



JULIA BUDKA

EARLY NEW KINGDOM SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE PERIPHERY OF SAI ISLAND: TOWARDS A CONTEXTUALISATION OF FRESH EVIDENCE FROM ATTAB WEST

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on recent fieldwork in Egyptian colonial towns, so-called temple towns, in the Middle Nile Valley and new approaches to ancient Nubian material culture, much progress has been made recently in understanding settlement patterns and lived experiences in New Kingdom Nubia.¹ In addition to work in temple towns, there has been an increase of archaeological research in the past decade in Sudanese regions formerly regarded as marginal, in places like the Fourth Cataract, Eastern Sudan, the Eastern desert and the Bayuda desert.² Questions of cultural diversity and connectivity are now common themes for archaeological missions working in Sudan. The data gathered so far illustrate the need to look beyond state-built foundations in the Nile Valley because previous research was clearly one-dimensional and does not reflect the complex dynamics in these ancient social spaces.

A promising rural area in northern Sudan is the research concession of the Munich University Attab to Ferka Survey Project (MUAFS), which covers a stretch of the Nile, including various islands, between Attab and Ferka. This region, situated just south of the Dal Cataract and previously surveyed in the 1970s by the Sudan Antiquities Service with the French Archaeological Research Unit and directed by André Vila,³ can be regarded as ‘peripheral’ to two urban centres of the region, Amara West⁴ and



Fig. 1: View of mound at site AtW 001 and Trench 1. Photo: J. Budka.

Sai Island.⁵ The Attab to Ferka region comprises rich settlement and funerary remains from the Palaeolithic to the Post-Medieval period, with a significant amount of archaeological evidence associated with the Kerma culture and the New Kingdom.⁶

Since 2020, the ERC DiverseNile project has been evaluating the specific living conditions in this Middle Nile ‘contact space’⁷ during the Bronze Age in direct comparison to urban centres, and reconstructing biographies of landscapes shaped by humans, human activities, technologies, materiality, and animals.⁸ The project introduces a novel approach to a Middle Nile regional study focusing on these contact space biographies, investigating human-landscape encounters in a peripheral borderscape.⁹ After the COVID-19 related break in fieldwork, the first excavation season of the DiverseNile project was

1 Spencer, Stevens and Binder 2017 with references

2 See, e.g., Manzo 2017; Davies and Welsby 2020; Lohwasser, Karberg and Auenmüller 2018

3 Vila 1976a, b; 1977a, b

4 Spencer 2017; see also Stevens and Garnett 2017

5 Budka 2020a

6 Budka 2019; Budka 2020b

7 Following the concept of ‘contact spaces’ by Stockhammer and Athanassov 2018

8 Kolen and Renes 2015

9 Budka 2019



Fig. 2: Location of site AtW 001 in relation to the neighbouring site 2-T-62. The extent and possible overlap of these sites are still unclear. Map: C. Geiger, ©DiverseNile.

carried out in spring 2022. Its results allow us to address some aspects of early New Kingdom settlement activities in the periphery of Sai Island and are outlined in the following.

2. THE SITE AtW 001

During the MUAFS survey in January 2022, a previously undocumented site at Attab West was noted, with an abundance of early 18th Dynasty potsherds as well as scatters of local schist pieces on the surface. This site, labelled as AtW 001, is a small almost circular mound (Fig. 1) which might have once belonged to site 2-T-62 recorded by André Vila (Fig. 2).¹⁰ A new electrical power line, set up between 2020 and 2021, runs right through AtW 001 and seems to have destroyed part of it.

In March 2022, one trench at the site, measuring c. 10 x 4 m, was excavated in the northern part of the mound (Fig. 3). Although no traces of architecture were found, several fills can be associated with domestic rubbish deposits and other activities.

2.1 THE EXCAVATION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

The documentation system used by the DiverseNile project at AtW 001 is based on a geodetical survey by total station and image-based 3D modelling via the “Structure from Motion” (SfM) principle. This GIS-based system for the documentation of stratigraphical excavations was originally developed at the University of Vienna and introduced for the AcrossBorders project and its excavations on Sai Island in 2014.¹¹ The stratigraphical unit (SU) is the fundamental entity of this conceptual model: SUs were systematically differentiated and documented during the excavation. The uncovered surfaces and contours of each individual SU are documented in this single surface excavation approach.

The archaeological deposits excavated in Trench 1 are characterised by considerable ash and charcoal, plant remains, animal bones including snails and shells and a high quantity of pottery sherds. These fills are most likely linked to debris from fires and other everyday activities. No remains of standing

¹⁰ Vila 1977b, 88-89

¹¹ Budka 2020a, 69-70 with references

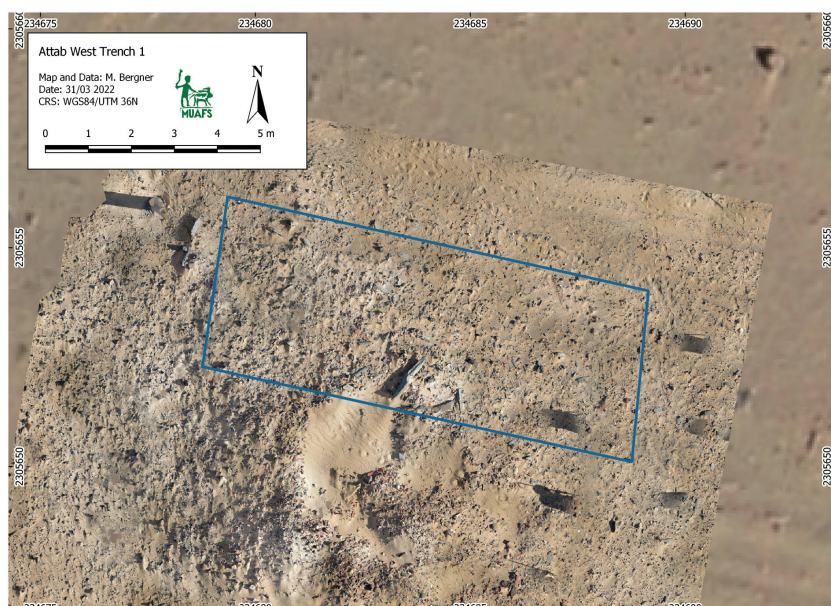


Fig. 3: Plan of location of Trench 1. Map: M. Bergner, ©DiverseNile.

architecture have been identified so far, but remains of collapsed mud bricks and overfired sherds indicate the prior existence of buildings and possibly of ovens or kilns. In addition to the debris deposits, several homogenous deposits of silt, including some ash, were documented.

The stratigraphy of Trench 1 is illustrated by a Harris Matrix (Fig. 4) and the archaeological layers include both deposits of settlement debris, as well as alluvial layers. The separation of individual layers was a challenge and therefore during the excavation there were more stratigraphical units (SU) defined than there were actual deposits. Overall, two phases are visible, divided by alluvial sediments (Fig. 5).

The earliest phase of Trench 1 which yielded ceramics and other anthropogenic material is comprised of stratigraphical units SU 1204, 1205, 1206 and 1218 (SU 1218 did not yield any finds) and was labelled as Phase I. The ashy areas of Phase I are directly on top of the natural alluvium (SU 1220). No formal floor or human-made surface was observed which suggests that we either have an open courtyard of unknown dimensions or that Trench 1 is located in the periphery of a domestic site. The latter would make sense given the location of the trench at the northern edge of mound AtW 001.

Lying stratigraphically below the natural alluvial sediments (SU 1220), the possible remains of a kiln were documented and recorded as SU

1216. SU 1216 is an irregular circular area (0.7 x 0.45m) in the north-western corner of the trench. It is delineated by alluvial sediments in the south and is composed of very fine and silty brownish-blackish-reddish material and ash. This also seemed to include red burnt mud bricks, as well as some calcinated root tunnels; SU 1216 also yielded one burnt doum nut (MUAFS 457/2022). The tentative interpretation of SU 1216 as a possible kiln, based on the burnt mud bricks and ashy material, remains to be confirmed through further excavation. This also applies to its stratigraphy and dating.

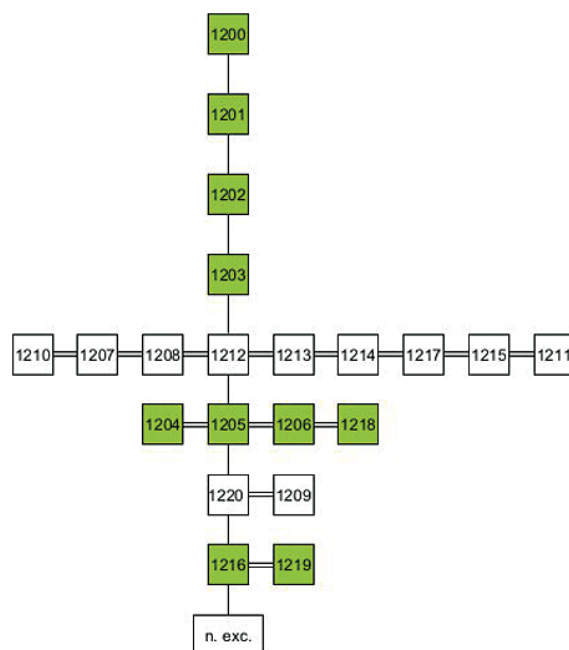


Fig. 4: Harris Matrix of Trench 1. Illustration: M. Bergner, ©DiverseNile.



Fig. 5: South section of Trench 1 at AtW 001. Photo: M. Bergner, ©DiverseNile.



MUAFS Find number	SU	Total of sherds	Diagnostics	Undiagnostics	Wheel made NK	Nubian
420/2022	1200	459	60	399	353	106
429/2022	1201	159	33	126	93	66
431/2022	1202	91	19	72	57	34
437/2022	1203	34	10	24	24	10
441/2022	1204	111	31	80	75	36
447/2022	1205	95	18	77	45	50
450/2022	1206	11	1	10	3	8
452/2022	1207	9	0	9	1	8
456/2022	1214	2	0	2	0	2
		971	172	799	651	320

Table 1: Overview of general statistics of pottery from AtW 001 (Trench 1, 2022).

The set of stratigraphical units representing Phase I in Trench 1 can be described as follows. SU 1204 is a loose, silty light grey and brown layer with some darker patches, including charcoal and ash. Some of these more compact inclusions are probably evidence of mud brick debris and SU 1204 was interpreted as a layer of settlement debris on top of an alluvial surface. SU 1205 is a similar layer of light grey and brown silty material with some dark areas of charcoal and ash. There were joining pottery sherds from SU 1204 and SU 1205, as such both fills most likely form part of the same layer. SU 1204 is similar to SU 1203, interpreted as belonging to a later phase at the site. SU 1206 was documented as a condensed alluvial sediment which during the excavation at first seemed to belong to a mud brick wall. It has an east-west alignment, measures 1.6 x 0.2m and is adjacent to SU 1205.

Phase II at Trench 1 was documented above some alluvial sediments and below the surface SU 1200 as SUs 1201, 1202 and 1203. As there were refitting pottery sherds across these three deposits, they are most likely all part of a single substantial layer of c. 25-30m thickness (see Fig. 5). SU 1201 was found across the whole of Trench 1 and can be described as a deposit of grey-brown sandy silt with stones and pebbles, frequent ceramic, bones, charcoal, and some secondarily fired mud brick fragments. Some ashy areas, measuring c. 30cm in diameter, were also documented and one piece of slag associated with a pottery sherd was found in SU 1201 (MUAFS 426/2022). SU 1202 is the level below SU 1201 and very similar; light grey-brown sandy silt with some stones and fragments of mud bricks were documented. SU 1203 is the lowest of this sequence of sandy silt debris. It is comparable in structure and nature but showed many traces of burning and large humus dark spots (with diameters of 50cm), as well as many charcoal pieces and ashy streaks. Secondary burnt and unfired mud brick fragments were also present.

The ashy and dark spots are located directly on top of alluvial sediments, mirroring Phase I.

2.2 THE CERAMICS

The ceramics from Trench 1 at AtW 001 are datable to the 18th Dynasty, more specifically to the early 18th Dynasty and Thutmose period. Interestingly, the number of Nubian wares in the various fill horizons was high, accounting for on average 33% of the ceramics (Table 1).¹² The lower fills had very little ceramic evidence and here Nubian wares were more common than Egyptian style wheel made pots; for example, SU 1214 yielded only two Nubian body-sherds of Kerma style and nothing else. Overall, the material of Phase I has 45.6% of Nubian style vessels whereas the quantity in Phase II decreases to 29%.

The SU with the most ceramic material was the surface layer SU 1200. This context can be used to illustrate variability in terms of fabrics and wares (Table 2). The majority of the sherds are wheel made Nile clay variants, predominantly a Nile B2 variant (total Nile clays: 311 pieces, 67.8%). Nubian wares are also well represented and account for 23.1% (106 pieces). Imported amphorae from the Levant are rare but present (30 pieces, 6.5%). Marl clay sherds from Egypt only account for 12 pieces (2.6%). One overfired Nile clay sherd was also documented in SU 1200.

The distribution of vessel types from SU 1200 (total: 61) is illustrated in Table 3.

Interestingly, closed vessels of Egyptian style, including imported amphorae, comprise together 46% of the ceramic material. Wheel made dishes

¹² This contrasts with the number of Nubian wares given for the nearby site 2-R-18. Here, 2006 sherds were documented in total, with an average of 7.8% Nubian sherds. 94% of these belong to coarse ware, 6% to fine ware. Stevens and Garnett 2017.

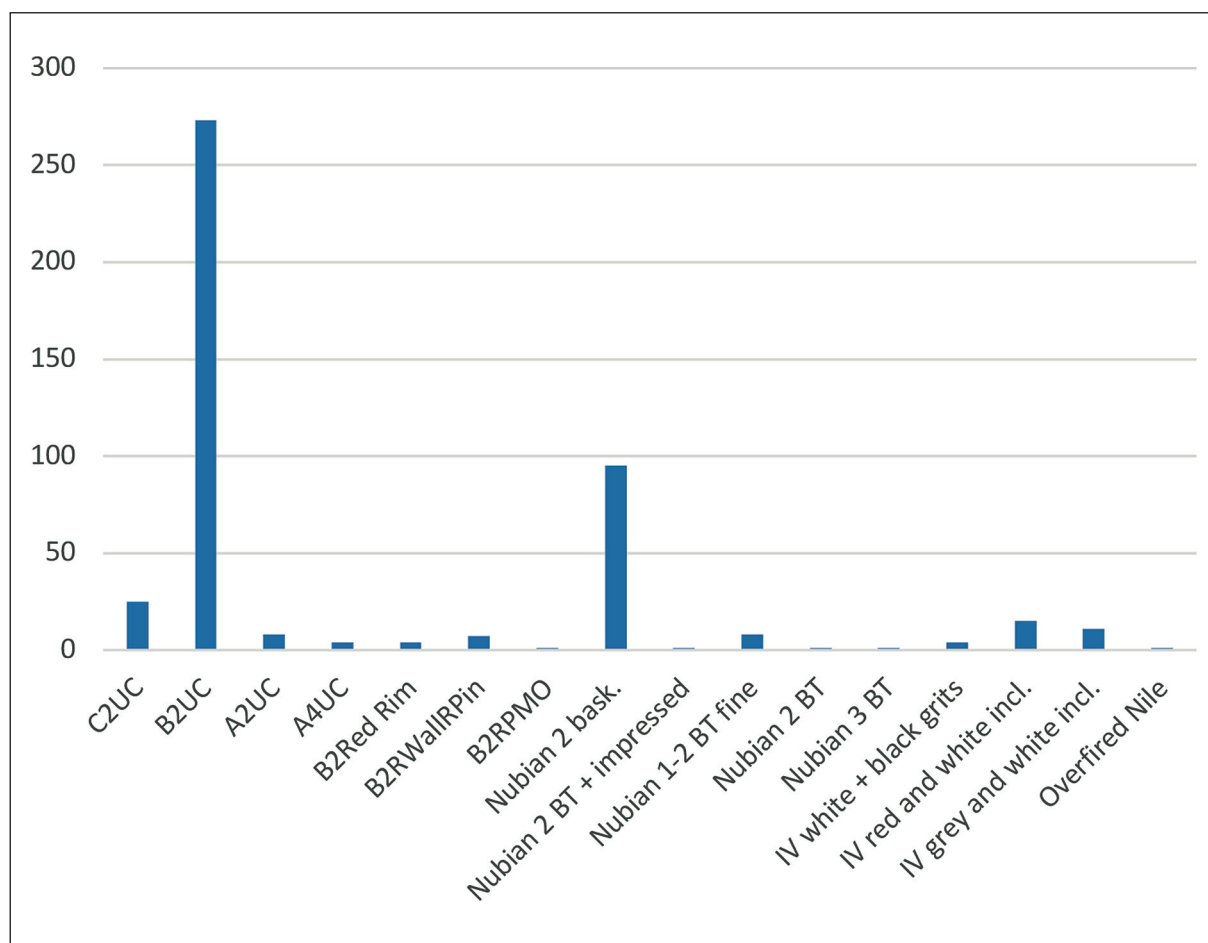


Table 2: The frequency of wares in MUAFS 420/2022, SU 1200.

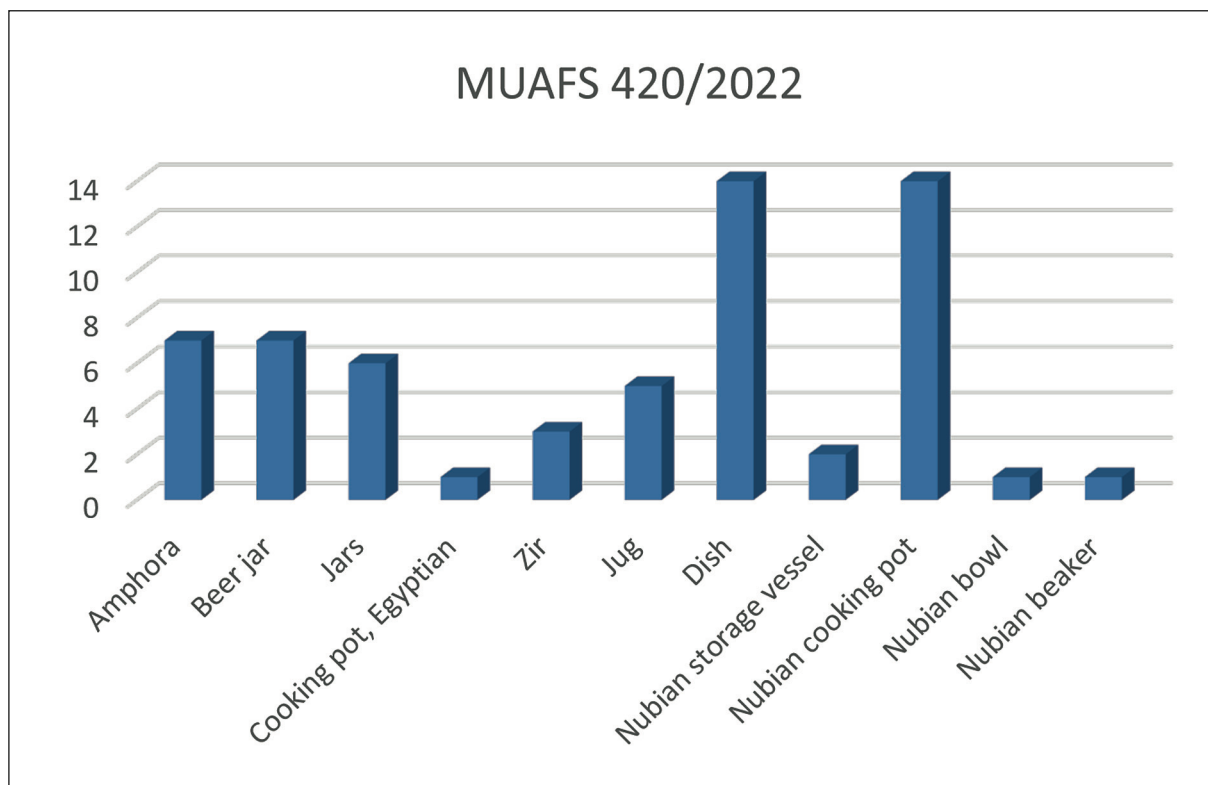


Table 3: Frequency of vessel types in SU 1200.

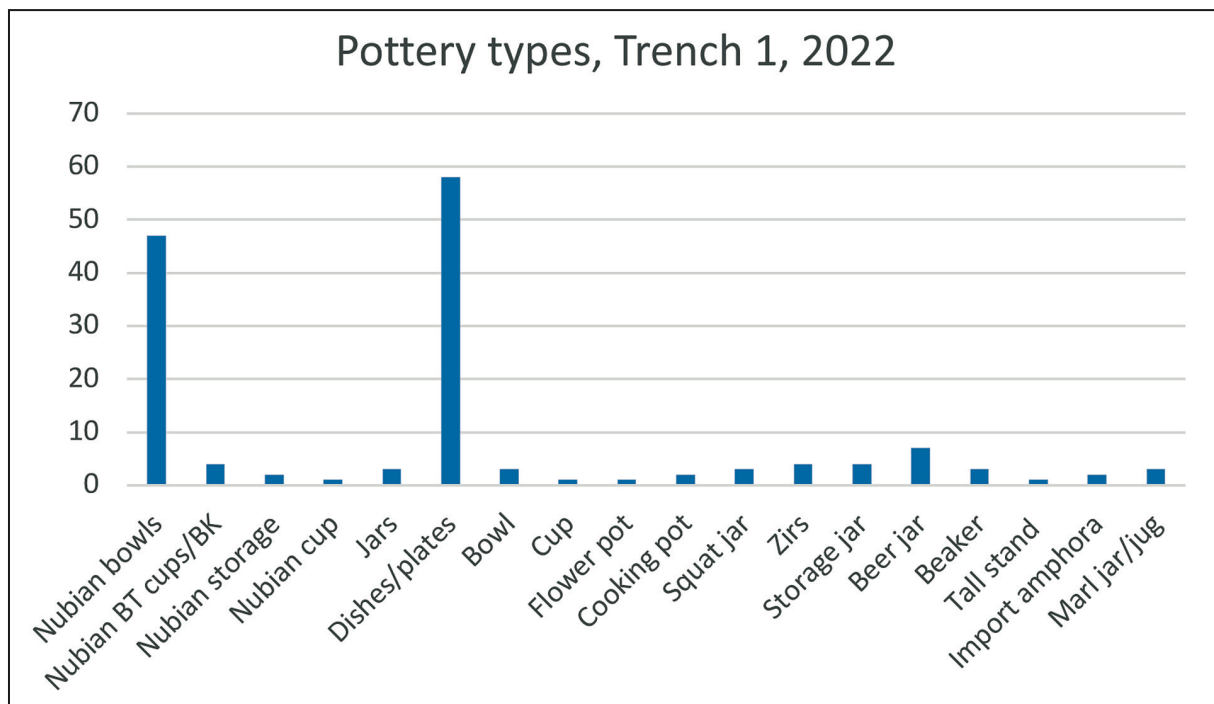


Table 4: Frequency of vessel types in all levels of Trench 1.

and Nubian globular bowls or cooking pots, mostly with mat impressions, are most common as single categories (23% each, making 46% in total). Other Nubian style vessels are also attested to as well as an Egyptian cooking pot.

The vessel types from all levels of Trench 1 according to the diagnostics are illustrated in Table 4. The frequencies are in general comparable to SU 1200, but slightly higher regarding the most common vessel types which comprise not 46% like in the surface layer but 70.5%. These are wheel made dishes and plates (39%) as well as Nubian style globular bowls (31.5%). The closed vessels (jars, squat jars, zirs, storage vessel, beer jars and imported amphorae) attest together to only 17%, thus notably less than in SU 1200.

All in all, Phase II has in general a larger variety of pottery types including closed vessels, as reflected in surface layer SU 1200. Phase I is characterised by more homogenous pottery assemblages, dominated by dishes and plates and Nubian globular bowls. As such, the full corpus of pottery types from Trench 1 is characterised by both phases of use. A more detailed analysis requires a larger dataset than the 971 sherds excavated in 2022.

The examples illustrated on Figures 6-11 also include large diagnostic pieces found on the surface of AtW 001. The assemblage MUAFS 011/2022 was collected during the survey in January 2022 and not during the excavation of Trench 1 but is clearly comparable to the material from SU 1200.

Zir vessels or water jars are in general essential for any settlement site. At AtW 001, both Marl clay zir vessels and Nile clay ones are present (Fig. 6). This compares, in general, well to Sai Island.¹³ However, it is remarkable that MUAFS 437-8/2022 from SU 1203 and thus Phase II does not belong to the typical New Kingdom Marl clay zir type, but rather to an earlier variant usually associated with the Second Intermediate Period. This nicely illustrates that the imported Marl clay vessels had a long lifespan of use, probably because they were objects with marked qualities which could not be replaced by locally made vessels.

A small number of painted Marl clay wares were also found at AtW 001, attesting to the well-known Thutmoside type of squat jars (Fig. 7). These vessels are associated with Phase II (SU 1201 and 1203). The rim sherd MUAFS 437-7/2022 is made in a Marl A3 clay, the body sherd MUAFS 429-13/2022 in Marl A2 clay.

The largest group of vessels from AtW 001 are dishes and plates (Fig. 8). All types are well known from Sai and other early New Kingdom sites.¹⁴ The most common surface treatment is a red wash which was burnished inside and outside until carination. Carinated bowls are also common in various sizes and shapes and sometimes occur as painted

¹³ Budka 2020a, 213-214, Fig. 82

¹⁴ Budka 2020a, 204-209 with references and parallels, e.g. at Sesebi

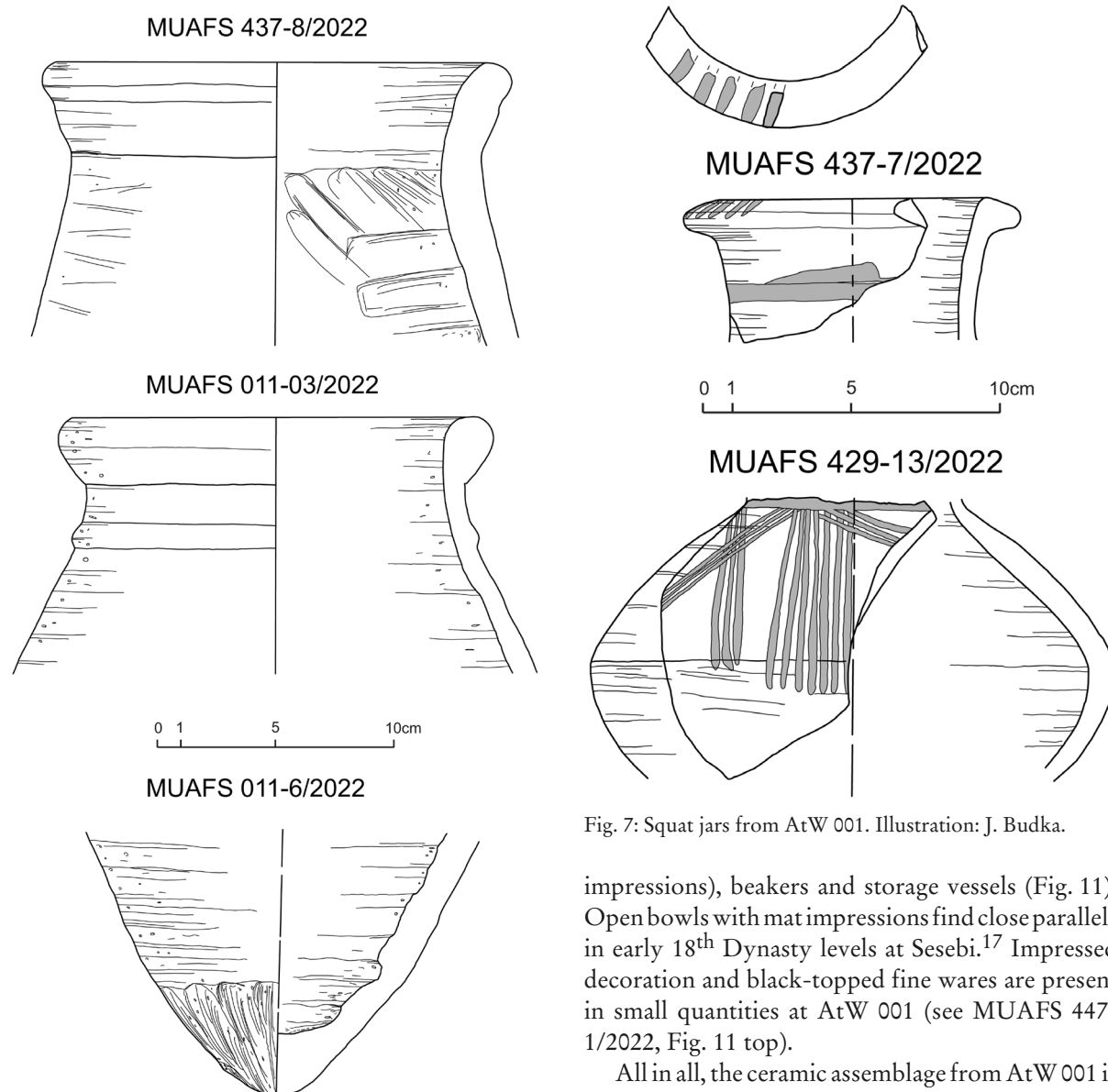


Fig. 6: Zir vessels from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.

variants (Fig. 9). Especially remarkable, is the surface find MUAFS 011-9/2022 with a black decoration of pending triangles on a red slipped surface (see below).

Cooking pots (Fig. 10) were found in AtW 001 in both Egyptian style (see MUAFS 441-18/2022 and 011-2/2022) and Nubian style with mat impressions (MUAFS 011-1/2022 and 437-2, 3, 4/2022). Both find close parallels at Sai.¹⁵ The Nubian globular bowls show, similar to Sai and Sesebi, a large variety of sizes and rim shapes.¹⁶ The Nubian style vessels from AtW 001 are predominantly bowls, but also include cups, dishes (including some with mat

¹⁵ Budka 2020a, 221-222

¹⁶ For the similar material from Sesebi see Rose 2012, Fig. 5

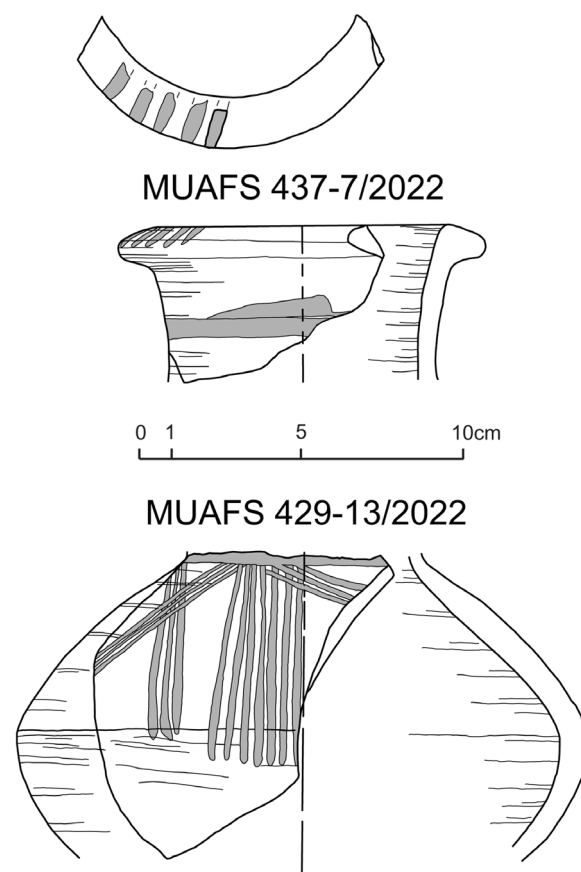


Fig. 7: Squat jars from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.

impressions), beakers and storage vessels (Fig. 11). Open bowls with mat impressions find close parallels in early 18th Dynasty levels at Sesebi.¹⁷ Impressed decoration and black-topped fine wares are present in small quantities at AtW 001 (see MUAFS 447-1/2022, Fig. 11 top).

All in all, the ceramic assemblage from AtW 001 is directly comparable with material from early levels at Sai. The vessels are associated with storage, cooking, serving and drinking. What is remarkable is the presence of imported amphorae and Marl clay vessels in quantities, which are similar to the main urban site of Sai and might suggest a close relation between the sites or at least some re-distribution of vessels into the hinterland.¹⁸ On the other hand, some shapes which are common at Sai, and normally associated with settlement sites, are missing. Apart from one tall stand, pots stands, as well as other functional

¹⁷ See Rose 2012, 18-20, Figs. 4.13-17

¹⁸ Note, however, that Rose 2017 has proposed a different scenario for Sesebi; she interpreted the small number of imported amphorae as private pieces, not as part of the official provision of the temple town. This interpretation was also favoured by Stevens and Garnett 2017 for 2-R-18. I imagine that both private and official backgrounds could apply, maybe in combination with each other.

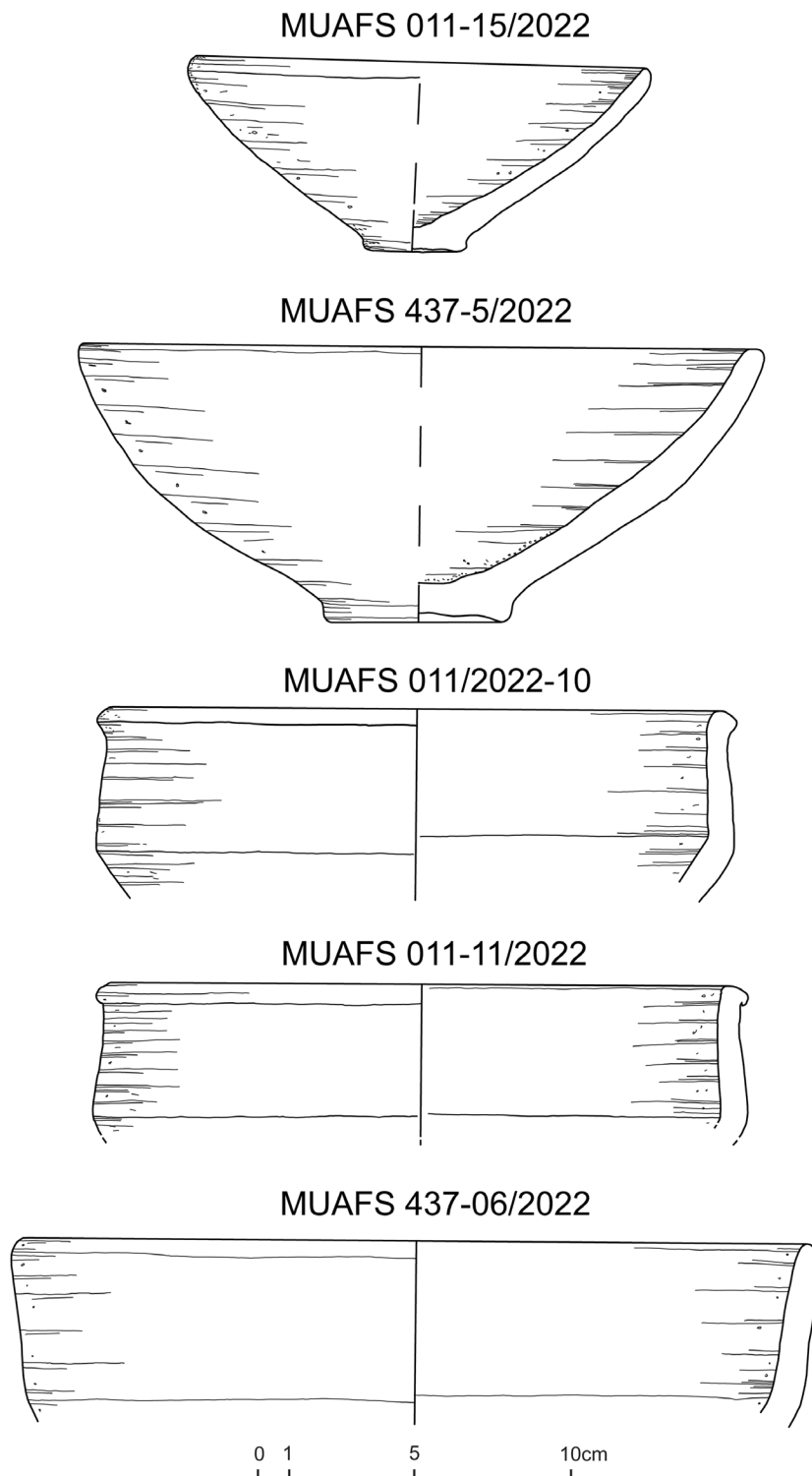


Fig. 8: Dishes and plates from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.

vessels like spinning bowls, fire dogs, bread plates and bread moulds are not attested to in Trench 1.¹⁹ Until further fieldwork is conducted, it will remain

¹⁹ At the comparable site 2-R-18, there were also no bread plates found; nor bread moulds at either site 2-R-18 or 2-R-65. Stevens and Garnett 2017, 296

unclear whether this absence is due to specific practices at AtW 001 or a misrepresentation caused by sample bias in the limited area of excavation.

One striking difference between AtW 001 and the city of Sai is the amount of Nubian material – whereas the early phase at the site in Attab West has 45.6% and the later phase 29% of Nubian pottery, the average amount of Nubian style vessels in New Kingdom sectors of Sai is 2.1%. This implies a stronger connection of AtW 001 to the handmade indigenous ceramic tradition which might be related to its rural character, to its occupants and/or to its function.

2.3 SMALL FINDS AND TOOLS

Apart from ceramics, the finds from AtW 001 included on the surface some grindstones and stone tools such as pounders, testifying to some grinding and crushing activities. Quartz chips can be found in the general vicinity of the site, extending into the area of site 2-T-62. One large granite grindstone, found on top of the surface just a few meters to the northeast of Trench 1, is of a type commonly associated with gold processing (Fig. 12). Such large grindstones have been interpreted as an Egyptian innovation brought to Nubia to improve gold processing during the New Kingdom.²⁰ However, the picture emerging from Hosh el-Guruf²¹ and

other areas of Nubia suggests a local origin for this technology, indicating that a complex organisation of gold processing existed before Egyptian coloni-

²⁰ Klemm and Klemm 2013, 609; see also Klemm and Klemm 2017. For New Kingdom grindstones from Sesebi see also Spence and Rose 2009, 21.

²¹ Emberling and Williams 2010, 20-22; Meyer 2010, 46

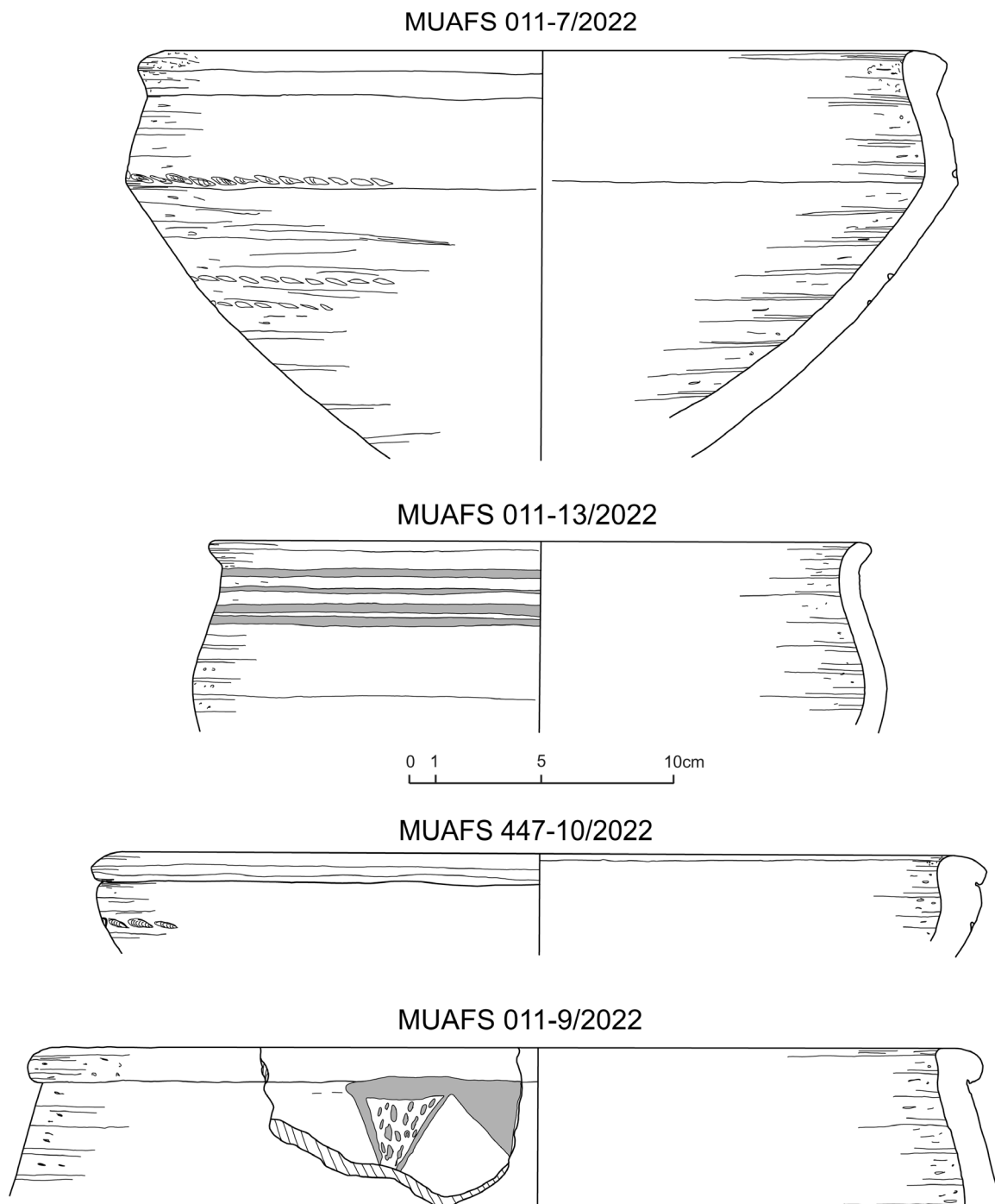


Fig. 9: Carinated bowls from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.

sation.²² Given the abundance of New Kingdom material at AtW 001, an 18th Dynasty date is the most likely.

For Trench 1, the number of small finds is limited and comprises stone tools, a stone vessel, one faience ring bead as well as a clay object, possibly a weight, and a reused sherd worked into a scraper. Of the six macrolithic tools excavated, there is one fragmented

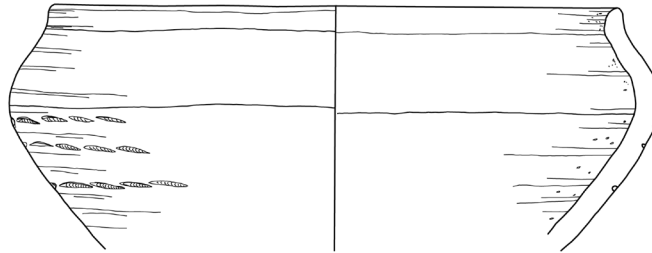
grindstone, one pestle, one pounder, two hammers and one polishing stone.

An eroded lid of a kohl pot made of calcite (MUAFS 51, Fig. 13) was found in the surface level, SU 1200. It could date to New Kingdom activities in the region, but since kohl pots in Nubia are well-known from Kerma cemeteries and were recently linked to Kerman-Egyptian diplomacy,²³

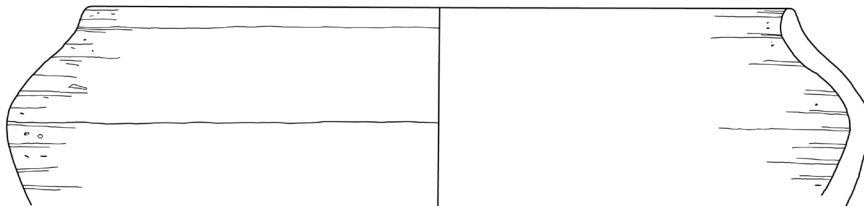
²² Williams 2021, 188; see also Rega 2020, 107-110

²³ See Walsh 2020

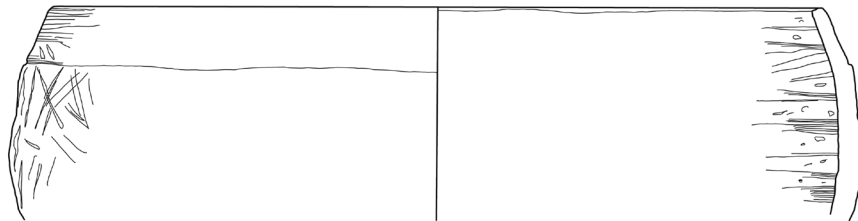
MUAFS 441-18/2022



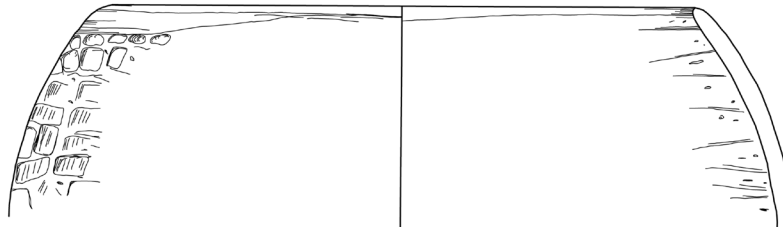
MUAFS 011-2/2022



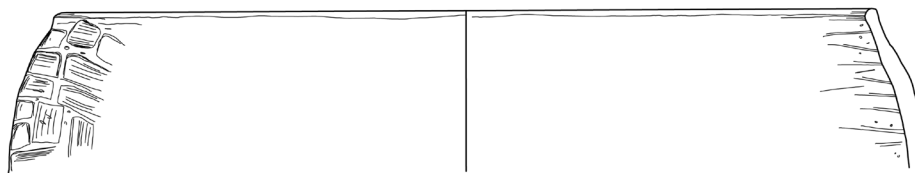
MUAFS 011-1/2022



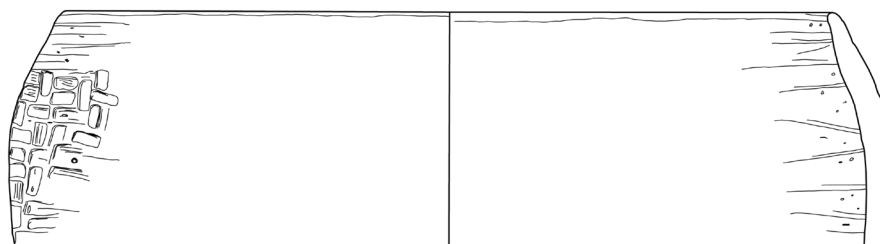
MUAFS 437-3/2022



MUAFS 437-2/2022



MUAFS 437-4/2022

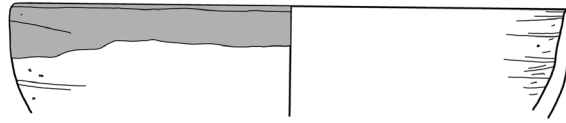


0 1 5 10cm

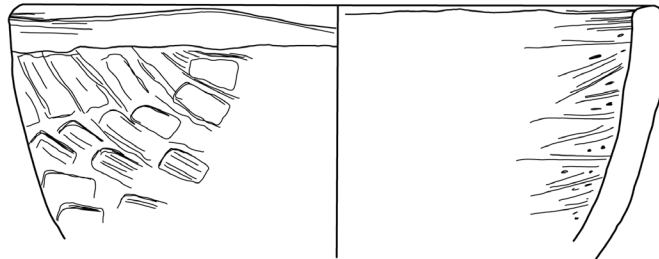
Fig. 10: Cooking pots from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.



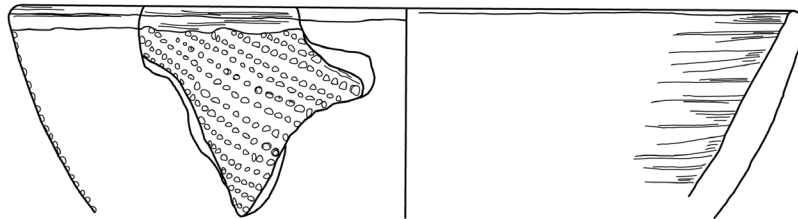
MUAFS 447-1/2022



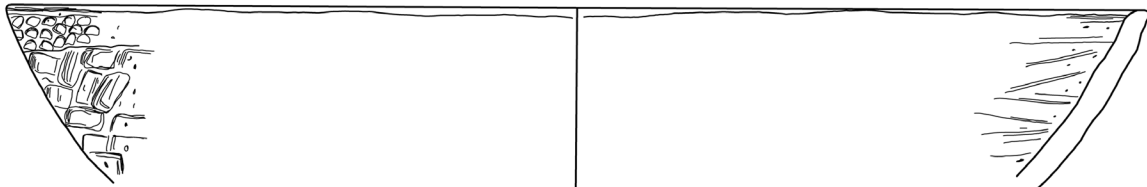
MUAFS 441-9/2022



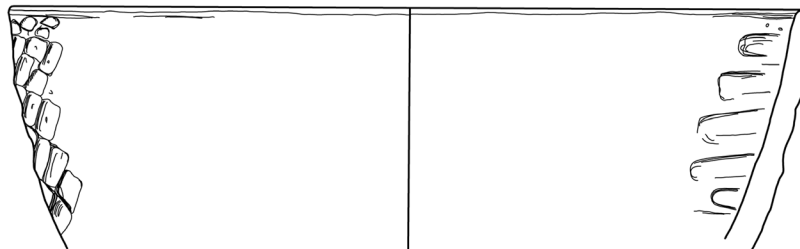
MUAFS 441-6/2022



MUAFS 431-6/2022



MUAFS 447-4/2022



0 1 5 10cm

MUAFS 431-4/2022

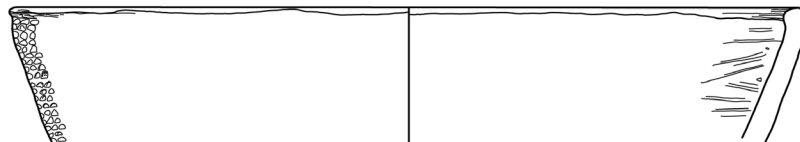


Fig. 11: Various Nubian style vessels from AtW 001. Illustration: J. Budka.



Fig. 12: Grindstone found on surface, northwest of Trench 1. Photo: J. Budka.

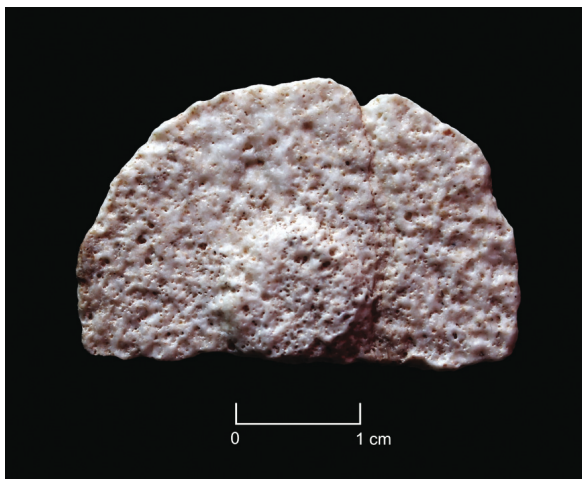


Fig. 13: Lid of kohl pot made of calcite, MUAFS 51. Photo: R. Lemos, ©DiverseNile.

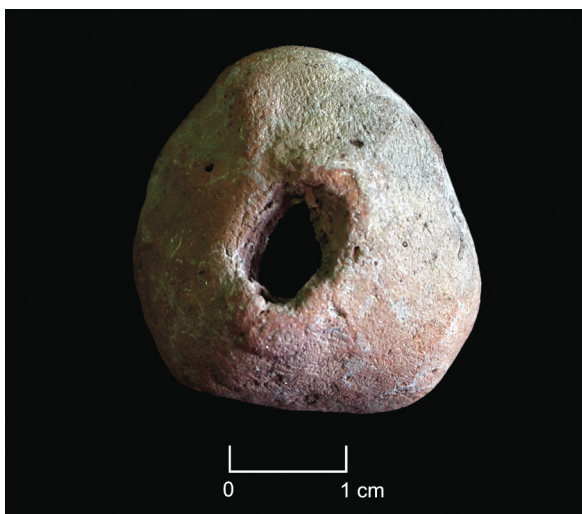


Fig. 14: Clay weight, MUAFS 55. Photo: R. Lemos, ©DiverseNile.

I think it is more likely that MUAFS 51 could be an “old piece”, presumably reused from a nearby Kerma site.

The clay weight MUAFS 55 was found in SU 1203 and therefore belongs to Phase II (Fig. 14). The small object (30x29x23mm) is of irregular, roughly spherical shape and has a large hole in the middle. A similar spherical pottery object with a central perforation and categorised as a weight was found in a surface level in the eastern sector of Sai Island (SAV1E 0331, 18x19x22mm).

2.4 THE DATING

At least two phases of activity from the New Kingdom period could be identified in Trench 1, an early phase and a slightly later one, both of which can be dated based on the ceramics.

For Phase I (SUs 1204, 1205, 1206, 1218), I propose an early 18th Dynasty date, which relates well to the earliest evidence from Sai Island (Level 4 at SAV1 North, Phase A for the general town).²⁴ The possible earlier use of the site (SU 1216 and 1219) still remains unclear but appears to go back to Classical/Recent Kerma times.

Phase II (SUs 1201, 1202 and 1203) at AtW 001 is associated with the mid-18th Dynasty, most likely the reign of Thutmose III. It mirrors the heyday of the urban site of Sai Island (Phase B)²⁵ and shows an increase of activity and material remains at the site.

All in all, the continuous use of AtW 001 from the latest phase of the Kerma empire, through the so-called reconquest of Kush during the early 18th Dynasty, to the firm establishment of the Egyptian colony and administration under Thutmose III, is significant. In all of these phases, the neighbouring centre on Sai Island was occupied and clearly of regional importance. The specific relations between AtW 001 and Sai remain, for now, unclear. This seems of special interest given the end of occupation at AtW 001 while Sai continued to flourish.

3. PARALLEL

Overall, the new site at Attab West finds a close parallel in the nearby site 2-R-18 in the desert hinterland of Amara West.²⁶ As highlighted by Anna Stevens and Anna Garnett, there were also rubbish deposits above homogenous deposits of silt and ash,

²⁴ Budka 2020a, 425

²⁵ Budka 2020a, 425

²⁶ Stevens and Garnett 2017, previously documented by Vila in the 1970s

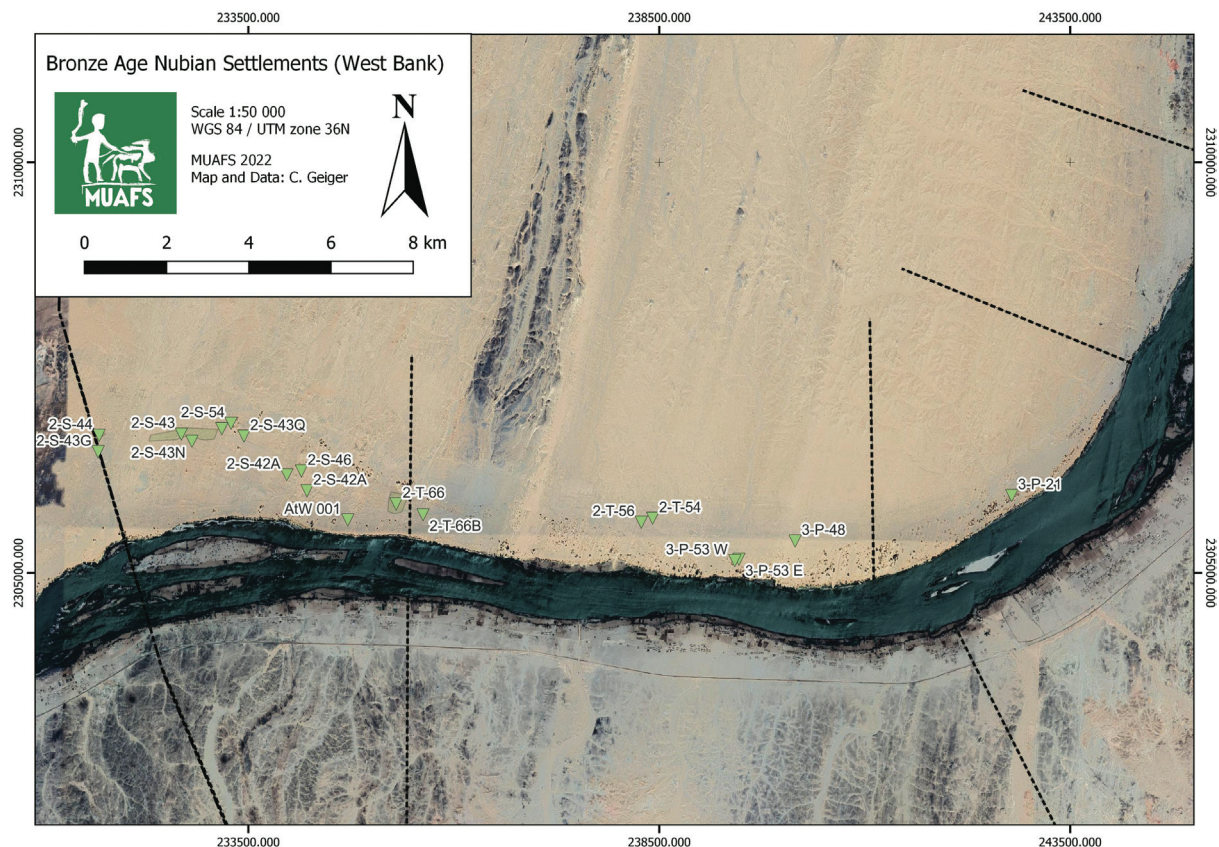


Fig. 15: Distribution of Bronze Age Nubian sites in the MUAFS concession. Map: C. Geiger, ©DiverseNile.

which seem to have accumulated directly on top of the natural surface. Like at AtW 001, no traces of architecture were preserved at the rural site 2-R-18, although some possible degraded fragments of mud mortar or brick were noted. The material culture, especially the pottery and the stone tools, is akin to the finds from AtW 001.²⁷ The dating to the early 18th Dynasty is also almost identical.

4. POSSIBLE FUNCTION OF EARLY NEW KINGDOM SETTLEMENTS IN THE PERIPHERY OF SAI

Based on the preliminary results of our excavations at AtW 001 as well as the parallel at 2-R-18, it can be suggested that AtW 001 is one of the early New Kingdom settlements in the periphery of Sai on the west bank. Similar to the town at Sai, there seems to be an evolution from the early 18th Dynasty to Thutmoside times, reflected in the increasing complexity of the pottery corpus which finds close parallels on Sai. Since no architecture has yet been found at AtW 001 to contextualise these findings, this interpretation remains tentative for now.

It is possible that AtW 001 was already founded and in use by Kerma times. As such, it is important to mention a number of so-called Kerma sites with predominantly dry-stone architecture but also mud brick buildings, documented by Vila in the Amara and Attab West districts.²⁸ In 2019, we surveyed these sites in the Attab district located along a palaeochannel of the Nile and found evidence of both Classical Kerma and early 18th Dynasty material. These 'Bronze Age Nubian' sites (Fig. 15) illustrate that our aim should be a functional and chronological assessment of individual sites rather than a concise cultural classification.²⁹ Based on the evidence from 2-R-18 and AtW 001, "the close sharing of space and activities"³⁰ between Egyptian and Nubian populations seems very likely, most probably reflecting mixed communities.

Two aspects which were already stressed by Anna Stevens and Anna Garnett for 2-R-18 are crucial for a functional analysis: 1) the past appearance of the

27 Stevens and Garnett 2017, 290, Fig. 3

28 As for now, no standing architecture could be identified at AtW 001. However, it is notable that the nearby possible New Kingdom site 2-T-62 comprises dry-stone structures.

29 For similar examples of 'transitional' sites see Liszka 2017; Nordström 2016, 156

30 Stevens and Garnett 2017, 303

landscape which was crisscrossed by ancient Nile channels and makes it likely that sites like 2-R-18 and AtW 001 were located on islands during the 18th Dynasty; 2) the possible connection of these sites with gold mining.³¹

In addition, the sites with dry-stone architecture along the palaeochannel find close parallels with so-called sentinel huts in the districts of Abu Sir, Mirgissa and Gemai.³² Thus, in addition to their association with gold mining, the sites are likely to have held a function as control posts for trade, gold transport and possibly the communication between hinterland communities and the newly established Egyptian centre on Sai Island.

5. OUTLOOK AND FUTURE RESEARCH

To conclude, despite many remaining questions, the results of Trench 1 are clearly promising and work at AtW 001 will continue soon with large scale excavations. A full assessment of the function and duration of use of this site will be significant to our aims of considering seasonal sites, as well as sites connected to gold working and other activities in the 18th Dynasty periphery of Sai Island. Furthermore, the two distinct phases of use at AtW 001 are likely to mirror changes in New Kingdom Nubia from the early 18th Dynasty to Thutmoside times. These developments are well known from central sites like Sai, but we now have the opportunity to investigate local dynamics.

Tracing both the dynamic taskscape³³ and objectscape³⁴ of AtW 001 is one of the main aims of the DiverseNile project. Our case study has particular potential, because the spatial and temporal dimensions of the landscape for the communities living in the Attab West district can be addressed. The environmental conditions in this landscape markedly changed over time. Jamie Woodward and his team have already illustrated that the New Kingdom was a time of significant environmental change with water channels drying up in the region.³⁵ In the MUAFS concession, this will be further investigated along the large palaeochannel in the districts of Attab and Ginis.

Future ceramic studies on more substantial amounts of pottery from AtW 001 will allow us to further consider and reflect on functional aspects,

local productions and communities of style.³⁶ Here, the appearance of painted wheel made deep bowls at AtW 001, like MUAFS 011-9/2022 (Fig. 9 bottom), is significant. For MUAFS 011-9/2022 we are at present not able to answer questions on where it was produced, or whether it was a private piece brought to the site or part of a general assemblage dispatched to AtW 001.³⁷ The piece is significant because it attests to a new style of painted vessels known from Sai,³⁸ but also visible at Askut.³⁹ This style combines, what seems to be, regional Nile clay wheel made Egyptian style vessel types with Nubian style decoration patterns. These locally produced vessels must be seen as syncretic, probably through the prism of the colonial experience, combining various cultural and aesthetic traditions to form something new. Such “in-between” ceramics⁴⁰ can be interpreted as evidence for the effects material culture has on creating communities. Like the Iron Age Levant, I imagine New Kingdom Nubia with “multiple intersecting and overlapping (but not necessarily homogenous or monolithic) networks of skilled practices.”⁴¹ The detailed assessment of sites like AtW 001, taking into account all identifiable social practices, has the potential to help us better understand rural communities in the Middle Nile Valley and their relation to more central sites.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was written during the ERC DiverseNile project. The European Research Council (ERC) provided funding for the project under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 865463).

For permission to work in the field kindly granted by the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan (NCAM), our sincere thanks go to Dr Ghalia Garelnabi (Acting Director General)

31 Stevens and Garnett 2017, 303

32 Nordström 2016, 138-140

33 Following Ingold 1993

34 Following Pitts and Versluys 2021; see also Lemos 2020

35 Woodward et al. 2017; see also Stevens and Garnett 2017

36 Following the concept of Feldman 2014

37 At present, INAA analysis of MUAFS 011-9/2022 (and other sherds from AtW 001) is being conducted by Giulia D'Ercole and Johannes Sterba. This might indicate where the Nile clay used originated, or at least allow comparisons with the pieces from Sai.

38 Miéle 2014, 387-389, Fig. 4

39 Smith 2003, Fig. 3.7; Budka 2018, 153. See also Rose 2018, 136

40 I would favour this term following Feldman 2014, 11 (proposed for Iron Age Levantine luxury products). For alternatives such as hybrid vessels see Budka 2020a, 410; see also Rose 2017, 466 “cross-over” pieces, adopted by Stevens and Garnett 2017.

41 Feldman 2014, 40



and Abdel Hai Abdel Sawy (Director of Fieldwork). I am very grateful to Huda Magzoub Elbashir, our NCAM inspector. Many thanks also go to all the team members involved in the 2022 season at AtW 001: Max Berner, Fabian Spitaler and Rennan Lemos. Mr Ramy's local gang of workmen deserves our gratitude for their hard work under difficult circumstances. Special thanks go to Chloë Ward, PostDoc of the DiverseNile project, for improving the written English of this paper and for much productive feedback and discussion. The author created the original ceramic drawings used in this paper and Caroline Stadlmann, student assistant of the DiverseNile project, produced the digital drawings. The photos of Figures 12-14 were kindly edited by Marion Devigne, volunteer of the DiverseNile project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budka, J. "Pots & People: Ceramics from Sai Island and Elephantine." In *From Microcosm to Macrocosm. Individual households and cities in Ancient Egypt and Nubia*, ed. by J. Budka and J. Auenmüller, 147-170. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2018.
- Budka, J. "Towards Middle Nile Biographies: The Munich University Attab to Ferka Survey Project 2018/2019." *Sudan & Nubia* 23, 2019: 1-15.
- Budka, J. *AcrossBorders 2. Living in New Kingdom Sai. Archaeology of Egypt, Sudan and the Levant 1*. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2020.
- Budka, J. "Kerma presence at Ginis East: The 2020 season of the Munich University Attab to Ferka Survey Project." *Sudan & Nubia* 24, 2020: 57-71.
- Davies, W.V. and Welsby, D.A. (eds). *Travelling the Korosko Road: archaeological exploration in Sudan's Eastern Desert*. With contributions by Alfredo Castiglioni, Angelo Castiglioni, Mahmoud Suliman Bashir, Andrea Manzo, Serena Massa, Francesco M. Rega, Phillipe Ruffieux, Donatella Usai. Sudan Archaeological Research Society Publication 24. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020.
- de Souza, A. "Paint it black: Pan-Grave black-topped and Egyptian black-rimmed pottery of the late Second Intermediate Period and early New Kingdom." In *Céramiques égyptiennes au Soudan ancien: importations, imitations et influences*, ed. by R. David, *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne* 11, 2018: 75-90.
- Edwards, D.N. (ed.). *The archaeological survey of Sudanese Nubia, 1963-69: the pharaonic sites*. SARS Publication 23. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020.
- Emberling, G. and Williams, B. "The Kingdom of Kush in the 4th Cataract: Archaeological Salvage of the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition 2007 Season. Part I. Preliminary Report on the Sites of Hosh el-Guruf and El-Widay." *Gdańsk Archaeological Museum and Heritage Protection Fund African Reports* 7, 2010: 17-38.
- Feldman, M.H. *Communities of Style. Portable Luxury Arts, Identity, and Collective Memory in the Iron Age Levant*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Ingold, T. "The Temporality of the Landscape." *World Archaeology* 25(2), 1993: 152-174.
- Meyer, C. "The Kingdom of Kush in the 4th Cataract: Archaeological Salvage of the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition 2007 Season. Part II. Grinding Stones and Gold Mining at Hosh el Guruf, Sudan." *Gdańsk Archaeological Museum and Heritage Protection Fund African Reports* 7, 2010: 39-52.
- Klemm, R. and Klemm, D. *Gold and Gold Mining in Ancient Egypt and Nubia. Geoarchaeology of the Ancient Gold Mining Sites in the Egyptian and Sudanese Eastern Deserts*. Heidelberg et al.: Springer, 2013.
- Klemm, D. and Klemm, R. "New Kingdom and early Kushite gold mining in Nubia." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 259-270. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Kolen, J. and Renes, J. "Landscape Biographies: Key Issues." In *Landscape Biographies: Geographical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives on the Production and Transmission of Landscapes*, ed. by J. Kolen, J. Renes and R. Hermans, 21-47. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.
- Lemos, R. "Material Culture and Colonization in Ancient Nubia: Evidence from the New Kingdom Cemeteries." In *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. by C. Smith. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_3307-1.
- Liszka, K. "Egyptian or Nubian? Dry-stone architecture at Wadi el-Hudi, Wadi es-Sebua, and the Eastern Desert." *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 103 (1), 2017: 35-51.
- Lohwasser, A., Karberg, T. and Auenmüller, J. (eds). *Bayuda studies: proceedings of the first international conference on the archaeology of the Bayuda Desert in Sudan*. *Meroitica* 27. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018.
- Manzo, A. *Eastern Sudan in its setting: the archaeology of a region far from the Nile Valley*. Access Archaeology; Cambridge Monographs in African Archaeology 94. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017.
- Miellé, L. "Nubian traditions on the ceramics found in the pharaonic town on Sai Island." In *The Fourth Cataract and Beyond. Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 1, ed. by J.R. Anderson and D.A. Welsby, 387-392. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.



- Nordström, H.-Å. *The West Bank Survey from Faras to Gemai 1. Sites of Early Nubian, Middle Nubian and Pharaonic Age*. BAR International Series 2650. Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2016.
- Pitts, M. and Versluys, M.J. "Objectscales: A manifesto for investigating the impacts of object flows on past societies." *Antiquity* 95 (380), 2021: 367-381. doi:10.15184/aqy.2020.148.
- Rega, F.M. "Preliminary study of the macro-lithic tools collected by CeRDO in the Sudanese Eastern Desert." In *Travelling the Korosko Road: Archaeological Exploration in Sudan's Eastern Desert*, ed. by W.V. Davies and D.A. Welsby, 99-124. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020.
- Rose, P. "Early 18th Dynasty Nubian Pottery from the Site of Sesebi, Sudan." In *Nubian Pottery from Egyptian Cultural Contexts of the Middle and Early New Kingdom. Proceedings of a Workshop held at the Austrian Archaeological Institute at Cairo, 1-12 December 2010*. *Ergänzungshefte zu den Jahreshften des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes* 13, ed. by I. Forstner-Müller and P.J. Rose, 13-29. Vienna: Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, 2012.
- Rose, P. "Sesebi: Ceramics, chronology and society." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 465-473. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Rose, P. "Egyptian Pottery from the Site of Sesebi." In *Céramiques égyptiennes au Soudan ancien: importations, imitations et influences*, ed. by R. David, *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne* 11, 2018: 135-149.
- Smith, S.T. "Pots and politics: Ceramics from Askut and Egyptian colonialism during the Middle through New Kingdoms." In *Egyptian Pottery. Proceedings of the 1990 Pottery Symposium at the University of California*, University of California Publications in Egyptian Archaeology 8, ed. by C.A. Redmount and C.A. Keller, 43-79. Berkeley: Regents of the University of California, 2003.
- Spence, K. and Rose, P. "New fieldwork at Sesebi." *Egyptian Archaeology* 35, 2009: 21-24.
- Spencer, N. "Building on new ground: the foundation of a colonial town at Amara West." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 323-355. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Spencer, N., Stevens, A. and Binder, M. "Introduction: History and historiography of a colonial entanglement, and the shaping of new archaeologies for Nubia in the New Kingdom." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 1-61. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Stevens, A. and Garnett, A. "Surveying the pharaonic desert hinterland of Amara West." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 287-306. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.
- Stockhammer, P.W. and Athanassov, B. "Conceptualising Contact Zones and Contact Spaces: An Archaeological Perspective." In *Archaeology across Frontiers and Borderlands. Fragmentation and Connectivity in the North Aegean and the Central Balkans from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age*. OREA 9, ed. by S. Gimatzidis, M. Pieniżek and S. Mangaloğlu-Votruba, 93-112. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2018.
- Vila, A. *La prospection archéologique de la Vallée du Nil, au Sud de la Cataracte de Dal (Nubie Soudanaise). Fascicule 3: District de Ferka (Est et Ouest)*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1976.
- Vila, A. *La prospection archéologique de la Vallée du Nil, au Sud de la Cataracte de Dal (Nubie Soudanaise). Fascicule 4: District de Mograkka (Est et Ouest), District de Kosha (Est et Ouest)*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1976.
- Vila, A. *La prospection archéologique de la Vallée du Nil, au Sud de la Cataracte de Dal (Nubie Soudanaise). Fascicule 5: District de Ginis (Est et Ouest)*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977.
- Vila, A. *La prospection archéologique de la Vallée du Nil, au Sud de la Cataracte de Dal (Nubie Soudanaise). Fascicule 6: District de Attab (Est et Ouest)*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977.
- Walsh, C. "Techniques for Egyptian eyes: diplomacy and the transmission of cosmetic practices between Egypt and Kerma." *Journal of Egyptian History* 13 (1-2), 2020: 295-332.
- Williams, B.B. "Kush in the wider world during the Kerma period." In *The Oxford handbook of ancient Nubia*, ed. by G. Emberling and B.B. Williams, 179-200. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Woodward, J., Macklin, M., Spencer, N., Binder, M., Dalton, M., Hay, S. and Hardy, A. "Living with a changing river and desert landscape at Amara West." In *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3, ed. by N. Spencer, A. Stevens and M. Binder, 227-257. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.



ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der neu entdeckte Fundplatz AtW 001 im Bezirk Attab West zeigt eine mehrphasige Siedlungstätigkeit im frühen Neuen Reich wie auch eine Assoziation mit der jüngsten Phase der Kermakultur. Der Artikel stellt die Ergebnisse der ersten Grabungen am Fundplatz vor und diskutiert mögliche Funktionen des Ortes. Parallelen finden sich im Bezirk von Amara West.

Im Kontext mit diesen Parallelen ermöglicht der Siedlungsplatz im Hinterland der Insel Sai neue Ansätze rund um die Besiedlung dieses Teils des Mittleren Niltals während der 18. Dynastie. Bezüge zum Goldabbau und zum sich wandelnden Nillauf sind erkennbar. AtW 001 besitzt großes Potenzial, um die sich ändernden Lebensbedingungen von Gemeinschaften außerhalb der urban strukturierten Kolonialverwaltung des Neuen Reiches zu rekonstruieren.