

W. M. Flinders Petrie's 1907/08 Dig Season Near Sūhāġ*

Re-considering the records and relocating the finds from the BSAE excavations at the sites of al-Haġārīsa, Athribis-Atrīpe, and the Shenute Monastery (ad-Dayr al-Abyaḍ)

Part II: The corpus of finds, 1. Ceramic vessels and sherds

By Rafed El-Sayed and Konstantin C. Lakomy

The second of a series of articles concerned with the British School of Archaeology in Egypt 1907/08 season directed by Flinders Petrie in the Sūhāġ district. The Late Antique pottery vessels and sherds originating from Petrie's excavations at sites near Sūhāġ, today in the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Manchester Museum, are documented and studied anew against the background of the published and unpublished excavation and museum records. Included are comments on the history of the ceramic collections in those institutions and a catalogue of 40 ceramic objects.

1. Introductory remarks

This article covering ceramic material is the second of several contributions dealing with the records and finds from the 1907/08 BSAE excavations at three different sites – all on the west bank of the Nile in the modern Sūhāġ district within the borders of the ancient ninth nome of Upper Egypt (**pl. I a, b**): al-Haġārīsa (Hagarseh), Athribis-Atrīpe, near Naġ' aš-Šayḥ Ḥamad, and the Shenute or White Monastery (Dayr al-Anbā Šinūda/ad-Dayr al-Abyaḍ)¹. While focusing on ceramics, it is primarily a study of the history of collections and a re-evaluation of early Egyptian field archaeology. From a methodological point of view, a closer look at a group of sherds with a deficient record of excavated context might seem out of place,² especially since it remains uncertain from which of the three sites subsumed by Petrie under the label 'Athribis' the artefacts derive (see below). The processing of museum inventories may even seem a questionable undertaking since very little ceramic material from the ninth nome of Upper Egypt collected by the several missions working there since the late 19th century has so far been published.³ On the other

* See R. El-Sayed, 'W.M. Flinders Petrie's 1907/08 Dig Season Near Sūhāġ. Reconsidering the records and relocating the finds from the BSAE excavations at the sites of al-Haġārīsa, Athribis-Atrīpe, and the Shenute Monastery (ad-Dayr al-Abyaḍ). Part I: The photographic record: views of sites, monuments and artefacts', (*StudPanOP* 2; Wiesbaden 2017).

1 For details and references to these sites see El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 2, esp. 17–18; 25–26.

2 For a similar approach see R. El-Sayed and K. C. Lakomy, 'Funde aus Aḥmīm-Panopolis in den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. I. Spätantike Keramikgefäße im Museum für Byzantinische Kunst', (*Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 56 (2004), 2017) and J. Faiers, 'Wadi Sarga revisited: A preliminary study of the pottery excavated in 1913/14', in E. O'Connell (ed.), *Egypt in the first millennium: Perspectives from new fieldwork*, (*BMPES* 2; Leuven, 2015), 177–189.

3 There are only preliminary reports on the pottery from most of the excavations in the ninth nome of Upper Egypt. During the excavations of 1884–1892 directed by Gaston Maspero, the undoubtedly large amount of pottery that came to light was just as poorly documented as the archaeological context. Ceramic material from these excavations can, however, in a few cases be identified in museums. The pottery which could be located by the authors so far has been documented and is currently being prepared for publication. Bronze Age pottery of the later Second Intermediate Period and the earlier New Kingdom was found during official Egyptian excavations at Naġ' al-Kulaybāt and of the Egypt Exploration Society (EES) at aš-Šawāmi'a (šarq) – see, for the former, M. T. Boulos, 'Report on Excavation at Nag El-Kelebat', *ASAE* 7 (1906), 1–3; for the EES finds, see T. Whittemore, 'The Sawāma cemeteries', *JEA* 85 (1914), 1–20; R. S. Merrillees, *The Cypriote Bronze Age Pottery Found in Egypt* (Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology XVIII; Lund, 1968), 93–94; J. Bourriau and A. Millard, 'The Excavation of Sawāma in 1914 by G.A. Wainwright and T. Whittemore', *JEA* 57 (1971), 28–40; as well as El-Sayed and Lakomy, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 56 (2017), 23–75. The most detailed published reports (even if not up to contemporary standards) are about the Late Antique and Medieval ceramic material from American excavations in the town of Aḥmīm: cf. S. McNally and V. Walsh, 'The Akhmim Data Base: a Multi-Stage System for Computer-Assisted Analysis of Artifacts', *JFA* 11 (1984), 47–59; S. McNally and I. Dvorzak Shrunck, *Excavations in Akhmim, Egypt: Continuity and change in city life from late*

hand our research has demonstrated that valuable results are attainable from such material. It must be taken into consideration, however, that in order to verify published or archival provenance information, even museum register entries⁴ and words or numbers written directly on objects⁵, the same critical assessment has to be applied as to any historical document. For example, corroboratory evidence is needed, where a published plate caption⁶ identifies one site, to indicate the provenance for most but not necessarily all the material illustrated on that plate (see below). Since more than a century has passed since their acquisition, the sherds are imbedded in multiple museological and historical contexts of a most complex nature.⁷ Accordingly, the study of these contexts is basic for recontextualising the material. Building upon the analysis of the initial contribution and following an introduction, this paper consists of two main sections: the first summarising the results of background research based on the excavation and collection records⁸ and the second presenting and discussing the ceramic material in a catalogue with 40 entries.⁹ Each entry includes the basic information on and classification of each item in tabular form, a short bibliography, and a brief list of comparanda plus drawings and photographs. A more extensive documentation of the material will be made available online at the 'AIS Mīn-Panos' website.¹⁰

2. Reconstructing the ceramic corpus from the EES excavations in the Sūhāḡ district

By Rafed El-Sayed

2.1 The documentation available

The only published documentation of the pottery unearthed during the BSAE 1907/08 excavations are drawings on Plates LI and LII of *Memphis I* (pl. III).¹¹ These 33 items¹² constituted the main reference for our endeavour to relocate and identify the ceramic objects now in museums. This is a remarkably small sample, in view of the fact that the mission worked for six weeks on three extensive sites. Not only have more recent excavations at the same

antiquity to the present, First Report (BAR International Series 590; Oxford, 1993); A.H. Salisbury, *Coptic Painted Finewares from Akhmim* (Ann Arbor, Minnesota, 1994); S. McNally, 'Appendix: Life in Late Roman and Early Islamic Egypt (with Later Reflections)', in Ph. Sellw (ed.), *Living for Eternity: The White Monastery and its Neighbourhood. Proceedings of a Symposium at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, March 6–9, 2003* <<http://www.egypt.umn.edu/Egypt/1-pb%20pdfs/Appendix%20Text.pdf>>; I. Dvorzak Schrunk, 'Spiritual Economy and Spiritual Craft: Monastic Pottery Production and Trade', in Ph. Sellw (ed.), *Living for Eternity: The White Monastery and its Neighbourhood. Proceedings of a Symposium at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, March 6–9, 2003* <<http://www.egypt.umn.edu/Egypt/1-pb%20pdfs/schrunk.pdf>>. For the Late Antique, Roman and later pottery from Necropolis B – which was first used during the Old Kingdom (2682–2145 BC), see C.A. Hope and A. McFarlane, *Akhmim in the Old Kingdom, Part II: The Pottery, Decoration Techniques and Colour Conventions* (SACE 7; Oxford, 2006), 106–111. The pottery from Ḡabal aš-Šayḡ al-Harīdī was briefly discussed by S. Orel, 'Pottery Survey and preliminary typology', in C. Kirby, 'Preliminary Report on the Second Survey Season at Gebel el-Haridi', *JEA* 80 (1994), 17–19. For the pottery finds from Roman and Late Antique burials in the New Kingdom cemetery near Awlād 'Azzāz, see S. Patten, 'The Pottery', in B. Ockinga, *A Tomb from the Reign of Tutankhamun at Akhmim* (ACEE 10; Warminster, 1997), 12–18. Pottery from Atrīpe is addressed in G. Pyke, 'Evidence for the Ceramic History of the Site' in R. El-Sayed and Y. El-Masry (eds), *Athribis Report 2008–2011* (forthcoming), and for that found during the Egyptian-American archaeological work at the White and Red Monasteries, see D. L. Brooks-Hedstrom, 'An Archaeological Mission for the White Monastery', *Coptica* 4 (2005), esp. 11–13. The pottery from the EAO/SCA excavations has not been systematically published down to the present; cf. Y. El-Masry, 'Recent Excavations at El-Khazindariya in the 9th Nome of Upper Egypt', in B.S. El-Sharkawy (ed.), *The Horizon. Studies in Egyptology in honour of M. A. Nur el-Din (10–12 April 2007)*, vol. 3, (Cairo, 2009), 179–184; idem, 'Recent Explorations in the Ninth Nome of Upper Egypt', 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: Archaeology, (Cairo and New York, 2003), 331–338.

4 See below 2.3.2.

5 See below 2.3.3.

6 See below 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.1.

7 On these contexts see A. Stevenson, 'Artefacts of Excavation: The British collection and distribution of Egyptian finds to museums, 1880–1915', *JHC* 23, (2013), 89–102.

8 The chapter is authored in the main by Rafed El-Sayed.

9 The catalogue is by Konstantin C. Lakomy.

10 Accessible through the project's website: <www.min-panos.uni-goettingen.de>.

11 On the sites see El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 1, 17–18; 25–26, and pl. I in this article.

12 Counting the two sherds from a single vessel on pl. LI (Cat. No. 39) as one item and excluding the unlocated lamp handle pl. LI.30.

sites yielded more material;¹³ Petrie's own publications give every indication that masses of pottery were present.¹⁴ But his interest focused on recording the architectural remains, copying the inscriptions and scenes of the Ptolemaic temple and the Old Kingdom and Roman period tombs at the sites of al-Haḡārīsa and at Athribis-Atrīpe, and scouring the mound at the latter site for ostraca and papyri.¹⁵ Other contributing factors for neglecting pottery might have included the lack of trained personnel in the team,¹⁶ Petrie's underestimation of the value of archaeology for historically better-documented periods such as late antiquity,¹⁷ and above all the role of the Sūhāḡ expedition of 1907/08 as a stop-gap season while waiting to start work at Memphis. Although it seems likely that most pottery unearthed was left at the sites near Sūhāḡ,¹⁸ it is obvious that the *Memphis* I plates show only a selection of the pottery brought to the UK in 1908, especially since some vessels and sherds not depicted on the plates are in the British Museum's prehistory collection¹⁹ and another unpublished vessel is now at Manchester (see below).²⁰

The unpublished records of the seasons' work are unproductive with regard to the pottery. The notebooks for those years²¹ are a most difficult record and do not add information on pottery capable of analysis.²² The pocket diaries, journals,²³ and letters as well lack any usable information concerning the pottery.²⁴ The PMA-negatives that can be associated with the sites include none intended to illustrate ceramic finds.²⁵

Like the pottery itself, the archaeological contexts were not recorded to the standard documented by Petrie's other publications,²⁶ most probably because he considered the Sūhāḡ expedition of winter 1907/08 just a 'gap-filling' minor mission.²⁷ He provided no detailed information about those who excavated and processed the ceramic material. Although responsibilities within Petrie's team are not well documented,²⁸ it seems that the excavations at the site of Athribis-Atrīpe were supervised for the most part by Petrie himself, while responsibility for the work at the Shenute Monastery fell to Edwin Ward, assisted by Ivo Gregg and Humphrey Hill.²⁹ The team working at al-Haḡārīsa comprised, in addition to Petrie,³⁰ at least Ernest Mackay.³¹ The discovery and collection of ceramic sherds and ostraca was but randomly mentioned by Petrie in his published reports.³² Processing was not done on site,³³

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- 13 During the 2008–2011 seasons at the site of Athribis-Atrīpe, the authors unearthed a pile of complete pottery vessels at the western outer wall of the temple of Ptolemy XII; presumably they were deposited there by Petrie's team; see R. El-Sayed and Y. El-Masry (eds), *Athribis Report 2008–2011* (forthcoming).
- 14 Petrie, *Athribis*, 15; Petrie, *Memphis* I, 14.
- 15 Petrie, *Athribis*, 1.
- 16 On the formation of the team see below.
- 17 I thank Stephen Quirke for discussing this aspect with me.
- 18 Presumably common procedure.
- 19 The four sherds within the group that, based on the published report, could not be ascribed to either 'Athribis' or Memphis, are cat. nos. 20, 27, 28 and 30.
- 20 More ceramic objects from the BSAE 1907/08 mission to Athribis-Atrīpe could be identified in other UK museums. They could, however, not be included into this article but will be presented in a forthcoming publication.
- 21 On the notebooks see B. Adams, 'Petrie's manuscript notes on the Koptos foundation deposits of Thutmosis III', *JEA* 61 (1975), 102–111 and especially S. Quirke, 'Petrie Archives in London and Oxford', in D. Magee, J. Bourriau and S. Quirke (eds), *Sitting beside Lepsius. Studies in Honour of Jaromir Malek at the Griffith Institute*, (OLA 185; Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA, 2009), 442–461.
- 22 The poor handwriting is difficult to decipher. On other difficulties, see El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 2, 14.
- 23 Copies of the journals of the respective years were checked at the Petrie Museum without usable results. A letter concerning the Sūhāḡ season was, however, located at Manchester (see below).
- 24 For letters with information on the Sūhāḡ sites and the expedition, see Drower, *Letters from the Desert*, 164–165, 182–184.
- 25 See El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 1. On PMAN 618 some sherds and vessels placed along the excavated walls of the temple are, however, visible.
- 26 On Petrie's methodology in archaeological field work see his *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, (London, 1904). On Petrie's neglect of archaeological context see A. Stevenson, *JHC* 23 (2013), 8–9.
- 27 See El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 2, 12–13.
- 28 El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 2, 12–13.
- 29 Petrie, *Athribis*, 2, 13. On Ward see Stevenson, *EA* 46, 29. Biographical data on Gregg and Hill has yet to come to light.
- 30 Drower, *Letters from the Desert*, 184.
- 31 Petrie, *Athribis*, 4.
- 32 Petrie, *Athribis*, 11–12, (15).
- 33 See the third segment of this study, in preparation.

whereas inking plans and the epigraphic recording were completed there before the end of the mission;³⁴ Margaret Murray³⁵ prepared the pottery tracings for the publication in London.³⁶

2.2 Relocating the finds

The drawings and very few comments published in *Memphis I* were the starting point for the relocation of the pottery that came to the United Kingdom in 1908 (pl. III). In the context of the yearly post-seasonal exhibition organised by Petrie and students in the summer of 1908 at University College some pottery excavated at Memphis as well as 'Athribis' was displayed.³⁷ As usual, the short catalogue Petrie provided for this exhibition did not comprise photographs of any of the artefacts on show, and no photograph taken at the exhibition could be located among the negatives in the Petrie Museum archives.³⁸ However, paragraph 16 of the catalogue mentions "groups of pottery from Athribis, and a large quantity from one waste heap at Memphis of about 350 B.C."³⁹ The exhibition also included objects from other sites, such as Dayr al-Balā'iza, investigated in the winter of 1906/07 and published in *Gizeh and Rifeh*.⁴⁰ Presumably all finds from the Sūhāḡ sites were, as was customary, distributed after the exhibition closed in late summer 1908.⁴¹ In 2013, no ceramic artefact from the sites near Sūhāḡ could be identified in the Petrie Museum. There is, however, a certain possibility that some of the ostraca brought to the United Kingdom from those excavations could have remained at University College.⁴²

However, in *Memphis I*, the locations which received pottery vessels in 1908 are mentioned: "They are mostly in the British Museum, Graeco-Roman Department, and some at South Kensington." The present whereabouts of some other ceramic finds could be located but only one object now in Manchester has to date been recorded (see below). According to the distribution lists, 'Athribis' material was sent primarily to museums in the United Kingdom.⁴³ For 'Athribis' the distribution lists are even more problematic than for other sites, since they do not distinguish in general between 'Athribis' and Memphis. Moreover, some of the pottery might have been sent to Petrie's private sponsors in Europe or elsewhere,⁴⁴ as was the case with certain other finds from the 1907/08 expedition.⁴⁵

A systematic search of databases and registers with the generous co-operation of the museum staff, enabled identification of most pottery published in *Memphis I* in the British and the Victoria and Albert Museums (hereafter: BM and V&A, respectively). In addition, the collections at the BM were found to include some additional objects not illustrated in the Memphis volume but said to be from Sūhāḡ sites. (Two of them – part of a votive figurine and a mould – will be discussed in a forthcoming part of this study.)

2.3 Findings from excavation and museum records

The records at the Petrie Museum did not prove to be at all helpful concerning the ceramic finds. With the exception of three items, all of the pottery reproduced in *Memphis I* could be located at the BM and the V&A. Moreover, the

34 Drower, *Letters from the Desert*, 182–83; cf. PMAN negatives 591, 592, 597, 598 and 1026.

35 For Margaret Alice Murray see Bierbrier, *Who Was Who*, 393–394.

36 Petrie, *Memphis I*, 15.

37 On such exhibitions which were primarily intended for the sponsors of Petrie's excavations, see A. Thornton, 'Exhibition Season: Annual Archaeological Exhibitions in London, 1880s–1930s', *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 25 (2015), 1–18 and T. Bagh, 'Finds from W.M.F. Petrie's Excavations', *Meddelelser fra Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek N.S.*: 13 (2011), 152.

38 See El-Sayed, *StudPanOP 2*, and Serpico, *Unseen Images*, 4 with a reproduction of a photograph showing the 1911 post season exhibition.

39 British School of Archaeology in Egypt, *Catalogue of Egyptian Antiquities, found by Prof. Flinders Petrie and Students at Memphis and Athribis. 1908. Exhibited at University College, Gower St., London, W.C., June 29th to July 25th* (London 1908), 9.

40 W.M.F.I. Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh*, (BSAE 13; London, 1907), 2, 30, pls. XXXVIII–XXXIX.

41 The exhibition lasted from June 29th to July 25th.

42 They could, however, not yet be identified.

43 See the list provided on the 'Digital Egypt for Universities' website <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/archaeology/athribismemphisdistribution.html> and also 'Appendix 1' in B. Adams, *JEA* 61 (1975), 108, and now the website www.egyptartefacts.griffith.ox.ac.uk.

44 See El-Sayed, *StudPanOP 2*, 16.

45 Which will be covered in the third segment of this study in preparation.

collection at the BM includes two items excavated by Petrie at Memphis, mentioned immediately above, and three others that could not be ascribed to either site. For completeness's sake, these objects are included in the catalogue here.

2.3.1 *Memphis I*

Petrie compensated for not having dealt with or illustrated any small finds or pottery in the 1908 report⁴⁶ by including Plates⁴⁷ LI (*"Athribis. Coptic Objects"*) and LII (*"[...] Athribis, Coptic pottery"*) (pl. III) in *Memphis I* a year later and commenting (p. 15):⁴⁸

Many pieces of painted pottery were found at Athribis; and it seemed desired by different authorities that they should be published for reference. They have all been traced by Miss Murray.

When starting to examine the ceramic objects from storage both in the V&A's Ceramic Department and in the BM's Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory, it quickly became obvious that Margaret Murray's tracings referred not only to painted pottery sherds, but, surprisingly, to complete vessels as well. The tracings of complete vessels and some other (diagnostic) sherds reproduce only details of the decoration. An exact reproduction of the profile of the sherds, and of complete vessels in particular was certainly not intended as is obviously the case with Cat. Nos. 1, 2, 26, and 29. Cat. No. 25, the reconstruction of the fragment of a bowl decorated with paintings of water lilies, could be attributed to Memphis, thanks to a tracing of it found in Petrie's report on pl. XX in *Memphis I* and corroborated by the wording of his report on pages 9 and 11–12.⁴⁹

2.3.2 *Museum registers*

According to the departmental register, a considerable number of objects excavated by the Egyptian Research Account at sites in Egypt⁵⁰ were registered at the BM's Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities in 1908.⁵¹ Among them, 30 *'fictile vases/fragments'*⁵² ascribed to 'Athribis' and Memphis were listed. On the acquisition of the group, a note in the register records: *'Presented by the Egyptian Research Account; Excavations of Professor Petrie; from Byzantine Athribis'*⁵³. In one instance (1908, 1015.38 = Cat. No. 3) *'from Memphis'*⁵⁴ is added. Each entry in the register includes a small sketch which proved to be of great usefulness for the identification of those objects that were presumed lost (cf. Cat. No. 2) or, more than 100 years after excavation, no longer preserve their distinctive painted decoration. All items were transferred on 23.11.1937 to the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities (since 2003: the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory) and entered in the departmental register.

Aside from the online collection database of the V&A, only Barbara Adams's Appendix was accessible.⁵⁵ She listed nine 'pottery' objects for 'Athribis' (V&A nos. 496–504.1908) – among them one fragmentary figurine.⁵⁶ Of the remaining eight pottery items, two (497.1908 and 502.1908) in the museum's database were labelled de-acces-

46 Petrie, *Athribis*.

47 A caption to a plate may be a later addition and may refer to the general content of a plate and be not correct for each item.

48 Petrie, *Memphis I*, 15.

49 Petrie, *Memphis I*, pl. XX: *'Memphis. Pottery of Tahutmes IV; False Doors; Foreign Bowl'*, p. 9: *"[...] a piece of painted dish at the bottom of Pl. XX. This dish is of rough pottery with a pale drab facing; the pattern is of black, with broad red filling, which is shaded here in vertical lines (B.M.)."*

50 Among other sites from Naukratis, Oxyrhynchos and the Fayyūm.

51 Register of the Greek and Roman Department, The British Museum, London.

52 Register of the Greek and Roman Department, The British Museum, London, p. 188–189.

53 Register of the Greek and Roman Department, The British Museum, London, p. 188–189.

54 Register of the Greek and Roman Department, The British Museum, London, p. 189.

55 Barbara Adams, *Egyptian Objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Egyptology Today 3; Warminster, 1977), 45.

56 Currently in the BM. It will be published in the forthcoming part of this study.

sioned and another (504.1908) could not be located.⁵⁷ Further confirmation could be gained from labels kept with the objects in the departmental ceramic storage area (see below).

In the register of the Manchester Museum, there is one ceramic vessel among the four objects with the provenance 'Athribis'.⁵⁸ No information is included about the acquisition of the objects, neither the date nor the source.⁵⁹ Like the three other objects from 'Athribis', MM 4932 is listed among many objects from Memphis, which – aside from the reference in Petrie's excavation report⁶⁰ – makes 1908 highly likely as the date of acquisition and the BSAE as the source.

2.3.3 Labels and marks⁶¹ on objects

The museum labels kept with the sherds in the V&A confirm the information on provenance stated in the museum register (**pl. II a, b**). Moreover, Cat. No. 35 (V&A 501–1908) bears the mark '*Deir Shenude*'⁶² (**pl. II c**) written hastily with a pencil on the back of the sherd. Whether the excavators added this notation is uncertain, although the use of a pencil, the cursory character of the writing, and its resemblance to Petrie's own hand is suggestive.⁶³ But other instances of the V&A accession number in pencil – once with the addition of '*TOP*' – are clearly curatorial and written in a different hand. On one of the sherds in the BM (Cat. no. 3) the provenance '*Memphis*' has been added in black ink in a different hand (**pl. VIb**). Since there is no tracing on plate LII ('*Athribis, Coptic pottery*') in *Memphis* I duplicating the pattern and/or the contour of the sherd, '*Memphis*' can be assumed as this sherd's provenance. The mention of the Shenute Monastery (Dayr al-Anbā Šinūda) on Cat. No. 35 in all likelihood refers to the provenance of the pottery labeled 'Athribis' (see below). The only other pencil marks on some sherds in the V&A are curators' marks and certainly not excavator's numbers, since they belong to the V&A numbering system. No labels or marks could be identified on the vessel in Manchester.

2.4 Conclusion

2.4.1 Provenance of the ceramic corpus

Provided that the majority of the pottery labelled 'Athribis' on Pl. LII of *Memphis* I does in fact derive from the 1907/08 dig season near Sūhāḡ and that it was not mixed up with other finds on its way to or in London, it should have originated from the actual site of Athribis-Atrīpe near Naḡ' aš-Šayḡ Ḥamad or from the Shenute Monastery (ad-Dayr al-Abyaḡ/Dayr al-Anbā Šinūda).⁶⁴ The research presented here suggests that the latter constitutes the more plausible provenance. From the viewpoint of historical geography and cultural history, it does not make much difference, since during the period in question both sites were part of a single cultural continuum – the monastic federation located at Mount Atrīpe – and thus closely interconnected.⁶⁵ The predominate aspect of the interaction concerned the comestibles, transported and served in ceramic vessels, which the main congregation provided for

57 Personal communication of Mrs Behnaz Atighi Moghaddam, Assistant Curator at the V&A Middle East Asian Department, on the 18th of May 2015.

58 The vessel is listed on page 531.

59 According to a personal communication of Dr Campbell Price on the 23rd of June 2016, many entries in the MM register do have site-excavation date information, but for some, like those here, such information was not recorded.

60 Petrie, *Memphis* I, 14.

61 On labels and notations on objects in the Petrie Museum collection see Ashvini Sivakumar, *Transcription of A.J. Arkell card index to marks on objects in the Petrie Museum*, (London, 2009).

62 The exact spelling is not quite clear.

63 There is need for further forensic research on this. For samples of Petrie's handwriting see the Griffith Institute's website www.griffith.ox.ac.uk.

64 The al-Ḥaḡārisa monastic site cannot be excluded although it seems quite unlikely, since according to Petrie's report, no archaeological investigation of the monastic remains were conducted.

65 B. Layton, *The Canons of our fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford 2014), 11–13; E. Wipzycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (Ive–VIII siècles)*, (JJP Supplements XI; Varsovie, 2009), 161–167. See also El-Sayed, *StudPanOP* 2, 15. To what extent the monastic community at the site of al-Ḥaḡārisa was part of the White Monastery network remains open.

the sustenance of the outlying, minor congregations.⁶⁶ The variety of the ceramic material documents the involvement of the monasteries in the commercial network supplying settlements with pottery throughout Egypt.⁶⁷

2.4.2 Dating of the pottery

Petrie assumed a fourth to fifth century date for the site he explored at the Shenute Monastery.⁶⁸ Recent research conducted at Late Antique monastic sites on the west bank near Sūhāġ has resulted in dating their occupation from the mid-fourth to the fourteenth century with a clear focus on the fifth to seventh century.⁶⁹ The dates proposed in this study for the pottery, based primarily on comparanda, conform in most cases to the range from the fourth to the seventh century, except for the Italian amphora from the Brindisi region (cat. no. 40) which probably should date to the 2nd to 1st century BC and not, as recorded in the Manchester Museum's inventory, to the 5th to 8th c. AD.⁷⁰

2.4.3 Composition of the ceramic corpus

Two items of the corpus, a diagnostic body sherd/base (Cat. No. 3) and more than five sherds from a deep inflected bowl painted with water lilies (Cat. No. 25) can be ascribed with some certainty to Memphis. While the base fragment belongs to a fine ware shape called a 'fish plate' and originates from a pottery workshop on Elephantine Island, the fragmentary bowl made of dense Nile clay seems to be a common example of Late Antique tableware with elaborate painted decoration, most probably used for the presentation and consumption of food.

The pottery that could be ascribed with a certain feasibility to the site of the Shenute Monastery includes a variety of fabrics and shapes with floral and faunal decor, of both local production and Egyptian imported wares, many of them from the Aswān region. Cat. No. 1 is an outstanding item within the group – not only because it is one of only two complete vessels within the corpus, but mainly for its decoration, function, and potential 'profanation'. A small irregular, secondary hole near the amphora's base may well be explicable as a so-called *ritual killing hole*, although such treatment is expected above all in burial traditions of earlier times, performed at temples and tombs⁷¹ and – to the best of our knowledge – uncommon in Late Antique pottery corpora. Of special interest among the painted sherds are several carefully painted and incised sherds of marl clay. Cat. Nos. 10 and 31 are very rare examples of so-called lamp stands of the 4th to 6th century AD, comparable to those found at Wādī n-Naṭrūn (Kellia).⁷² Furthermore, two peculiarly painted sherds of wheel-turned lamps (Cat. Nos. 15 and 32) must be regarded as rare, because of their distinctive shape, unique floral decoration and colour, as well as the remains of a coating inside. Cat. no. 6 also preserves a residue of burned incense, which suggests that the bowl might have been used as incense burner in a liturgical/sacral context. The small sherd Cat. No. 35, together with the (diagnostic) body sherds nos.

66 B. Layton, 'Social Structure and Food Consumption in an Early Christian Monastery: The Evidence of Shenoute's *Canons* and the White Monastery Federation A.D. 385–465', *Le Muséon* 115 (2002), 25–55; idem, *The Canons of our Fathers*, 13, 74.

67 Th. Beckh, *Zeitzeugen aus Ton. Die Gebrauchskeramik der Klosteranlage Deir El-Bachit in Theben-West (Oberägypten)* (SDAIK 37; Berlin, 2013), 74, 85.

68 Petrie, *Athribis*, 1, 15. British School of Archaeology in Egypt, *Catalogue 1908*, 4. The British School of Archaeology in Egypt, *Excavations at Memphis. 1908* (London, 1908), 2; Petrie, *Seventy Years*, 209. The two labels that were found with the sherds at the V&A give the 6th or 7th centuries (cat. nos. 32, 35) and 5th to 8th (cat. nos. 31, 33, 34, 36) centuries, respectively.

69 El-Sayed, in El-Sayed and El-Masry (eds), *Athribis I*, 212–217; D.L. Brooks Hedstrom and E.S. Bolman, 'The White Monastery Federation Project: Survey and Mapping at the Monastery of Apa Shenoute (Dayr al-Anba Shinuda), Sohag, 2005–2007', *DOP* 65/66 (2011–2012), 334–335; G. Pyke, 2008–2011 unpublished Athribis reports.

70 The late dating (5th to 8th c. AD) in the museum register is obviously due to Petrie's general dating of the site that the registrar adopted, who was M. Murray, according to a hand-written entry on page 531 of the catalogue. The description in the register makes it clear that the amphora presented here as Cat. No. 40 is doubtless the 'vase' listed in the register. Thus, if there were any confusion of objects, it occurred before the amphora was sent to Manchester.

71 J. Budka, 'Die Keramik des Osiriskultes: Erste Beobachtungen zu Formen, Datierung und Funktion', *MDAIK* 66 (2010), 61–62; A. Seiler, *Tradition & Wandel. Die Keramik als Spiegel der Kulturentwicklung Thebens in der Zweiten Zwischenzeit* (SDAIK 32; Mainz, 2005), 170–184.

72 Egloff, *Kellia II*, pl. 87.3

4, 5, 9, 12, 14 and 34, are a singular selection of rich and unique painted sherds, which constitute a representative portfolio of a Late Antique pottery corpus from Upper Egypt.

Three sherds of the corpus labelled 'Athribis and Memphis' in the register of the Prehistory Department of the BM (Cat. Nos. 27, 28, and 30) could not be identified with any of the tracings on Pl. LII of *Memphis I*. Probably illustrations of them were not included since their decoration is not simply executed in painting but in other techniques as well. In one instance the decoration is stamped; in another it is moulded; and in yet another, pressed with a comb. Cat. Nos. 27 and 30 are Nubian coarse and fine wares, respectively. Regardless of which site they are associated with, they further document the well-attested exchange between Egypt and the Meroitic realm at the beginning of late antiquity.⁷³

2.5 Introductory remarks on the recording and presentation of the ceramic material

The pottery was recorded and studied by the authors at the British Museum, Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory and in the Ceramic Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2014 and 2015, and in the Manchester Museum in 2016. All objects that could be subjected to autopsy (i.e., exclusive of Cat. Nos. 2, 8, 37–39), were measured and recorded, photographed, and drawn. The material is presented in an annotated catalogue following a consistent system, eliminating the necessity of lengthy discussion of each item. The basic information on fabric, shape, technique, and decoration is provided in tabular form. Each entry is followed by a concise bibliography and, in most instances, a brief list of comparanda. Drawings and photographs of each object recorded complement the catalogue entries, since the authors consider photographs accompanied by drawings provide a useful means of pottery documentation. The ceramic analysis basically follows the Vienna System with the following publications consulted:

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- D. A. Aston, *Elephantine XIX: Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period* (AV 95; Mainz, 1999).
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73 D. N. Edwards, 'Meroe and the Sudanic Kingdoms', *Journal of African History*, 39 (1998), 188–190; J. van der Vliet, 'Qasr Ibrim in Lower Nubia: Cultural Interaction at the Southernmost Roman Limes', in J. van der Vliet and J. L. Hagen (eds), *Qasr Ibrim, between Egypt and Africa. Studies in cultural exchange* (Nino Symposium, Leiden, 11–12 December 2009), (Egyptologische Uitgaven XXVI; Leuven 2013), 1–22.

- J. Budka, 'Die Keramik des Osiriskultes: Erste Beobachtungen zu Formen, Datierung und Funktion', *MDAIK* 66 (2010), 61–62.
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