

FESTIVAL POTTERY OF THE NEW KINGDOM: THE CASE OF ELEPHANTINE¹

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1. Introduction

Blue painted pottery is among the best known wares from Ancient Egypt. Its main characteristics are the blue colour, a large range of decorative, mostly floral motives, fancy shapes, a rather short lifespan (approximately 1430-1140 BC, from the mid-18th Dynasty until late Ramesside times) as well as a restricted distribution². The key finding places of blue painted pottery are urban centres and capitals like Thebes, Memphis, Amarna and Gurob. It was once believed that this specific ware was produced in Memphis and Thebes only³ and it was labelled “*palace pottery*”⁴. Despite its popularity, the specific functions of this ware are in some respects still unclear. New excavations at settlement and temple sites as well as in cemeteries and cultic centres (e.g. at Qantir, Saqqara, South Abydos, Umm el-Qaab and Thebes) have produced additional material that underscores the broader distribution and greater variability in use of this distinctive ware⁵.

¹ I am grateful to all who have supported my research on this subject — especially to the excavators Cornelius and Beatrice von Pilgrim, to Dietrich Raue and Anne Seiler for many useful remarks and particularly to Stephen P. Harvey for editing my English and for a very fruitful exchange of ideas about blue painted pots and festival pottery in general.

² Cf. C. HOPE, ‘Blue-Painted Pottery’, in: E. BROVARSKI, S.K. DOLL & R.E. FREED (eds.), *Egypt’s Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom*, exhibition catalogue (Boston, 1982), 88-90; C. HOPE, ‘Blue Painted and Polychrome Decorated Pottery from Amarna: A Preliminary Corpus’, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 2 (1991), 17-92; D.A. ASTON, *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes Q I. Teil 1, Corpus of Fabrics, Wares and Shapes*, Forschungen in der Ramses-Stadt. Die Grabungen des Pelizaeus-Museums Hildesheim in Qantir-Pi-Ramesse, vol. 1 (Mainz am Rhein, 1998), 56-57 and 354-355; C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery*, *Shire Egyptology* 5, 2nd edition (Princes Risborough, 2001), 26-27 and 43-44.

³ Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom – Three Studies* (Burwood, 1989), 16, 58.

⁴ W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part II: The Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (1675-1080 B.C.)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), 247.

⁵ Cf. P. LACOVARA, in: R.E. FREED, Y.J. MARKOWITZ & S.H. D’AURIA (eds.), *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun* (Boston, 1999), 236.

2. Blue painted pottery from Elephantine

Prior to recent excavations by the Swiss Institute in cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute Cairo, evidence for *blue painted ware* at Elephantine was scarce⁶. Although the sherds excavated between 2002 and 2008 are few in number, they are of significance for the ware and its use throughout Egypt. At Elephantine, blue painted pottery is attested in the New Kingdom layers [Bauschichten] 9, 8 and 7, thus ranging in date from the mid-18th to the 20th Dynasties⁷. To date, the small corpus comprises a total of 75 fragmentary vessels. The majority are closed forms (amphorae, bottles and various types of jars, primarily funnel necked); only three plates/dishes and one lid were found. Among the sherds from stratified contexts, two can be dated to the reigns of Amenhotep II-Thutmose IV, and eleven are of the period from the reign of Amenhotep III to the end of the 18th Dynasty. 33 blue painted sherds are of the 19th Dynasty, and six are 20th Dynasty in date. The remaining 23 sherds which were collected on the surface or recovered from *sebbakh* chiefly feature linear patterns comparable to the material at Qantir⁸, and can consequently be dated to the Ramesside period. Out of this small sample, it is striking that almost 75% of the blue painted pottery from Elephantine was produced during the 19th Dynasty⁹.

2.1. Decoration technique and patterns¹⁰

All blue painted pieces from Elephantine made in Nile clay were decorated before firing. Blue, black and red are the basic colours. Blue paint is attested on uncoated, cream-slipped and red-slipped surfaces in various fabrics¹¹. The latter, red-slipped

⁶ For published pieces, see D.A. ASTON, *Elephantine XIX, Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 95 (Mainz am Rhein, 1999), nos. 26-28, 394 and 1365.

⁷ For the (preliminary) dating of the layers of the New Kingdom see J. BUDKA, 'XII. Zur Keramik des Neuen Reiches – erste Beobachtungen anhand des Materials aus der Oststraße B II', in: G. DREYER et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine, 31./32. Grabungsbericht', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 61 (2005), 112-114. For the evidence of blue painted pottery at Elephantine see J. BUDKA, 'Weihgefäße und Festkeramik des Neuen Reiches von Elephantine', in: D. RAUE et al., 'Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine, 35./36. Grabungsbericht', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 64 (2008), 106-132.

⁸ D.A. ASTON, *Qantir I*, 354-419.

⁹ The small number of late 18th Dynasty sherds is related to the fact that the archaeological remains of this period are rather scarce (the relevant *Bauschicht* 9 comprises 17% of the diagnostic sherds of the New Kingdom) – the Ramesside layers are again better preserved and thus the total number of sherds increases (covering 41% of the diagnostic sherds of the New Kingdom).

¹⁰ For the latest concise overview on decoration techniques of blue painted pottery see P. ROSE, *The Eighteenth Dynasty Pottery Corpus from Amarna*, Egypt Exploration Society Excavation Memoir 83 (London, 2007), 18-30.

¹¹ See J. BUDKA, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 64 (2008), 122, tables 1 and 2.

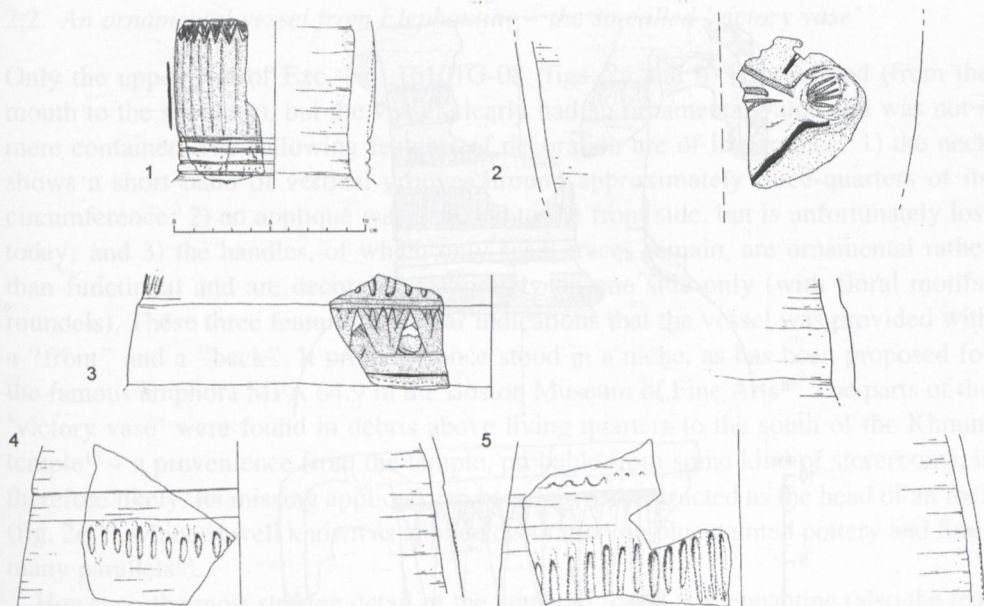


Fig. 1. Selected blue painted sherds and vessels with 'fluting' from Elephantine: 1. amphora, Nile B2, Exc.-No. 18500-01; 2. Hathor vessel, Nile B2, Exc.-no. 5301-01; 3. funnel necked jar, Nile B2, Exc.-No. 35603M/d-02; 4. funnel necked jar, Marl A4, Exc.-No. 36603S/d-07; 5. funnel necked jar, Marl A4, Exc.-No. 36603S/d-06.

surfaces are characteristic of the Ramesside period. Cream-slipped blue painted vessels are generally very common, but most frequently appear during the late 18th Dynasty. Aside from some carinated bowls of Ramesside date, uncoated marl clay vessels decorated in blue together with other colours (red and black) are typical for the mid-18th Dynasty. This type of ware was decorated post-firing¹². In addition to painted decoration, relief decoration is quite common on blue painted vessels and attested at Elephantine as well (fig. 1). In one case, the head of Hathor was modelled out of the vessel wall (fig. 1.2)¹³. Six blue painted and four undecorated sherds show zones of vertical incised scorings ('fluting') (figs. 1.1 and 1.3-5). A large vessel (see below) attests to the design of the vessel surface through application of separate modelled elements (fig. 2).

¹² See C.A. HOPE, 'Innovation and Decoration of Ceramics in the Mid-18th Dynasty', *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 97-122.

¹³ For parallels see J. BOURRIAU, *Umm el-Ga'ab. Pottery from the Nile Valley before the Arab Conquest* (Cambridge, 1981), 38-39, nos. 55-56; J. BOURRIAU, 'Pottery Figure Vases of the New Kingdom', *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), pl. 27.4; C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 2 (1991), fig. 5h, pl. 5b.

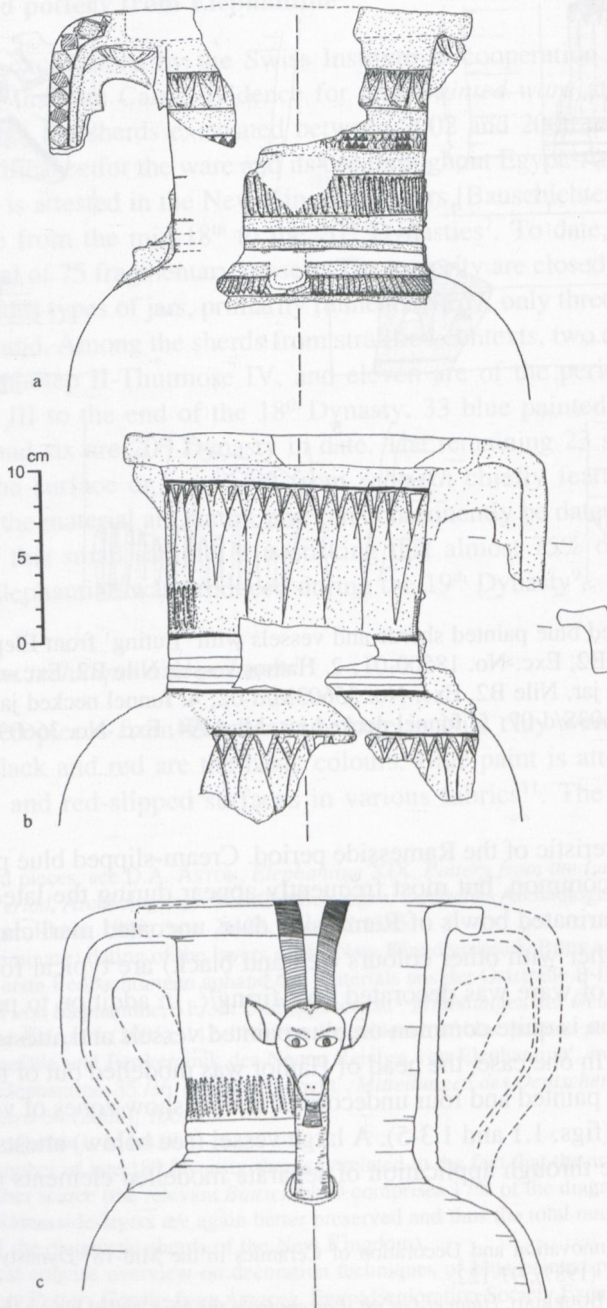


Fig. 2. The so called 'victory vase', Exc.-No. 16101G-08.
a) front, b) back and c) reconstruction of ibex-appliqué.

2.2. *An ornamental vessel from Elephantine – the so called ‘victory vase’*

Only the upper part of Exc.-No. 16101G-08 (figs. 2a and b) is preserved (from the mouth to the shoulder), but the vessel clearly had an ornamental value and was not a mere container. The following features of decoration are of importance: 1) the neck shows a short band of vertical grooves around approximately three-quarters of its circumference; 2) an appliqué was attached to the front side, but is unfortunately lost today; and 3) the handles, of which only scant traces remain, are ornamental rather than functional and are decorated elaborately on one side only (with floral motifs/roundels). These three features are clear indications that the vessel was provided with a “front” and a “back”. It probably once stood in a niche, as has been proposed for the famous amphora MFA 64.9 in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts¹⁴. The parts of the ‘victory vase’ were found in debris above living quarters to the south of the Khnum temple¹⁵ – a provenience from the temple, probable from some kind of storerooms, is therefore likely. Its missing appliqué can be safely reconstructed as the head of an ibex (fig. 2c)¹⁶, which is well known as applied decoration on blue painted pottery and finds many parallels¹⁷.

However, the most striking detail of the amphora found at Elephantine (also the reason why it has been dubbed the ‘victory vase’) is the applied decoration in the shape of two free-standing, two-dimensional figures of bound prisoners (fig. 3). These probably once belonged to the amphora (according to their find spot, material and style of manufacture). Prisoners are very common motifs in the decorative arts of the New Kingdom¹⁸

¹⁴ C.A. HOPE, in: E. BROVARSKI, S.K. DOLL & R.E. FREED (eds.), *Egypt's Golden Age*, 90.

¹⁵ See C. VON PILGRIM, *Elephantine XVIII, Untersuchungen in der Stadt des Mittleren Reiches und der Zweiten Zwischenzeit*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 91 (Mainz, 1996), 67.

¹⁶ The reconstruction by D.A. ASTON, *Elephantine XIX, Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period*, 19, note 57 “with a luted Hathor head” (probably based on comparison with an extraordinary vessel from Saqqara, J. BOURRIAU et al., *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut'ankhamun III. The New Kingdom Pottery*, Seventy-First Excavation memoir, Egypt Exploration Society (London, 2005), 52-55, no. 147) does not correspond to the actual traces of the applications on 16101G-08.

¹⁷ See J. BOURRIAU, *Umm el-Ga'ab. Pottery from the Nile Valley before the Arab Conquest*, 39, cat. 57; C.A. HOPE, in: *Egypt's Golden Age*, 88; C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom – Three Studies*, 97, 100; it was once believed that this type of application was restricted to Malqata and Amarna, but recently ibex-appliqués were found in Qantir (D.A. ASTON, *Qantir I*, 400-401, no. 1418) and Abydos (J. BUDKA, ‘The Oriental Institute Ahmose and Tetisheri Project at Abydos 2002-2004: The New Kingdom Pottery’, *Egypt & the Levant* 16 (2006), 108, fig. 17).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. S. PETSCHER & M. VON FALCK (eds.), *Pharao siegt immer. Krieg und Frieden im Alten Ägypten*, exhibition catalogue (Hamm, 2004), 51; A. LOHWASSER, ‘Ein Nordländer im Südland. Zu einem ägyptischen Spendenöffel aus dem Sudan’, *Der Antike Sudan* 18 (2007), 179-188 (so called cosmetic spoons in the shape of foreigners).

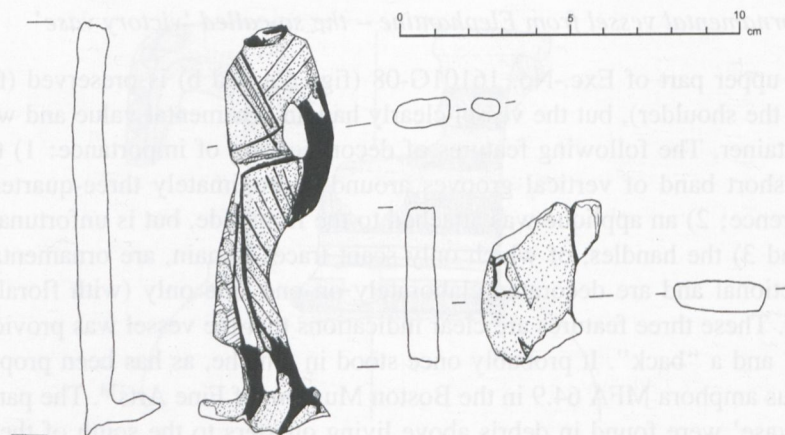


Fig. 3. Fragments of two-dimensional, blue painted figures of captives, belonging to the 'victory vase', Exc.-No. 6113e.

and appear frequently on palace floors¹⁹ (fig. 4) but I know of no parallels for modelled, free-standing captives among pottery vessels²⁰. Comparable figures are however often part of the composition of metal vessels, as depicted in both temple and tomb decoration (fig. 5)²¹. The latter suggest that the two captive figures were formerly applied to the lip

¹⁹ In Malqata, Amarna and possibly Memphis prisoners are part of the design of painted pavements; the examples in Amarna are the best preserved ones and the closest parallels for the Elephantine pieces (fig. 4), see F.J. WEATHERHEAD, 'Painted Pavements in the Great Palace at Amarna', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992), 191, fig. 5 and F. J. WEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings, Seventy-eighth Excavation Memoir*, Egypt Exploration Society (London, 2007), 20, fig. 17; from Qantir and Medinet Habu comes a large number of fayence tiles that commonly depict bound prisoners, see J. ŚLIWA, 'Ägyptische Fayence-Kacheln mit Darstellungen von Fremdvölkern', in: *Festschrift zum 150jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Mitteilungen aus der Ägyptischen Sammlung VIII* (Berlin, 1974), 233-238 and S. PETSCHER & M. VON FALCK (eds.), *Pharao siegt immer* (Hamm, 2004), 45-49, nos. 35-40.

²⁰ However, the legs of two prisoners form the handles of an extraordinary pilgrim vase (Berlin 13155; cf. *Ägyptisches Museum Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (Berlin, 1967), no. 674; J. BOURRIAU, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), Pl. 27.2; mid-18th Dyn.).

²¹ E.g. E. PRISSE D'AVENNES, *Atlas de l'Art Égyptien* (Cairo, new edition, 1991), pls. no. II. 83 and 96; W. WRZESZINSKI, *Atlas zur Altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, vol. II (Leipzig, 1935), pls. 25c, 37, 38A.3, 44.4, 48 = 49.11, 52, B6 1.9, 59.10; P. MONTET, *Les reliques de l'art syrien dans l'Égypte du Nouvel Empire*, Publications de la faculté des lettres de l'université de Strasbourg (Paris, 1937), figs. 58 and 59; C.R. LEPSIUS, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien: nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842-1845 ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition* (Berlin, 1849-1859), Abth. III, Blatt 118 (TT 40 of Viceroy Huy). That such elaborated vessels made of metal probably have inspired blue painted pottery with applied decoration was already suggested by P. LACOVARA, in: *Pharaohs of the sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun* (Boston, 1999), 236, cat. 103.

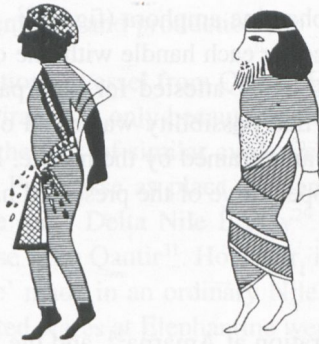


Fig. 4. Painted figures of bound captives from Amarna, palace floor (after F.J. WHEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings*, fig. 17).

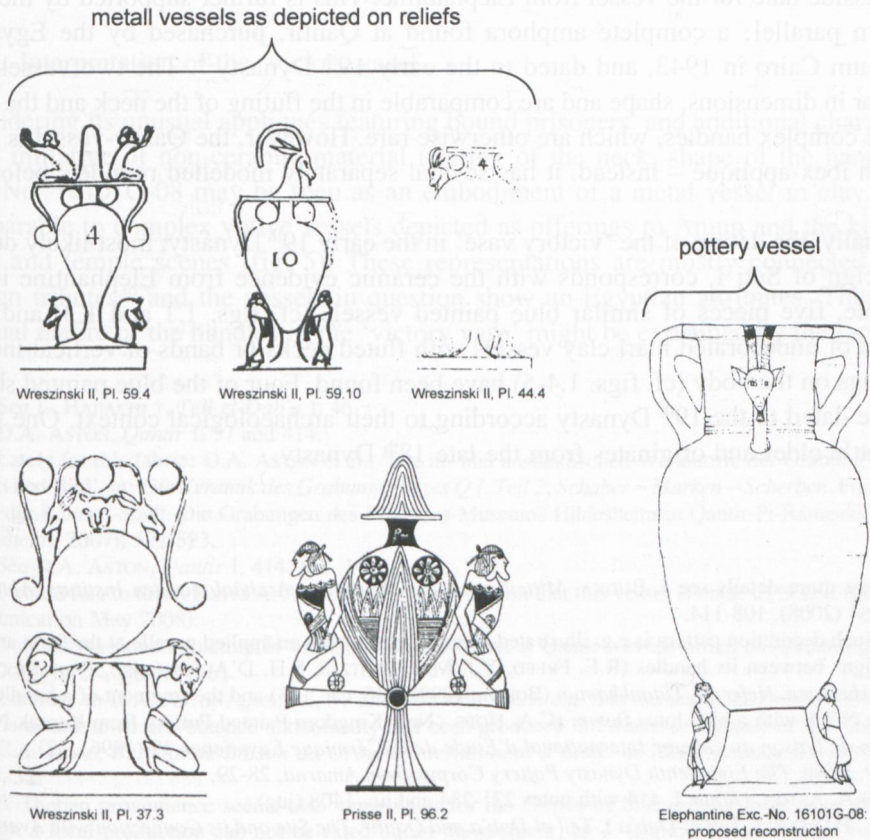


Fig. 5. Parallels for the 'victory-vase' on tomb- and temple-reliefs (metal vessels) and its proposed reconstruction.

of the conical foot of the Elephantine amphora (fig. 5)²². An alternative reconstruction would be to fill the area framed by each handle with one of the figures of the prisoners – this decoration technique is rarely attested for blue painted pottery²³. However, in the case of the ‘victory vase’ this possibility was ruled out because the figures of the prisoners are too large for the area framed by the handle. Besides, there are no traces of a possible application in the upper curve of the preserved handle (cf. fig. 2a).

2.2.1. Dating and parallels

Fluting is a rare style of decoration at Amarna²⁴, and the general shape of the ‘victory vase’ has no parallel within contexts of the late 18th Dynasty. By contrast, Ramesside material from Qantir and Saqqara includes a number of amphorae, funnel-necked jars and one small jug decorated with bands of vertical grooves²⁵. These facts point to a Ramesside date for the vessel from Elephantine. This is further supported by the best known parallel: a complete amphora found at Qantir, purchased by the Egyptian Museum Cairo in 1943, and dated to the early 19th Dynasty²⁶. The two vessels are similar in dimensions, shape and are comparable in the fluting of the neck and the style of the complex handles, which are otherwise rare. However, the Qantir-vessel is lacking an ibex-appliqué – instead, it has several separately modelled roundels below its lip.

Finally, the dating of the ‘victory vase’ in the early 19th Dynasty, most likely during the reign of Seti I, corresponds with the ceramic evidence from Elephantine itself. To date, five pieces of similar blue painted vessels (cf. figs. 1.1 and 1.3) and four sherds of undecorated marl clay vessels with fluted necks or bands of vertical incised scorings on the body (cf. figs. 1.4-5) have been found. Four of the blue painted sherds can be dated to the 19th Dynasty according to their archaeological context. One piece is a little older and originates from the late 18th Dynasty.

²² For more details see J. BUDKA, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 64 (2008), 108-114.

²³ Such decoration pattern is e.g. illustrated by an amphora with an applied gazelle at the front and two *ankh*-signs between its handles (R.E. FREED, Y.J. MARKOWITZ & S.H. D’AURIA (eds.), *Pharaohs of the sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun* (Boston, 1999), 236, cat. 103) and the fragment of a handle from Karnak North with a blue lotus flower (C.A. HOPE, ‘New Kingdom Painted Pottery from Karnak North’, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe International d’Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 19 (1996), 32).

²⁴ P. ROSE, *The Eighteenth Dynasty Pottery Corpus from Amarna*, 28-29.

²⁵ D.A. ASTON, *Qantir I*, 414 with notes 231-234 and no. 1408 (jug).

²⁶ L. HABACHI †, *Tell el-Dab’a I. Tell el-Dab’a and Qantir. The Site and its Connection with Avaris and Piramesse*, ed. by E.-M. ENGEL, *Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 23, *Untersuchungen der Zweigstelle Kairo des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 2 (Vienna, 2001), cat. 150, fig. 92, pl. 49D.

2.2.2. The question of provenience and production

In the case of the above-mentioned vessel from Qantir, Habachi argued that vessels of this style were produced in Piramesse only because of the frequent appearance of fluting on jars from Qantir and the lack of similar evidence from other sites²⁷. Aston has adopted this view²⁸. Indeed, Piramesse as place of manufacture is likely for funnel-necked jars fabricated in the local Delta Nile E clay²⁹ like the pieces published by Aston³⁰ and the discussed vase from Qantir³¹. However, it seems rather improbable for vessels like the 'victory vase' made in an ordinary Nile B-variant³². Given that most marl clay vessels and decorated wares at Elephantine were imported from Thebes during the New Kingdom (see below), a provenience for vessels in the style of the 'victory vase' from Thebes cannot be ruled out³³. The discovery of blue painted pottery vessels decorated with fluting in Karnak North underscores this possibility³⁴. In fact, most of the blue painted pottery from Elephantine seems to have been produced at Thebes³⁵.

2.2.3. Interpretation of the 'victory vase'

Considering its unusual appliquéés featuring bound prisoners, and additional characteristics imitative of non-ceramic material (fluting of the neck, shape of the handles), Exc.-No. 16101G-08 may be seen as an embodiment of a metal vessel in clay. It is comparable to complex votive vessels depicted as offerings to Amun and the king in tomb and temple scenes (fig. 5). These representations are mostly connected with foreign tributes³⁶ and the vessels in question show un-Egyptian attributes. Thus, the unusual nature of the handles of the 'victory vase' might be explained by the fact that

²⁷ See L. HABACHI †, *Tell el-Dab'a* I, 46.

²⁸ D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* I, 57 and 414.

²⁹ Lately for this fabric: D.A. ASTON et al., 'Die in- und ausländischen Werkstoffe der Grabung Qantir in Wort und Bild', in: *Die Keramik des Grabungsplatzes Q I. Teil 2, Schaber – Marken – Scherben*, Forschungen in der Ramses-Stadt. Die Grabungen des Pelizaeus-Museums Hildesheim in Qantir-Pi-Ramesse, vol. 5 (Hildesheim, 2007), 521-523.

³⁰ See D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* I, 414, nos. 1463-1474.

³¹ I would like to thank David A. Aston for the confirmation that this vessel is made of Nile E (personal communication May 2008).

³² Note that the small quantity of vessels of Nile B found at Qantir was identified as southern production; D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* I, 61.

³³ Contrary to D.A. ASTON, *Qantir* I, 57 and 414 who stated e.g. that the amphora Boston MFA 64.9 which is of unknown provenience undoubtedly had been produced in Piramesse because of the 'fluting'.

³⁴ C.A. HOPE, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe International d'Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 19 (1996), 32.

³⁵ A Theban provenience seems also very likely for the corpus of blue painted pottery at Abydos, although a local production can not be ruled out at the moment, cf. J. BUDKA, *Egypt & the Levant* 16 (2006), 113.

³⁶ For a recent study of this type of scene and possible interpretations: S. HALLMANN, *Die Tributzszenen des Neuen Reiches*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 66 (Wiesbaden, 2006), passim.

the Egyptians adapted foreign shapes and motifs. It was probably brought from Thebes by a high official, maybe even by the viceroy of Kush himself, and donated to the temple at Elephantine during the early 19th Dynasty³⁷. The viceroys and other Theban officials are well attested in the area of the First Cataract by means of rock inscriptions³⁸. It is noteworthy that the official who is contemporary with the probable date of production of the 'victory vase', Amenemopet (who was in office during the reigns of Seti I and Ramesses II), left four rock inscriptions on the road to Shellal. These inscriptions commemorate his military actions carried out on behalf of the king – Seti I is depicted once in his war chariot, holding a captive in his hand and on a second tableau slaying prisoners³⁹. Could the background for these inscriptions be somehow related to the dedication of a pottery vessel with bound prisoners⁴⁰, or do both scenes and vessels merely reflect a popular *topos* during New Kingdom Egypt⁴¹, mirroring important aspects of ancient life?⁴²

³⁷ Such vessels might have been royal donations as has been proposed for example for polychrome 18th Dynasty amphorae, see A. and A. BRACK, *Das Grab des Tjanuni – Theben Nr. 74*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Abteilung Kairo 19 (Mainz, 1977), pls. 15, 63 and M. Bell, 'Regional variation in polychrome pottery of the 19th Dynasty', *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 73, note 118. Similar vessels that were probably donated by the king have been found inside of Mansions of Millions of years (e.g. temple of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV, see C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 110-111 and M.C. GUIDOTTI & F. SILVANO, *La ceramica del tempio di Thutmose IV a Gurna*, Biblioteca di Studi Egittologici 3 (Pisa, 2003), figs. 10-15).

³⁸ See L. HABACHI, 'The Graffiti and Work of the Viceroys of Kush in the Region of Aswan', *Kush* 5 (1957), 13-36; L. HABACHI, 'Two Graffiti from the Reign of Queen Hatshepsut', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 16 (1957), 89-92; S.J. SEIDLMAYER, 'New Rock Inscriptions on Elephantine Island', 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 (Cairo, 2003), 443-445; lately A. GASSE & V. RONDOT, *Les inscriptions de Séhel*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale du Caire 126 (Cairo, 2007), passim.

³⁹ W.M.F. PETRIE, *A Season in Egypt, 1887* (London, 1888), pl. V, nos. 109-110; L. HABACHI, *Kush* 5 (1957), 26-27; A.J. PEDEN, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt. Scope and Roles of Informal Writings (c. 3100-332 B.C.)*, Probleme der Ägyptologie 17 (Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2001), 110.

⁴⁰ Note that Amenemopet is represented in the temple of Beit el-Wali dedicating a votive vessel with attached figures of Nubians, quite similar to the figures from Elephantine, see H. Schäfer, *Altägyptische Prunkgefäße mit aufgesetzten Randverzierungen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Goldschmiedekunst, Untersuchungen zur Geschichte und Altertumskunde Aegyptens* 4 (Hildesheim 1964, reprint of Leipzig, 1903), 23 with note 2 (C.R. LEPSIUS, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, Abth. III, Blatt 176e).

⁴¹ Cf. the designs on the pavements in New Kingdom palaces which are very similar to decoration of painted pottery (in terms of both wildlife scenes and depictions of prisoners, as pointed out by Stephen P. Harvey, personal communication) and which were convincingly explained as highly symbolized reflection of the cosmos, D. O'CONNOR, 'City and Palace in New Kingdom Egypt', *Cahiers de Recherche de l'Institut de Papyrologie et d'Égyptologie de Lille* 11 (1989), 78; D. O'CONNOR, 'Mirror of the Cosmos: The Palace of Merenptah', in: E.L. BLEIBERG (ed.), *Fragments of a Shattered Visage, The Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ramesses the Great*, Monographs of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology 1 (Memphis, Tenn., 1993), 184 and F.J. WEATHERHEAD, *Amarna Palace Paintings*, 349.

⁴² St.P. Harvey pointed out that the depictions of bound captives on palace floors might be comparable to apotropaic aspects of wall decoration in private houses as illustrated by motifs like hung ducks (personal communication and see his paper 'Visiting the House on Earth: The Ancient Egyptian Domestic Nexus

3. Discussion: Date, function and use of blue painted pottery at Elephantine

Given the small amount of blue painted pottery in Elephantine, one of the central questions concerning the ware group is its function. Considering the existence of some extraordinary pieces and the rareness of rather simple ones, it is safe to assume that *blue painted ware* does not belong primarily among general household wares and was not used for everyday activities⁴³ as at Amarna and Malqata⁴⁴. Rather, blue painted pottery seems to be connected with temple cult as is the case at other sites, for example at Abydos⁴⁵, Memphis⁴⁶ and at Thebes⁴⁷. One must further stress, that, in addition to the above mentioned domestic contexts at Malqata and Amarna, both sites offer a wide-ranging setting for the use of blue painted pottery. The case of Malqata is probably connected with its function as venue of the Sed-festivals of Amenhotep III; the special case of Amarna is related to the fundamental changes of religious practice during the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten and to one of its primary mottos, the day-to-day-feast (“*Veralltäglicung des Fests oder Verfestlichung des Alltags*”⁴⁸) because of the omnipresence of the sun god Aten.

The ‘victory vase’ from Elephantine was not a simple container, but had an ornamental and symbolic value, probably with several semantic layers⁴⁹. In sum, blue painted pottery at Elephantine neither has the character of basic *household ware* nor

Between This World and the Next’, held at the Oriental Institute’s conference ‘*Performing Death. Social Analyses of Ancient Funerary Traditions in the Mediterranean*’, February 16-17, 2006; currently in preparation for publication elsewhere). According to HARVEY (ibid.), “there is compelling evidence for viewing the officials’ estates, and especially their houses, as a microcosm of both the city of Amarna and world as the Egyptians viewed it.”

⁴³ For the “wide range of domestic contexts” (kitchen as well as reception rooms) see C.A. Hope, ‘Concerning a blue-painted vessel from East Karnak’, *The Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 15, no. 3 (1985), 79.

⁴⁴ Blue painted sherds cover only 0.8% of the diagnostics from *Bauschicht* 9; 1.6% from *Bauschicht* 8 and 7; cf. Malqata with 6.4% of diagnostics (C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom*, 12) and Amarna with “only a few percent”, C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 2 (1991), 17.

⁴⁵ See J. BUDKA, *Egypt & the Levant* 16 (2006), 105-108.

⁴⁶ C.A. HOPE, ‘Some Memphite Blue-painted Pottery of the Mid-18th Dynasty’, in: J. PHILLIPPS et al. (eds.), *Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Near East. Studies in Honour of Martha Rhodes Bell*, Vol. II (San Antonio, Texas, 1997), 249-286.

⁴⁷ E.g. from Karnak, see C.A. HOPE, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe International d’Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 19 (1996), 31; C.A. HOPE, ‘Karnak North: Painted Ceramics of the New Kingdom’, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe International d’Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 20 (1997), 29 or from Houses of Millions of years on the westbank, M.C. GUIDOTTI & F. SILVANO, *La ceramica del tempio di Thutmosi IV a Gurna*, figs. 10-15.

⁴⁸ J. ASSMANN, ‘Das ägyptische Prozessionsfest’, in: J. ASSMANN (ed.), *Das Fest und das Heilige. Religiöse Kontrapunkte zur Alltagswelt*, Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen 1 (Gütersloh, 1991), 118.

⁴⁹ For the fact that objects, motifs and compositions in Ancient Egypt may function on several semantic levels, e.g. providing pleasure while still having deeper meanings, see L. MESKELL, *Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt. Material Biographies Past and Present* (Oxford & New York, 2004), 122 and 147.

of *palace ware*⁵⁰. It was probably not produced on the island. The vessels were imported, most likely from Thebes⁵¹. Thus, they already held some kind of value since the vessels could not be replaced on the spot. *Votive vessels* like the 'victory vase' have cultic connotations, and were probably presented at local temples in the form of painted pottery, imitating the kind of metal vessels of higher value that are frequently depicted on walls of temples and tombs (fig. 5).

Most of the blue painted pottery from Elephantine can be dated to the 19th Dynasty, primarily to the reign of Ramesses II and his predecessor, Seti I. A smaller group of vessels was produced during the reign of Amenhotep III up to the late 18th Dynasty. Other categories of monuments found on the island flourished during these specific periods as well: rock inscriptions⁵² and small barque shrines⁵³. Both are connected with festival processions and cultic activities⁵⁴. Local festivals at Elephantine prospered already at the time of the re-opening of the new temple of Khnum during the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, following extensive building activities by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. These festivals, which are traceable by means of temple inscriptions and blocks, architecture, stelae and rock inscriptions, focused on the worship of the triad of the cataract and on Amun⁵⁵.

It is interesting to note that the time of the mid-18th Dynasty marks exactly the beginning of the appearance of decorated pottery wares of the New Kingdom in Elephantine (and elsewhere). Within the category of painted vessels, a group of mono-, bi- and polychrome decorated marl clay vessels is remarkable. These are slender bottles with a long neck, made in Marl A2 and A4 clay of the Vienna System and painted

⁵⁰ This term was suggested while assuming a restricted production in residential workshops at Memphis and Thebes, see C.A. HOPE, *Pottery of the Egyptian New Kingdom – Three Studies*, 16 and 58.

⁵¹ One sherd, Exc.-No. 26000-02, is rather unusual but finds parallels in complete vessels excavated at Giza (see C.A. HOPE, in: J. PHILIPPS et al. (eds.), *Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Near East. Studies in Honour of Martha Rhodes Bell*, Vol. II, 256, especially JE 48179, fig. 7). A Memphite origin for this vessel seems therefore possible.

⁵² Cf. A.J. PEDEN, *The Graffiti of Pharaonic Egypt. Scope and Roles of Informal Writings (c. 3100-332 B.C.)*, 84 and 112; S.J. SEIDLMEYER, 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 (Cairo, 2003), 443-445.

⁵³ The so called *temple du sud* of Amenhotep III (*Description de l'Égypte*, vol. I, pls. 31, 34-38; M.F. LAMING-MACADAM, 'Gleanings from the Bankes MSS.', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 32 (1946), 59, pl. 7) and *temple du nord* of Ramesses II (*Description de l'Égypte*, vol. I, pls. 31, 38; L. BORCHARDT, 'Besprechung von Porter-Moss, A Topographical Bibliography', *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 41 (1938), 156).

⁵⁴ For the evidence of festivals in the cataract region see D. VALBELLE, *Satis et Anoukis*, Sonderschriften des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo 8 (Mainz am Rhein, 1981), 121-126; cf. also D. BRÖCKELMANN, 'Die „Schiffsfahrten“ im Grab Sarenputs I. auf der Qubbet el-Hawa: ein früher Hinweis auf Prozessionsfeste der Anuket?', *Göttinger Miszellen* 209 (2006), 7-31.

⁵⁵ See M. BOMMAS, *Der Tempel des Chnum der 18. Dynastie auf Elephantine*, PhD-thesis (Heidelberg, 2000), 21-22, <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/3383/>. For rock inscriptions of the Mid-18th Dyn., especially by the viceroy Usersatet, cf. A. GASSE & V. RONDOT, *Les inscriptions de Séhel*, 141-157, SEH 253-260 (Usersatet).

either in red and black, in red, black and blue, or in black only⁵⁶. The motifs comprise simple linear designs (bands and dots) as well as floral and faunal elements (e.g. flowers, lotus buds, ducks and papyrus). The as-yet published parallels are dated to the reigns of Amenhotep II to Thutmose IV⁵⁷, which corresponds well with the stratigraphic evidence at Elephantine. The provenience of most of the complete vessels in museums is unknown, but they are said to come from Thebes⁵⁸. A Theban manufacture would correspond to finds by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo in the Seti I temple at Qurna⁵⁹ and by the IFAO in Karnak North⁶⁰. In the case of the sherds from Elephantine, a provenience from Thebes is therefore very likely. Due to 1) the archaeological contexts and 2) the pictorial evidence from tombs of nobles we know of two central functions of such decorated vessels: 1) as offerings in royal temples, more precisely in Mansions of Millions of years⁶¹ and thus related to the cult of Amun and the king⁶² and 2) as wine jars used in the Beautiful Feast of the Valley during banquets, as memorized by the Theban elite on their tomb walls⁶³. Both sources have a cultic connotation in common and are closely connected with festivals (in both cases with the pre-eminent Theban festival, the Beautiful Feast of the Valley⁶⁴). It is furthermore

⁵⁶ The red and black ware was clearly stimulated by the Palestinian Bi-chrome ware and is characteristic of the time of Thutmose III, see C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 109.

⁵⁷ C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 108-109 and 116; see in addition the material from the temple of Thutmose IV at Qurna, M.C. GUIDOTTI & F. SILVANO, *La ceramica del tempio di Thutmosi IV a Gurna*, figs. 10-15.

⁵⁸ C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 116 proposed a "Theban manufacture for such decorated vessels" (cf. as additional support for this thesis the material cited in notes 59-61).

⁵⁹ See R. STADELMANN & K. MYŚLIWIEC, 'Der Tempel Sethos' I. in Qurna. Vierter Grabungsbericht', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 38 (1982), pl. 99.

⁶⁰ C.A. HOPE, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe International d'Étude de la Céramique Égyptienne* 19 (1996), 32.

⁶¹ Cf. the earliest finds in the temple of Amenhotep II; see W.M.F. PETRIE, *Six temples at Thebes* (London, 1897), pl. V; C.A. HOPE, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 110-111 and note 62 as well as M.C. GUIDOTTI & F. SILVANO, *La ceramica del tempio di Thutmosi IV a Gurna*, figs. 10-15 for the temple of Thutmose IV.

⁶² For the cultic function of this particular type of temple see M. ULLMANN, *König für die Ewigkeit – Die Häuser von Millionen von Jahren, Ägypten und Altes Testament* 51 (Wiesbaden, 2002), 672 and passim.

⁶³ For a list of such 18th Dynasty vessels in Theban Tombs and their festival as well as funerary context see M. BELL, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 73, note 118.

⁶⁴ For the Beautiful Feast of the Valley see S. SCHOTT, *Das schöne Fest vom Wüstentale, Festbräuche einer Totenstadt*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur in Mainz 11 (Wiesbaden, 1953), passim; S. WIEBACH, 'Die Begegnung von Lebenden und Verstorbenen im Rahmen des thebanischen Talfestes', *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 13 (1986), 264-291; E. GRAEFE, 'Talfest', in: *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* VI (Wiesbaden, 1986), 187-189; M. BELL, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 73, note 117; J. ASSMANN, in: J. ASSMANN (ed.), *Das Fest und das Heilige* (Gütersloh, 1991), 105-122 and S.-A. NAGUIB, 'The Beautiful Feast of the Valley', in: R. SKARSTEN, E.J. KLEPPE & R.B. FINNESTAD (eds.), *Understanding and History in Arts and Sciences* (Solum, Oslo, 1991), 21-32. References for the Festival of the Valley in Ramesside time have been collected by M. BELL, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 72-73, note 115.

likely that – as it is well attested for flower bouquets⁶⁵ – such vessels were first dedicated on the occasion of the festival within a temple and used afterwards within private funerary and festival cult (“Umlaufopfer”).

One can assume that the imported nature of such vessels, far from decreasing their special character, may have enhanced the sense that they were not intended for everyday use. Additionally, in the case of Elephantine, we know of close interconnections between the local and the Theban cults because the highest officials from Thebes spent some time on a regular basis in the area of the southern border of Egypt⁶⁶. In general, it seems that people tend to stick to the cultic activities of their hometown and thus require the same kind of votives and similar festivals⁶⁷. In addition, familiar types of objects can hold great meaning for people away from home, even in one’s own country⁶⁸. Further, local circumstances can motivate the individual treatment and specific adaptation of rituals and activities. This might be the case with the ‘victory vase’ – a rare shape attested in the residence, but specially modified for its symbolic function at Elephantine, close to Egypt’s southern border. While less unusual features of the vessel (like the ibex-appliqués that are well attested at other sites like Thebes, Amarna, and Abydos) might indicate the overall meaning of the vessel, they could equally well denote a general theme not tied to a specific place or context. For example, several sources point to a strong connection of the ibex with the New Year⁶⁹, and it is therefore tempting to assume that vessels with attached ibex-appliqués were used within the sphere of the New Year’s festival⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Cf. S. SCHOTT, *Das schöne Fest vom Wüstenale*, 48.

⁶⁶ For the close relationship between Thebes and Elephantine see W. SPIEGELBERG, ‘Ein Heiligtum des Gottes Chnum von Elephantine in der thebanischen Totenstadt’, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 54 (1918), 64-67; I. NEBE, ‘V. Die Stelen des Heiligtums Y’, in: W. KAISER et al., ‘Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. 17./18. Grabungsbericht’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 46 (1990), 231; M. BOMMAS, ‘Ramessidische Graffiti aus Elephantine’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 51 (1995), 3-4; J. BUDKA, *Der König an der Haustür, Die Rolle des ägyptischen Herrschers an dekorierten Türgewänden von Beamten im Neuen Reich*, *Beiträge zur Ägyptologie* 19 (Vienna, 2001), 64.

⁶⁷ It has been suggested that the Festival of the Valley was celebrated outside of Thebes as well; see M. BELL, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 1 (1987), 58 with note 135; similar H. ALTENMÜLLER, ‘Feste’, *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* II (Wiesbaden, 1981), 181.

⁶⁸ Cf. also the strong reference to Theban gods by Theban officials temporarily stationed in Elephantine; see note 66 and J. BUDKA, ‘Bauteile des Wohnsitzes einer thebanischen Beamtenfamilie in Elephantine’, in: D. RAUE et al., ‘Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. 35./36. Grabungsbericht’, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 64 (2008), 94-97.

⁶⁹ See C. LEITZ, ‘Die Nacht des Kindes in seinem Nest in Dendera’, *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 120 (1993), 161 with note 142.

⁷⁰ I thank Joachim F. Quack for posing this idea to me after a lecture I gave at Würzburg in June 2008. It might be worth mentioning that, although it is not possible to reconstruct a general cause for the so-called tributes in the New Kingdom, the bringing of foreign gifts is at least twice connected with the Festival of the New Year, see HALLMANN, *Die Tributzene des Neuen Reiches*, 287. This might correspond to the

To conclude, the term *palace pottery* is far too limited for the attested variability of use of blue painted pottery, even in residences like Malqata, Qantir and Amarna. Bearing in mind the above-mentioned characteristics of this distinctive ware at Elephantine and considering aspects of its early use at Thebes, a collective term implying its functional use on the island might be *festive pottery*⁷¹. The case of Elephantine therefore underlines the need for a site-specific and contextual approach when dealing with blue painted pottery and contributes to our understanding of the use and function of this particular ware, an understanding that is as yet far from complete.

Le site archéologique de la ville gréco-romaine d'Oxyrhynchos, qui a succédé à la ville pharaonique de Per-Medjed, se trouve à proximité de la ville moderne d'El-Bahnasa, dans la province de Minia, à environ 190 km au sud du Caire, sur la rive gauche du Bahr Yousef.

L'importance d'Oxyrhynchos, capitale du XIX^e nome de la Haute Égypte, est due principalement à son emplacement géographique. Sa position en plein réseau routier vers les oasis du désert occidental la convertit en véritable centre du trafic caravanier, où s'échangeaient des produits d'Afrique Centrale, des oasis, de la Libye et de la Méditerranée. L'importance stratégique de son emplacement sur cette route vers le désert occidental fut la raison de son développement à partir de la XXVI^e dynastie et de la présence de grandes tombes de fonctionnaires.

L'étude archéologique du site a débuté entre 1897 et 1907 avec les fouilles des papyrologues Grenfell et Hunt, à la recherche de papyrus. Les travaux ont mis à jour l'énorme quantité de papyrus écrits en grec, latin et copte (d'époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine) qui ont fait la célébrité d'Oxyrhynchos dans les milieux universitaires internationaux. Ils ont aussi dressé un plan topographique du site, avec des tombes de différentes époques. En 1922, Petrie a réalisé une campagne de fouilles à Oxyrhynchos. Il situait sur le plan certains des éléments dispersés de la cité gréco-romaine, comme une base de colonne honorifique dédiée à l'empereur d'Orient Phocas, les ruines d'un théâtre et il découvrait quelques tombes et chapelles funéraires.

À partir de 1982, le Service des Antiquités d'Égypte a mené des campagnes archéologiques qui ont permis de découvrir des tombes en pierre de l'époque gréco-romaine et suite.

Il s'agit d'une série de structures complexes, avec des puits qui irriguaient des chambres autour de cours. Elles étaient couvertes d'une voûte en berceau, et il y avait des peintures murales. On a pu récupérer des cercueils en bois peints et des ossements.

La mission archéologique espagnole, dirigée par le Dr. Josep Faldut, fouille depuis

fact that so-called cosmetic spoons in the shape of foreigners supporting vessels were sometimes used as votives on the occasion of the New Year Festival, see A. LOHWASSER, *Der Antike Sudan* 18 (2007), 186.

⁷¹ Cf. C.A. HOPE, *Egyptian Pottery*, Shire Egyptology 5, 2nd edition (Princes Risborough, 2001), 50: "Elaborately decorated vessels, such as those of the New Kingdom, may have been reserved for use on festive occasions."