the direction of Carmen Pérez-Die and continued work in the necropolis of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom, which is the focus of the project since 2000.<sup>1</sup>

The study of the pottery from the excavations at the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom necropolis in 2006 concentrated on preliminary dating of previously and currently excavated contexts and documentation of selected contexts and vessels.

It was, thus, possible to view about 350 different contexts of various sizes and assign preliminary dates to them on the basis of their diagnostic material (mostly rim- or base fragments, as well as handles and diagnostic body fragments (necks, painted sherds, sherds with incisions, etc.)).

These contexts were excavated in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2006, and, after four campaigns a good overview of the material could be gained. It is thus possible to plan a strategy to study certain promising contexts in order to know more about the date of the material and the original composition of the tomb deposits and offering pottery, which was laid down during the functioning of the mortuary cult.

It will also be possible to draw some conclusions on the later history of the cemetery as the post First Intermediate/early Middle Kingdom ceramic material could be

1. For preliminary reports see PÉREZ-DIE 2001, p. 6-25; PÉREZ-DIE 2004, p. 21-24; PÉREZ-DIE 2005a, p. 239-254 ; PÉREZ-DIE 2005b, *passim* ; PÉREZ-DIE 2010, *passim*. See also the report of 2003 in this volume, as well as BADER 2009, p. 13-41; BADER 2011, p. 37-69.

dated more closely by David Aston despite being from mixed contexts in disturbed find positions. He collaborated for a few days last season and studied some of the diagnostic material, which he dated to a late phase of the Late Period going into the early Ptolemaic period (late 4th to 3rd century B.C., see below for some examples).<sup>2</sup>

Another very interesting and promising line of investigation was initiated this season, namely the excavation of contexts in levels below the currently studied tombs, in order to find out if the ceramic material is the same or different to the repertoire now known. As the ground level of the tombs rises towards the east, it was possible, due to a favourably low water table, to excavate below Areas 8 and 16. With this aim in mind the material excavated in 2001 below Area 11 was also re-examined and some material studied and drawn.

It turned out, however, that the ceramics under Area 11 were, with a few exceptions, in keeping with the known corpus and, thus, dissimilar to the remarkably different material from below Areas 8 and 16, which itself bears similarities to the repertoire of the late Old Kingdom as known from Dahshur and Saqqara (see below). The question how this material is to be dated, can as yet not be answered: are we confronted with actual Old Kingdom remains of the late Old Kingdom/6th Dynasty or is it rather a continuation of the late Old Kingdom style that did not fall out of use immediately but continued until some time later in the First Intermediate Period. As the exposure of the excavation below the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom tombs was not as large as one would wish, owing to the ground water and time restrictions, the archaeological nature of these contexts remains so far unclear (fill? older tombs? settlement contexts?).<sup>3</sup>

The study of the pottery followed, as in previous years, the Vienna System.<sup>4</sup> In this small report I would like to present some of the findings in a chronological order, beginning with the latest material, dated by David Aston to the late 4th/3rd century BC.

One typical shape of this period at Herakleopolis that was encountered quite frequently, in the form of bases, is a kind of chalice/beaker with a stem (from HM 04, Area 15/16, stratigraphic unit/UE 4d), for which so far no close parallels could be found.<sup>5</sup> We therefore suspect that the shape was favoured locally. The chalices are made

2. D. A. Aston, personal communication.

3. See BADER 2009, *passim* for a more complete treatise.

4. NORDSTRÖM, BOURRIAU 1993, p. 168-182.

5. Similar is a shape from Elephantine, 3rd century B.C. although the actual foot is missing. Cf. ASTON 1999, pl. 92, 2463.



of Nile clay (Nile C2), with a wheel made base, which was cut off the wheel with a string. There seems to be no variation in this technique. The surface of the vessel was uncoated (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> Such bases appear frequently in the uppermost, disturbed levels of the excavations at Herakleopolis Magna.

Another vessel type occurring quite often together with such chalices was a kind of small lid with slightly incurved rim (HM, Area 17, feature 1). The “base” or “handle” respectively was quite crudely finger modelled, in a way that made it impossible to be used as a dish, because it is too uneven to stand upright, unless it was stuck into soft/sandy ground. These lids were made of Nile B2, uncoated and wet smoothed (fig. 2).<sup>7</sup>

For the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom some more complete ceramic vessel shapes were recorded that were previously known only as very small fragments. Amongst these was a dish of a Nile B2 fabric with a red slip on interior and exterior (10 R 4/6 red) that was polished, but not very well. The vessel was made on the slow wheel, whilst the base was visibly scraped. The shape of this dish seems to be derived from the Old Kingdom Meidum-bowls (HM, Area 15, stratigraphic unit/UE 137, fig. 3)<sup>8</sup> although it lacks the high quality of the raw material and the surface treatment as well as the typical sharp carination. The base seems to have been flat, which would not be connected to the Meidum-bowls at all, but perhaps this dish is somehow related to the bowls with spout, one of which had been found earlier at Ehnasya.<sup>9</sup>

A more unusual shape of closed vessel (HM 04, Area 17, feature 6, fig. 4) with a wide mouth and an ovoid body shape (comparable to Sedment 49p, 51m, 51q, 52b or 52e)<sup>10</sup> was found in Area 17, feature 6. The jar was made of Nile C1 clay with a scraped base. The body and the base were made separately and joined just above the base as a joining line clearly demonstrates. The body was turned on the slow wheel/turning device and the rim probably added separately again. A red slip was observed on the exterior of the vessel (10 R 5/6 red; natural surface 7.5 YR 6/4 brown). The bag

6. For similar fragments previously found cf. LÓPEZ GRANDE, QUESADA SANZ, MOLINERO POLO 1995, fig. 37.f and g, but made of Nile B.

7. Similar fragments in LÓPEZ GRANDE, QUESADA SANZ, MOLINERO POLO 1995, p. 86, 101, fig. 55. c-d. Tipo XXXII.C, dated to ca. 730/700 – 650 B.C. Perhaps lids in connection with the burning of incense acc. to López Grande.

8. Cf. BADER 2009, fig. 3.d.

9. Cf. BADER 2012, in this volume, fig. 2.f.

10. PETRIE, BRUNTON 1924a, pl. 30-31.

shaped vessel is not in keeping with the bulk of the ceramic material found at the site but some parallels could perhaps also be cited from the Teti pyramid cemetery,<sup>11</sup> although they seem not exactly comparable. The body shape is reminiscent of a series of closed vessels known from further south.<sup>12</sup>

A typical shape for the area around Herakleopolis Magna, as it occurs frequently in the cemetery of the closely related site of Sedment,<sup>13</sup> could be reconstructed to a complete profile (fig. 5). So far this vessel type has been found in fragments of bases and rims, which are very distinctive, but complete profiles were rather rare. This example comes from Area 11, layer 9, feature 5 and consists of Marl C2 clay that was totally overfired and produced a greenish surface (natural surface outside 5 Y 7/3 light gray; inside 10 YR 6/2 light brownish gray).

Another shape that is seldom easily reconstructable is a very carefully made large dish of Nile B2 fabric with a dark red slip that was polished on the inside and outside (10 R 4/6 red, fig. 6). This example comes from Area 13, feature 12, layer 7. The rim diameter is 43.4 cm.

Two more remarkable vessel shapes that probably date to the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom include a very large storage jar made of Marl clay (fig. 7). This first type has been known for some time<sup>14</sup> and finally the reconstruction of a complete profile was achieved.<sup>15</sup> The vessels are made from a range of various Marl clays, amongst them Marl C and Marl A (2 or 4), as well as a very sandy marl, that could hitherto not be classified within the Vienna System. The very large size of the vessel is 52.5 cm and suggests a storage jar. A large number of similar vessel fragments was excavated in Area 16, feature 115, which is unfortunately disturbed. But the vessel shape seems to belong to the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom as only a few obviously later intrusions were spotted within this context. This type also kept re-occurring in other undisturbed contexts at Herakleopolis. Parallels for the rims of such jars are known from Dahshur<sup>16</sup> and even Giza as early as in the Old

11. SOWADA, CALLAGHAN, BENTLY 1999, p. 74, pl. 41, TNE94:6I, TNE94:88, both unstratified.

12. Tendentially e.g. in Akhmim although not exactly the same, HOPE 2006, *passim*; the same in ZITMAN 2010, fig. 2.2-3; fig. 18-19.

13. PETRIE, BRUNTON 1924a, type family 90, most similar to 90p. Bader 2012.

14. Cf. LÓPEZ GRANDE QUESADA SANZ, MOLINERO POLO 1995, p. 47, fig. 5. a-c, tipo BD. 51410, with parallels from Ayn Asil and Dahshur (fig. 10.12, 10), classified as Marl D. Cf. BADER 2009, fig. 7. d-f; BADER 2012, Area 12.

15. From Area 15, stratigraphic unit 242, cota 6.44.

16. Similar findings in Dahshur, but made of Marl A3. Cf. ALEXANIAN 1999, fig. 57, M70, M90. The examples at Ehnasya did not include Marl A3 yet.

Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> It is perhaps possible to see the beginnings of this vessel type in the late Old Kingdom in Saqqara,<sup>18</sup> or even as far south as in Qubbet el-Hawa.<sup>19</sup> By the time of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom it seems that the body shape has already become ovoid and does not show such a prominent shoulder anymore as the presumed predecessors. It remains to be seen if the body shape shows variation.

In combination with these storage jars there appeared large, quite rough red slipped Nile C dishes and plates with deep string impressions on the exterior just underneath the rim.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps these two types belonged to the original tomb contents, but this assumption has to be weighed against the evidence, before it can be proved without a doubt.

The second type is a unique vessel of immense dimensions (max. width ca 48.0 cm, rim diameter 24.0 cm, ht prob. 65.0 cm, fig. 8), most of which was found in Area 17, feature 6. It was made of a very rough Nile C2 fabric, the surface was uncoated and fired in places to a violet/lilac colour at the base, the rim was covered with a white slip on the outside (white 7.5 YR 7/3 pink, nat. surface 10 R 5/4 weak red). This vat had been turned on a turning device of some kind, but symmetry could not be achieved. The base was reconstructed to about a third of the overall height and the rim to about a fifth of the height. Rim and base did not have a connection, so the overall height had to be reconstructed. Shape and size of the vessel are reminiscent of the large brewing vats in First Intermediate Period/Middle Kingdom model scenes.<sup>21</sup>

Finally a few pottery types with unequivocal similarity to the late Old Kingdom pottery repertoire as known from Dahshur or Saqqara of the late 6th Dynasty will be presented.<sup>22</sup> One of the probably most diagnostic pieces is a wide breadmould made of a very rough Nile C2 fabric (fig. 9).<sup>23</sup> It has a white (2.5 Y 8/3 pale yellow) and a red slip (5 YR 6/6 reddish yellow) on the exterior forming some kind of triangular pattern (?) or a discoloration. The rim was trimmed with a tool, the base finished with fingers as shown by the imprints on the base.<sup>24</sup> The piece was found in Area 8, feature 5, layer IV.

17. Similar in Giza, cf. WODZINSKA 2003, pl. 40, fig. 45.

18. RZEUSKA 2006, pl. 41.138; rim shape pl. 41.134.

19. EDEL 2008, 3, p. 2039, fig. 54, QH 209/17.

20. Cf. BADER 2009, fig. 2.e-f.

21. For example TOOLEY 1995, fig. 24.

22. ALEXANIAN 1999, p. 120-166; RZEUSKA 2003, p. 125-134. Cf. BADER 2009, *passim*.

23. Cf. BADER 2009, fig. 12.d.

24. JAQUET-GORDON 1980, fig. 3, 2, 4, 6.

One context (Area 8, feature 5, layer III) contained dishes that show a strong affinity to “real Meidum bowls”, with a very well polished surface that looks almost metallic and being made of a very fine and hard fabric (Nile A/B1) that contains almost no inclusions (fig. 10).<sup>25</sup> From the same context comes another vessel type known from late Old Kingdom contexts elsewhere,<sup>26</sup> namely a kind of closed vessel with the rim turned inwards and hand made as vertical scraping is visible on the inside (fig. 11). This type is made from fabric Nile C2 and can be white slipped outside or left uncoated. The last type presented here (fig. 12) shows a certain similarity to the Old Kingdom beer jars.<sup>27</sup> It was hand made and manufactured from fabric Nile C2, rim diameter about 11.0 cm. The surface remained uncoated.

The analysis of the pottery of Ehnasya el Medina has reached a very interesting stage since, for the first time, an earlier phase than the one represented by typical ‘First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom’ material from the larger Gurob/Sedment/Ehnasya area seems to have been found.<sup>28</sup> This material could lead to a more thorough understanding of the necropolis at Ehnasya, but of course, more work in analysing the ceramic finds is needed to pinpoint the dating and phasing of the cemetery more closely.

25. Cf. OP DE BEECK 2000, p. 5-14; OP DE BEECK 2004, p. 239-274.

26. ALEXANIAN 1999, fig. 54, M 42, M 44.

27. ALEXANIAN 1999, fig. 54, M 45 looks almost the same. Also Nile C, uncoated. Cf. ALEXANIAN 1999, fig. 55, the base of M 46.

28. For an introduction to the shapes reminiscent of Old Kingdom ceramics see now also Bader 2009, p. 13-41.

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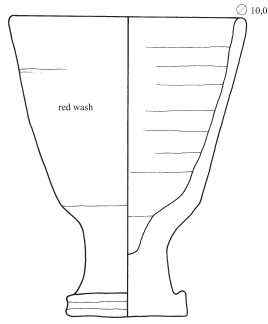


fig. 1

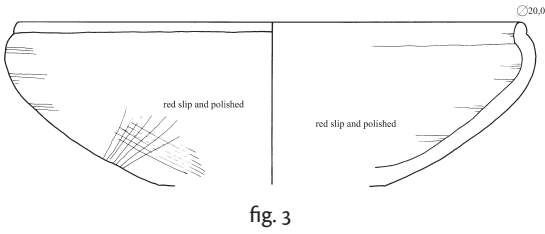
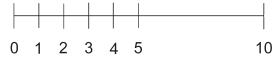
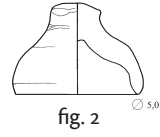


fig. 3

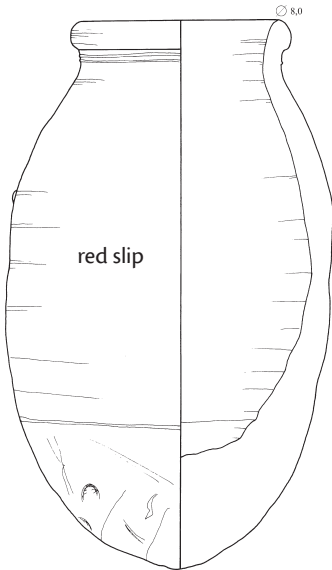


fig. 4

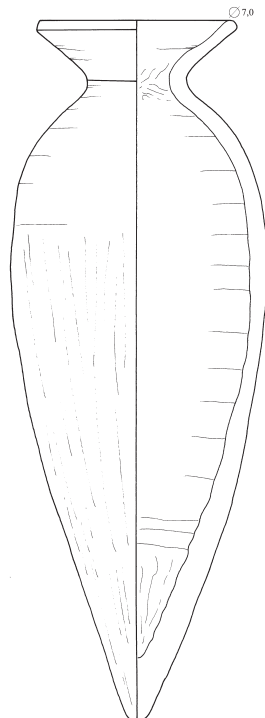


fig. 5

Fig. 1-5. Pottery from Ebnasya el-Medina, scale 1:3.

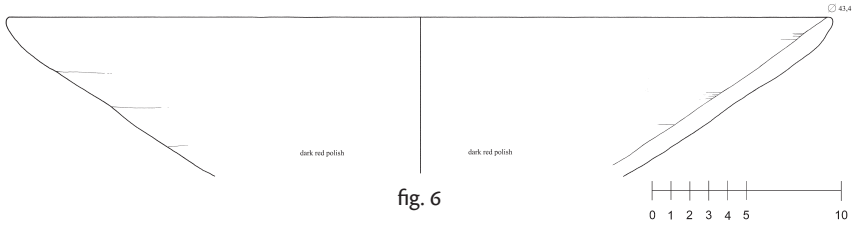


fig. 6

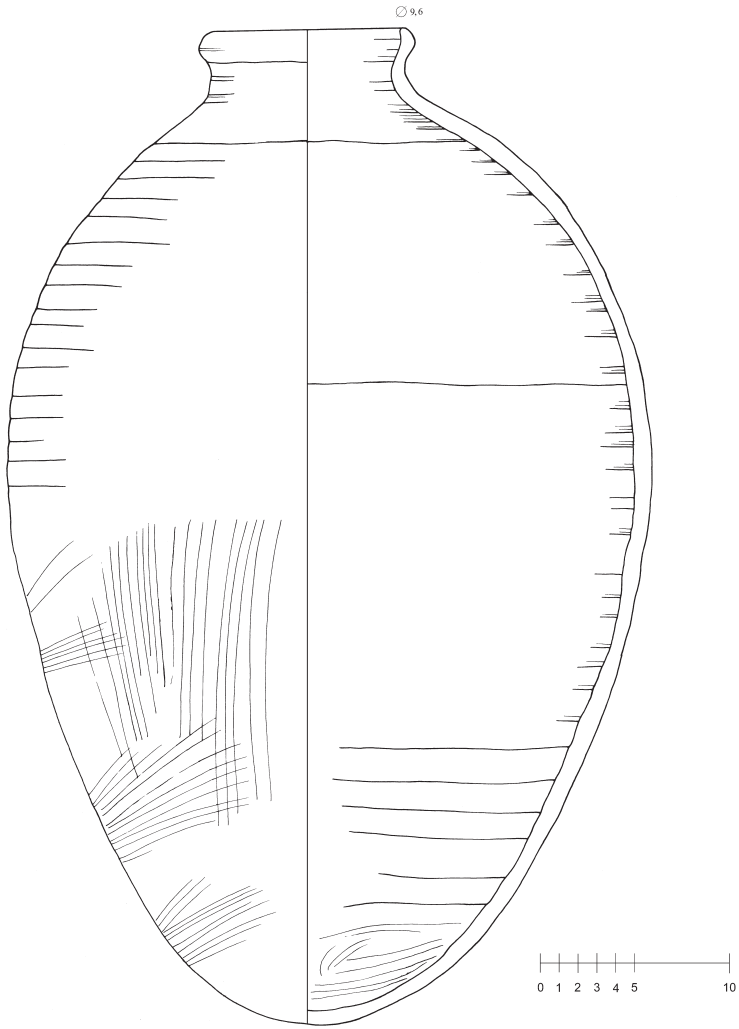


fig. 7

Fig. 6-7. Pottery from Ehnasya el-Medina, scale 1:4.



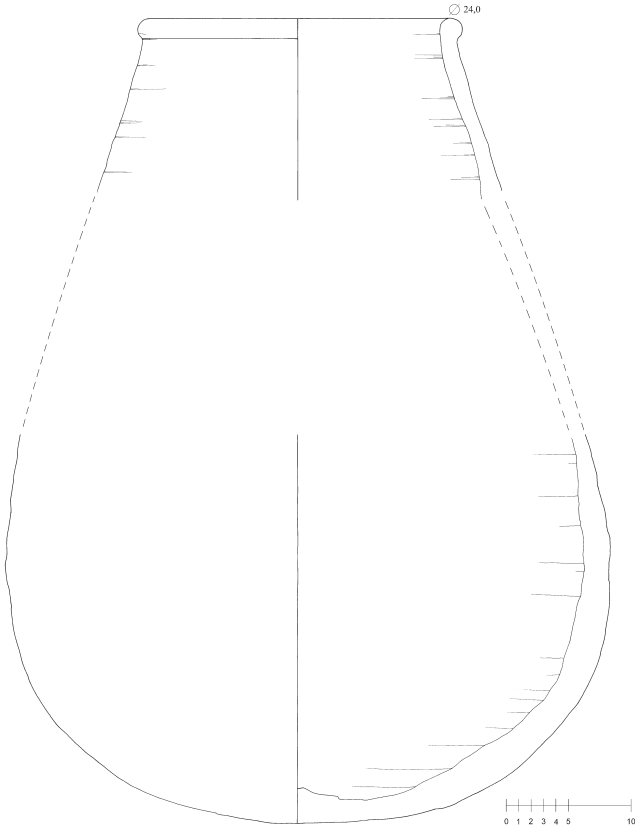


fig. 8

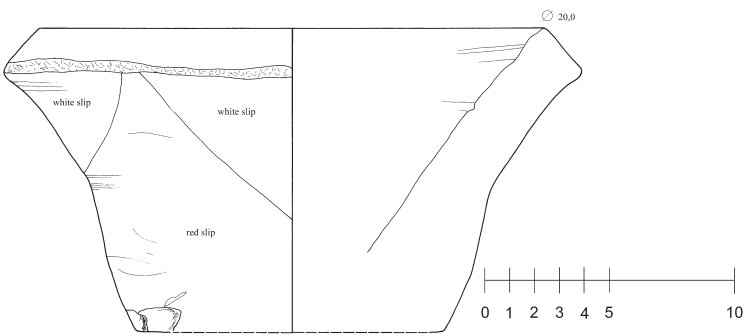


fig. 9

Fig. 8-9. Pottery from Ehnasya el-Medina, scale 1:6 and 1:3.

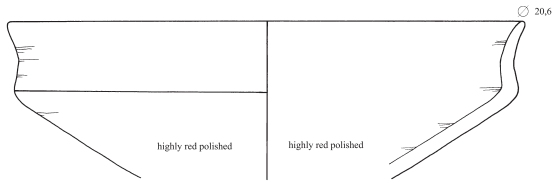


fig. 10

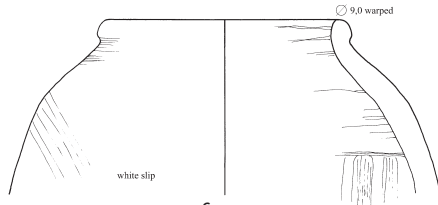


fig. 11

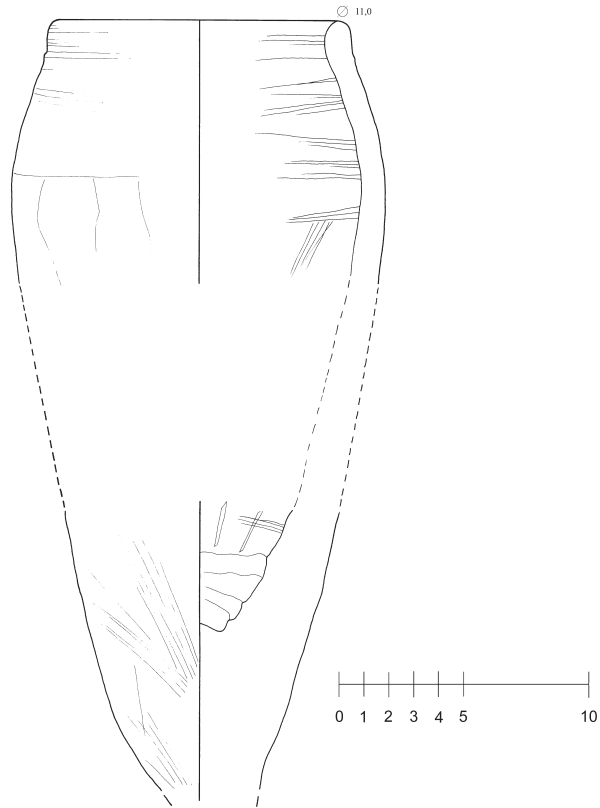


fig. 12

Fig. 10-12. Pottery from Ehnasya el-Medina, scale 1:3.