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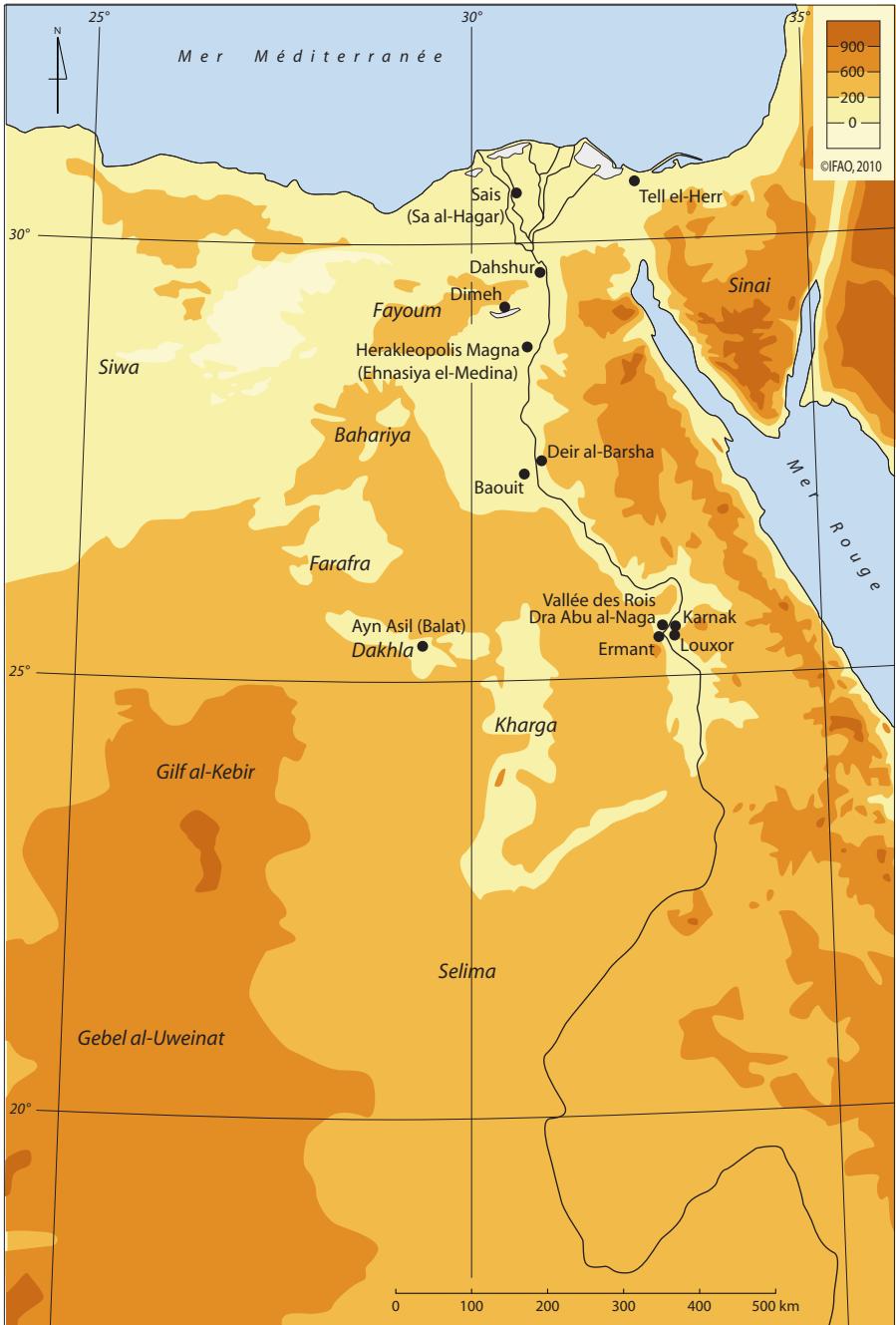
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3. Pottery from Pyramids of the 13th Dynasty in the Dahshur Region: *Survey in Dahshur 2006*

IN continuation of the investigations conducted in Dahshur by the German Archaeological Institute and the Free University Berlin,¹ a survey was undertaken in spring 2006.² Two separate new areas were covered: in the north, the region around the 13th Dynasty pyramid of Khendjer and the “unfinished”, anonymous pyramid in Saqqara-South/Dahshur-North and in the southern end of Dahshur, the area between the pyramid of Ameney-Qemau and the pyramid of Mazghuna-South. In the course of the survey, numerous new 13th Dynasty funerary structures, ranging from unfinished pyramidal projects to extensive elite necropoleis were discovered and recorded.³ Associated with the new as well as the known monuments, substantial amounts of surface pottery were found. While the majority of the material found is of 13th Dynasty date, the pottery ranges in dates from the Old Kingdom to Late Antiquity (“Coptic”). In particular the areas were also used as cemeteries in the early New Kingdom and the area of Saqqara-South/Dahshur-North also in the Late Period. Here only material found associated with the 13th Dynasty pyramids shall be presented, albeit briefly. To date virtually no pottery associated with these late Middle Kingdom structures has been published or mentioned.⁴

*Seminar für Ägyptologie, Free University Berlin; Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo.

1. STADELMANN, ALEXANIAN 1998, p. 293-317.

2. I wish to thank the Supreme Council of Antiquities, represented by inspector ADEL RAGAB ALI, MOHAMMED SABR MOHAMMED EL-DALY, the director of Dahshur SAMY EL-HUSSEINY and the director of Saqqara KAMAL WAHID for their support.

3. SCHIESTL 2006, p. 46-52; SCHIESTL 2008, p. 239-266; ALEXANIAN, SEIDLMAYER, SCHIESTL 2009, p. 25-41; SCHIESTL in print.

4. For some pottery from foundation deposits of pyramids in Saqqara-South, see JÉQUIER 1933, fig. 24, 44; note also the photograph of the tomb chamber of the pyramid of Mazghuna-South (PETRIE, WAINWRIGHT, MACKAY, 1912, pl. LXII, bottom), on which pottery is visible on the left bottom corner of the picture. It is, however, unclear if it is ancient and where the pots are from.

1. Saqqara-South/Dahshur-North: The pyramid of Khendjer, the “unfinished pyramid” and a new pyramid south of the unfinished pyramid (Saqqara-South 7)

As a result of the published excavations of the team under the direction of G. Jéquier,⁵ the pyramid of Khendjer and the unfinished pyramid to its south are two of the better documented monuments of the 13th Dynasty. To the published plan of the site,⁶ now numerous additions can be made:⁷ south of the large “unfinished pyramid” is a smaller unfinished pyramid (*Saqqara-South 7*) and north, south and west of the pyramid of Khendjer are the traces of several contemporary elite tombs (*Saqqara-South 4* and *5/1-5/4*). To the north of the elite tombs of *Saqqara-South 4* are the remains of a very large, presumably pyramidal, substructure (*Saqqara-South 3*). In the south-west, at a distance of about 250 m, an extended elite necropolis of the 13th Dynasty (*Saqqara-South 8*) was documented. In all these areas, pottery of the 13th Dynasty was found on the surface, in differing amounts.⁸ The sector of the pyramid of Khendjer (*Saqqara-South 5*) was particularly rich in pottery.⁹ We are thus for the first time provided with some idea of what the pottery associated with these elite and royal monuments looked like. Many very basic questions surround these monuments, such as their precise chronological placement in the 13th Dynasty, whether these monuments were completed, whether they were “used” (as tombs) and if so, by whom, and whether they were the focus of any cultic activity. The intense archaeological investigations of the past have dramatically reshaped parts of the site and obviously also shifted archaeological material, and pottery, around. Only future excavations can show the full potential this material might hold. Certainly in addressing some of these questions, pottery could offer a very, if not the most, valuable tool.

The same range of types was found in the whole area. They were primarily three groups of pottery: fine hemispherical drinking cups (fig. 1, no. 1, from pyramid of

5. JÉQUIER 1933.

6. JÉQUIER 1933, pl. I; for a discussion of the older maps of the site by the LEPSIUS-expedition and DE MORGAN see SCHIESTL 2006.

7. Detailed map in SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 1; see also SCHIESTL 2006, p. 48, fig. 8; *Rundbrief des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo*, Oktober 2006, p. 18, fig. 25; www.dainst.de/medien/de/daik_rundbrief_2006_3.pdf.

8. Pottery from Saqqara-South 3 (area of pyramidal substructure in the north) and 4 (area of large tombs between Saqqara-South 3 and area of pyramid of Khendjer, Saqqara-South 5), see SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 2; Saqqara-South 5 (area of pyramid of Khendjer), SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 3a-b; Saqqara-South 5/1 and 5/2 (tombs south of pyramid of Khendjer), SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 4; Saqqara-South 6 (area of unfinished anonymous pyramid, excavated by JÉQUIER, southwest of pyramid of Khendjer), SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 5; Saqqara-South 7 (area of unfinished pyramid south of Saqqara-South 6), SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 6; Saqqara-South 8 (cemetery in the west), SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 7-8.

9. SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 3a-b.

Khendjer), beer-bottles (fig. 1, no. 2, from pyramid of Khendjer and fig. 1, no. 3, from the unfinished pyramid south of the unfinished pyramid excavated by JÉQUIER, *Saqqara-South* 7) and large Marl C-containers, commonly called *zirs* (fig. 1, no. 4, from the unfinished pyramid excavated by JÉQUIER, *Saqqara-South* 6). The hemispherical drinking cups were generally of an open shape with slightly incurved rims, less frequently they had straight sides. Most examples were made of fine Nile B1, the use of Nile B2 was rare. Generally the rim had been applied with a thin red band, often only covering the top of the rim; sometimes they were decorated with a wider red band on the outside. Of the so-called beer-bottles, large containers made of Nile C2, only rims with parts of the neck could be collected. The necks are generally straight and show a slight widening at the top. The rims are formed by a rounded thickening, of varying width and shape, but always displaying an indentation on the inside. This inner indentation can be slight or deep. The *zirs*, large containers made of Marl C, display wide openings and a characteristically formed angular rim. The flat top of the rim is usually slightly slanted to the outside or can be horizontal, as in the example shown here (fig. 1, no. 4). As is often the case with surface finds, the sherds can be quite worn and details can be changed by erosion of sand and wind. For example, some of these zir-rims have been weathered to a rounded shape, whereas they originally probably had a more angular appearance.

2. Dahshur South: Dahshur-South 2 and the Pyramid of Ameny-Qemau

2.1. Dahshur-South 2

About 250 m north of the pyramid of Ameny-Qemau two structures, *Dahshur-South* 2 and 16, were discovered and tentatively designated as the remains of substructures of 13th Dynasty pyramids: *Dahshur-South* 2 was first identified by Di. Arnold and R. Stadelmann¹⁰ in 1975 and the adjacent *Dahshur-South* 16 by N. Alexanian and R. Stadelmann¹¹ in 1997. In a brief visit by the author, together with Nicole Alexanian, in 2006 some pottery was collected on the surface around *Dahshur South* 2 and is presented here (fig. 1, no. 5-7).

Two fragments of *zirs* were found: a very weathered rim (fig. 1, no. 6), the surface of which was completely worn on the inside and outside. While the diameter could no longer be reconstructed and the orientation is only approximate, the basic shape of the rim is recognizable as a typical 13th Dynasty type. A flat base of a *zir* of Marl C

10. ARNOLD, STADELMANN 1975, p. 174.

11. STADELMANN, ALEXANIAN 1998, p. 312-313.

(fig. 1, no. 7) shows signs of smoothing by hand on the inside. The base has a diameter of 12 cm. The very weathered remains of a carinated Marl C bowl were also found.¹² This shape group, recently analysed in detail by B. Bader,¹³ first can be documented with certainty for the horizon of the late 12th and early 13th Dynasties, but continues in use until the later 13th Dynasty.¹⁴ Fig. 1, no. 5 is probably the base of a large stand. Its diameter is approximately 20 cm. It is made of Nile C2 and the rim on the base displays the impression of a cord. The diagnostic material found at the site confirms the suggested 13th Dynasty date.

2.2. *The pyramid of Ameny-Qemau*

The site of the pyramid of *Ameny-Qemau* was first excavated by a team led by C. Muses.¹⁵ The architecture was later reinvestigated and documented by V. Maragiolio and C. Rinaldi.¹⁶ Neither teams published or mentioned a single fragment of pottery. The canopic equipment of this king has been recently published by N. Swelim and A. Dodson.¹⁷ A brief survey of the site in the spring of 2006 produced a small sample of surface pottery, both from the top of the mound, where the pyramid was situated, and from the archaeological dumps off the northern, western and eastern sides of this hill. On the top of the mound, from the area of the pyramid substructure, a conical base of an Old Kingdom beer jar was found. Previous reports give no indication of finding any traces of Old Kingdom activities on the mound. In the immediate vicinity, however, lie numerous Old Kingdom structures, the best known being the mastaba of Ipi.¹⁸ While it is possible that this prominent hill had already been used in the Old Kingdom, not too much significance should be attached to such singular surface finds in a so heavily ransacked area. Two fragments of miniature dishes with flat bases and steep sides (fig. 2, no. 5), found in the area of the pyramid substructure, could date either to the Old or the Middle Kingdom. The fragment of a Nile B2 bowl, of roughly hemispherical shape, is covered with a thick red coating on the inside and the outside (fig. 2, no. 1). The diameter is 24 cm and its simple rim is of a rather square shape. The fabric has a Middle Kingdom feel, but no good Middle Kingdom parallels can

12. The example is not depicted here, as it was too weathered to be properly drawn.

13. BADER, 2002, p. 37, fig. 5.

14. Dahshur, Keramikkomplex 7, ARNOLD, 1982, fig. II, no. 1; see also sites south of pyramid of Amenemhet III, Dahshur South 25-1 and 29, STADELMANN, ALEXANIAN 1998, p. 309-310, fig. 8, no. 2, 6.

15. MUSES 2000.

16. MARAGIOLIO, RINALDI 1968, p. 325-338.

17. SWELIM, DODSON 1998, p. 319-334.

18. Currently being prepared for final publication by Nicole Alexanian; For preliminary reports see ALEXANIAN, SEIDLMEYER 2002, p. 3-19.

be cited. The neck of a bottle or jar with a rounded rim (fig. 2, no. 2) is made of Nile B2, but the surface is completely weathered. A date contemporary with the pyramid is proposed, but again good parallels are lacking. However, the fragments of rims of beer-bottles are certainly 13th Dynasty (fig. 2, no. 3 and 4), as is the rounded base of such a container, albeit a small variant (fig. 2, no. 6). All are made of Nile C2. The surface of one (fig. 2, no. 3) retained traces of a red coating. In complete vessels this usually was applied at least to the rim, neck and upper part of the body. The surfaces of the other two examples are completely weathered, in one case (fig. 2, no. 4) more than just the surface was missing - the vessels' walls were presumably originally thicker. In both cases the necks of these bottles are straight. The example in fig. 2, no. 3 has a thickly rounded rim with a slight inner indentation, while the outer lip in the example in fig. 2, no. 4 is less pronounced.

3. Mazghuna-North and South

Moving south along the eastern edge of the desert plateau, from the pyramid of Ameny-Qemau towards the pyramid of *Mazghuna-North*, a string of elite 13th Dynasty tombs are located (*Dahshur-South* 49-53).¹⁹ Today only pits remain, in some of which traces of shafts could be made out. All of these structures were associated with sherds of late Middle Kingdom pottery. One of the sites, *Dahshur-South* 49, was investigated by a trial excavation in 2007.²⁰ A brick lined shaft could be cleared; this was filled with debris and large amounts of pottery of the 13th Dynasty.

While the sites of the pyramids at *Mazghuna-North* and *South*²¹ have both suffered extensively from the ever encroaching sand- and *tafl*-quarrying activities surrounding them, it is the site of *Mazghuna-South* which has suffered the most. It is destroyed. The remaining traces of the pyramid of *Mazghuna-North* are somewhat protected by the presence of a Coptic cemetery erected on the site. At *Mazghuna-North* three pieces of pottery of 13th Dynasty date could be picked up: half of a thin walled, fine hemispherical cup (fig. 3, no. 1) was filled with a hard whitish substance, presumably mortar. The cup was made of Nile B1; the original surface has worn off. Its reconstructed shape is slightly closed with a maximum diameter of 10.7 cm. Whether the

19. Discovered in the course of the 2006 survey, see SCHIESTL 2006, p. 50-52, fig. 14; SCHIESTL 2008a, fig. 9-10;

20. SCHIESTL 2008, p. 63-67; SCHIESTL 2007, p. 9-15.

www.dainst.org/sites/default/files/mediien/de/dahschur_report_2007.pdf

21. MACKAY, Chapters XIII and XIV, in Petrie, Wainwright, Mackay 1912, p. 41-55, pl. 39-49.

cup's use in some building activity was contemporary with the construction of the pyramid or whether the fragment was picked up and utilized in this way at a later point in time remains open. Two fragments of rims of beer-bottles were found (fig. 3, no. 2-3). Both are made of Nile C2 and have a red coating on the outside. The preserved rims are of similar type: a straight neck widening at the top is provided with a thick rounded rim with an indentation on the inside. In the one case (fig. 3, no. 2) the rolled rim is of a rounded triangular shape and the indentation is deep, in the other case (fig. 3, no. 3) the rim is more slender and the indentation slighter.

Mazghuna-South offered very little surface finds. Only two sherds could be collected: One is a weathered rim fragment of a hemispherical cup, diameter 10 cm, made of Nile B2 (fig. 3, no. 4). It has a slightly closed shape. The other fragment is the neck and rim of a small jar or bottle (fig. 3, no. 5) made of Nile B2. The small traces of red coating remaining on the outside could originally have been burnished.

4. Final Comments

The potential chronological span for the deposition of the sherds ranges from the construction of the monuments to the end of cultic activity, or, as is the case of the complex of Amenemhet III at Dahschur, a secondary reuse of parts of the site in the 13th Dynasty (Keramikkomplex 7, in the following called sector 7).²² Only further archaeological investigations in the field can work out the history of use at the sites and of specific contexts containing sherds. However, neither a long cultic activity, if any at all, nor a reuse in the 13th Dynasty seems likely to have taken place at these mostly unfinished monuments. We thus might be dealing with relatively brief periods of activities, possibly limited to the period of construction. This would make the study of the pottery all the more interesting.

Not knowing the precise chronological placement of many of the royal monuments, we are in the (for Egyptologists) odd position of "the pot dating the king, instead of the king dating the pot". All these shapes fit very well within our current general idea of pottery of the first half of the 13th Dynasty. However, what are our current general ideas and can we achieve a finer date? The chronological backbone of late Middle Kingdom pottery is formed by the publication of the material from the pyramid complex of Amenemhet III at Dahshur by Do. Arnold:²³ the pottery from sector 6 reaches from the late 12th into the early 13th Dynasty and the material from sector 7

22. ARNOLD 1977, p. 21-26; ARNOLD 1982, p. 28, 39-40, 42, fig. 10-11.

23. ARNOLD 1982, p. 25-65.

is placed post first third of 13th Dynasty. In comparing the late 12th-early 13th Dynasty horizon at Dahshur (sectors 3, 4 and 6) to the latest deposit at the site, sector 7 (post first third of 13th Dynasty), clear differences can be made out, but certain shapes also show a continuity, such as some rims of beer-bottles²⁴ and *zirs*.²⁵ If one were to take certain individual pieces out of either Dahshur sector, they would “fit” in the other. This is as such not surprising as they both belong to the same Middle Kingdom pottery tradition, as has been often emphasized. It underscores the longevity of certain shapes which seem to have continued parallel to new developments in this period. It is the scope of substantial assemblages, which enables us to grasp the difference. Based on only a handful of material, as is currently the case for many of the sites discussed here, finer dates for the discussed sites would be disingenuous. Future attempts at fine-dating the pottery found associated with these royal sites will also have to address the question of how long certain “early 13th Dynasty” shapes remained in use in the royal necropolis. Dahshur sector 7 is also a “floating assemblage” and in particular the date of its end remains uncertain. Do. Arnold proposed a possible duration of the activities in sector 7 until the end of the 13th Dynasty,²⁶ a point J. Bourriau seems to support.²⁷ Recently B. Bader suggested, based on her comparison of the pottery from settlement layers at Memphis/Kom Rabi’a, Tell el-Dab’a and Dahshur sector 7, an end in the mid 13th Dynasty (around 1700 BC) for the sector 7 assemblage.²⁸ In that scheme, with the end of sector 7 we enter ceramic *terra incognita* at Dahshur. In any case, gaining a fuller picture of the pottery corpus of the residential necropolis of the 13th Dynasty is essential.

24. ARNOLD 1982, fig. 9, no. 16; fig. 10, no. 10.

25. ARNOLD 1982, fig. 8, no. 3, 5, 7; fig. 9, no. 15; fig. 11, no. 3.

26. ARNOLD 1982, p. 40.

27. BOURRIAU 1997, p. 166.

28. BADER 2009, p. 705-707. I thank Bettina Bader for kindly providing me with her PhD-manuscript, for discussing these issues with me and for her help.

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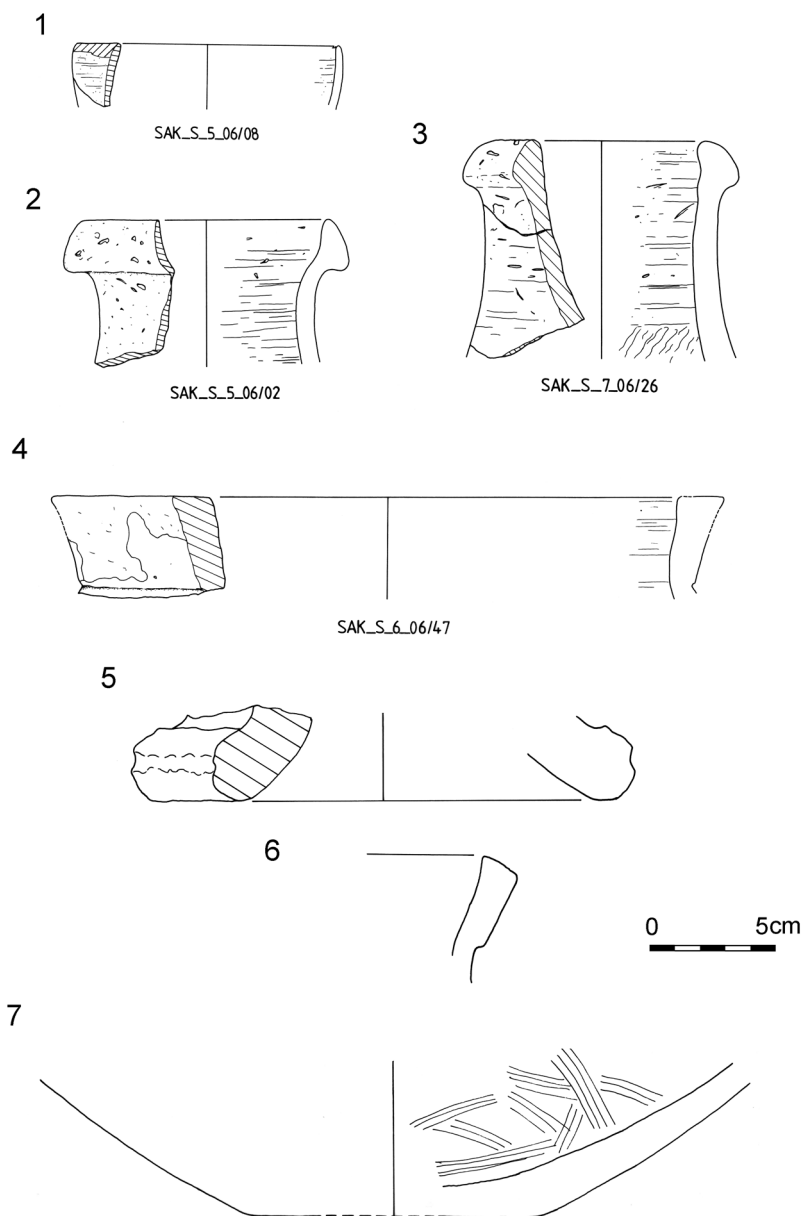


Fig. 1. Pottery from Saqqara-South, pyramid of Khendjer (no. 1-2), the „unfinished pyramid“, Saqqara-South 6 (no. 4) and the pyramidal substructure south of the unfinished pyramid, Saqqara-South 7 (no. 3). Pottery from Dahshur-South 2, north of pyramid of Ameny-Qemau (no. 5-7). (no. 1: Nile B1, red rim; no. 2: Nile C1-2, red coated; no. 3: Nile C2, red coated; no. 4: Marl C, plain; no. 5: Nile C2, plain; no. 6-7: Marl C, plain).

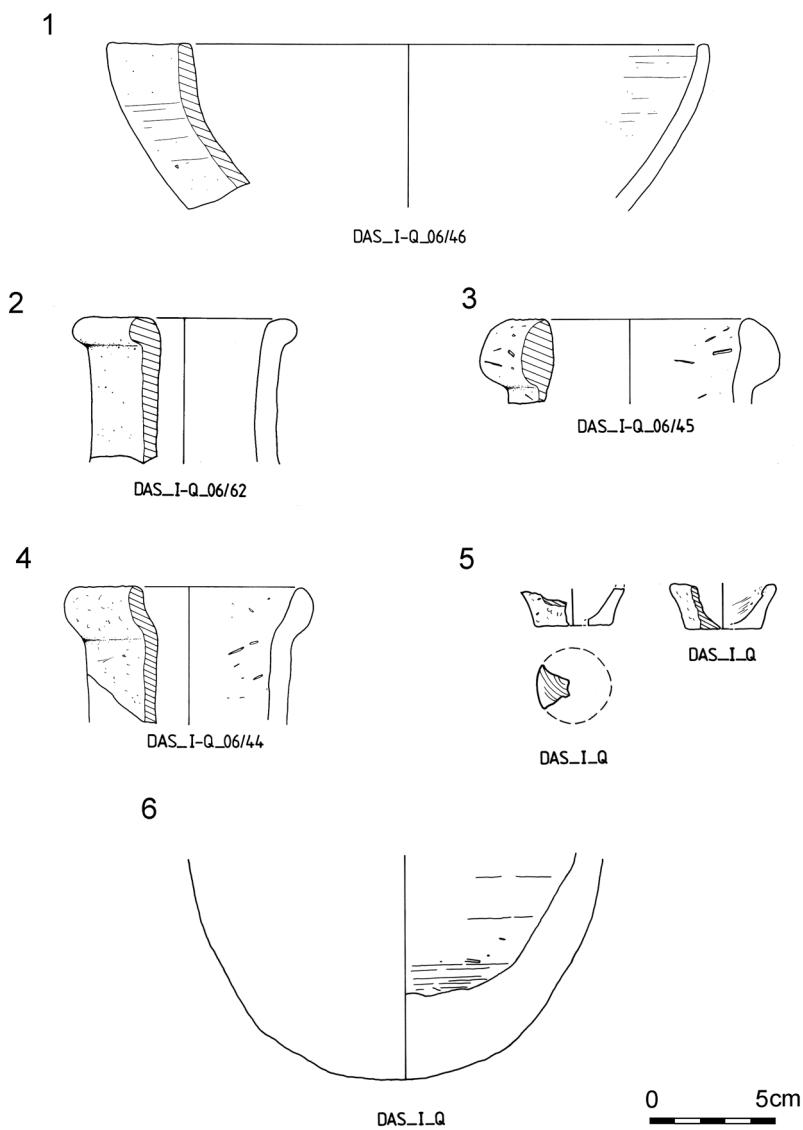


Fig. 2. Pottery from Dahshur-South, pyramid of Ameny-Qemau (no. 1: Nile B2, thick red coating inside and outside; no. 2: Nile B2, surface weathered; no. 3: Nile C2, red coated outside; no. 4: Nile C2, surface weathered; no. 5: Nile B2, plain; no. 6: Nile C2, surface weathered).

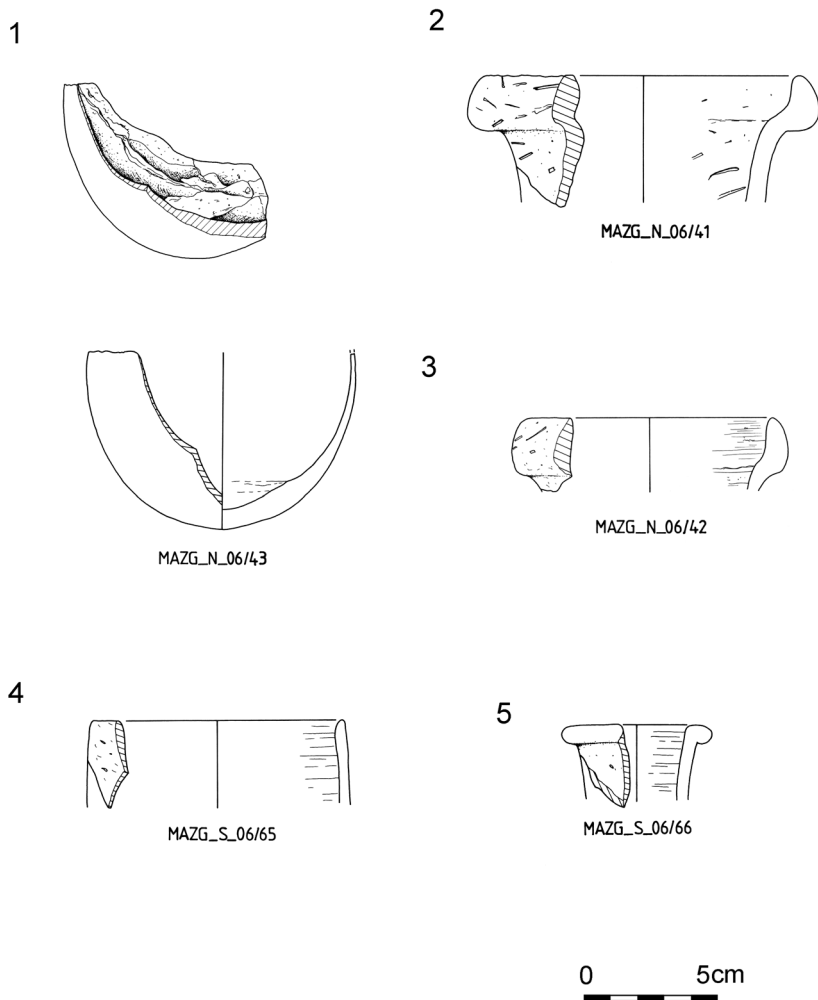


Fig. 3. Pottery from the pyramids of Mazghuna-North (no. 1-3; no. 1: Nile B1, surface weathered, filled with mortar; no. 2: Nile C2, red coated outside; no. 3: Nile C1, traces of red coating) and Mazghuna-South (no. 4-5; no. 4: Nile B2, surface weathered; no. 5: Nile B2, traces of red coating outside, possibly burnished).