

# Pottery of Manqabad

A selected catalogue of the  
ceramic assemblage from the  
monastery of 'Abba Nefer' at  
Asuyt (Egypt)

Ilaria Incordino

Access Archaeology





ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD  
Summertown Pavilion  
18-24 Middle Way  
Summertown  
Oxford OX2 7LG  
[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978-1-78969-513-7  
ISBN 978-1-78969-514-4 (e-Pdf)

© Ilaria Incordino and Archaeopress 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

# Contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter I. A selected catalogue of pottery from El-Ashmunein SCA store and Manqabad site .....	4
Introduction to the catalogue .....	4
1.1 The pottery from the el-Ashmunein SCA store .....	5
1.2 The pottery from the Site of Manqabad .....	8
The Catalogue .....	9
Chapter II. Observations and comments on the typologies.....	76
2.1 Analysis of the pottery typologies: coarse wares.....	76
2.2 Fine wares .....	79
2.3 Amphorae and lamps.....	88
Chapter III. The pottery survey on the site .....	92
3.1 The Northern Housing Units (HU): pottery <i>in situ</i> .....	92
3.2 The Survey of the Central and Southern area of the site .....	97
Conclusions .....	101
References .....	103
Plates .....	109



# Introduction

The present volume has the principal aim to present, document and analyse a selection of ceramics deriving from the Egyptian site of Manqabad (Asyut). The Italian Egyptian project at the monastery of 'Abba Nefer the Hermit' at Manqabad started in 2011, sponsored by the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (UNIOR) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation (MAECI) and directed by Rosanna Pirelli, professor of Egyptology and Archaeology and Art History of Ancient Egypt at UNIOR.

The site is located about 9 km north of Asyut and was accidentally discovered in 1965, during construction work for the local electrical system. Between 1976 and 2010 it was excavated only by Egyptian inspectors of the Antiquities Service (SCA). During the three UNIOR field missions conducted so far, the team has been able to re-discover and outline the history of this huge monastic site (92.000 m<sup>2</sup>) in the Middle Egypt region, which is formed by three main areas (see the picture below): the Northern Sector, a 230m. long double row of monastic housing units and a chapel located at the northern end of the site, today limited by the modern Muslim cemetery; the Central Sector, including more housing units, a possible thermal bath complex of the Late Roman Period and a 'Qasr'; the Southern sector with the possible remains of another church, a monumental gate on the west and a quite high 'dump', which could represent the production area of the site.

The main phases of occupations can be identified as follows: a First Christian Period (Phase I, 6th century AD), a Second Christian Period (Phase II, 8th century AD) corresponding to the beginning of the Islamic Period; an Islamic Period, 19th century CE, reign of Mahmud II). In addition to that, three more periods of possible, or less regular human presence can be suggested as follows: a Pharaonic Period (deduced from the finding of hieroglyphic signs on at least two limestone blocks reused in Christian era analysed during the 2014 and 2018 missions); a Ptolemaic Period (?); and a Late Roman Period (for the presence of thermal-bath-like architectural structures in the central area of the site). Moreover, some literary (papyrus) sources quote the occurrence of a *castrum* at Likopolis still in use during the first half of the 5th century AD. This date can be seen as a *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the monastic settlement at Manqabad.

One of the principal goals of the project is the study and publication of the related findings, today stored at the SCA warehouses in el-Ashmunein and Shutby, together with the analysis of the material deriving from the ongoing excavations. Of course, pottery has a prominent role in the identification of the different phases of occupation and production/domestic activities performed in the ancient monastic community. Therefore this volume aims at presenting the most significant ceramic typologies identified from Manqabad, while collecting as much references and parallels as possible deriving from several different monastic sites in Egypt.

Notwithstanding the still ongoing process of study of this assemblage (many archaeometric and possibly content analysis are still in progress), the wish of the author is to share with the scientific community those typologies identified, in order to contribute to the debate about the documentation, study, publication and classification of ceramic material from Byzantine Egypt.



Aerial view of the monastic site of Manqabad.

### **Methodological issues**

The study conducted on the Manqabad ceramics has been affected, since the first attempts, by several difficulties, of which the effort to find reliable parallels in the available literature is one of the most important. In fact, if we do not consider the most recent volumes and papers dedicated to assemblages of Byzantine pottery from Egypt, many publications, mostly regarding ancient excavation material, still present an incomplete set of data, which cannot be properly used as comparative repertoires. Unfortunately, it was not possible to get technical or general information about vessels (nor even a picture or drawing) deriving, for example, from Thebes (St.Epiphanius), Saqqara (Apa Jeremia) and many other similar sites.

In a few cases, this problem has been solved with the online publication of pottery assemblage today kept in museums, such as the beautiful example of the online collection of Byzantine pottery in the Louvre<sup>1</sup>, but this is still to be considered as an exception to the general rule. Even more frequent is the possibility to find references to a particular pottery type through the use of several different classification systems and acronyms, not infrequently borrowed from Late Roman types. Even if in the last decades many attempts have been successfully made to tackle this issue, the Byzantine ceramic typologies from Egypt still lack a comprehensive treatment. In fact, we still have to deal with the lack of a unique and complete system of classification of the Byzantine pottery in Egypt. Certainly many fundamental volumes are available to be used as parallel repertoires, edited most of all during the last three decades, which form the essential bulk of the relevant literature<sup>2</sup>. But it is still very common to find a single and self-referential system of classification for each site and its related pottery assemblage.

Considering those general methodological issues, this catalogue does not include a new system of pottery classification, but simply refers to previous schemes, when possible, in order to identify the typologies. In particular, the use of acronyms such as ERSW (Egyptian Red Slip Wares) refers to the Hayes classification of Late Roman pottery<sup>3</sup>.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank first of all Prof. Rosanna Pirelli (UNIOR) for giving her the chance to work on this very interesting material in the framework of the Manqabad archaeological mission. She wishes to express her gratitude also to Dr. Jane Faiers and Dr. Maria Cristina Guidotti for their revision of the volume and inspiring suggestions about the classification and identification issues.

The author's indebtedness goes also to the director and inspectors of the el-Ashmunein SCA store (Nasser Nanoss, Ali abd al-Dhahar), to Dr. Ezzat Salib G.D. of the Restoration for Archaeological site, and more in general to the Inspectorate of el-Minia, for granting permission to work on the material from Manqabad, their kindness and co-operation. Many thanks are due also to Richard Sadleir for correcting the many drafts of the English text; to Dr. Delphine Dixneuf for providing parallels and related bibliography; to Dr. Vincente Barba Colmenero for sharing info about the pottery assemblage from Qubbet el-Hawa site; to Dr. Ilona Regulski and Dr. Wolfgang Müller for discussing similar material from Asyut and Aswan and to Dr. Valentina Perna for drawing some selected items.

Last, but not least, the author owes a great debt also to her family, and to her husband Stefano in particular, for the great patience and support shown during the several missions abroad necessary to collect data, without which the publication of this volume would not be possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://musee.louvre.fr/bases/neyret/3100.php?page=3100&lng=0&> Unfortunately, during the preparation of this volume, the Louvre database of byzantine pottery was involved in many technical problems related mostly to the impossibility of upgrading the old system, and to an attempt to hack it, so currently the database is not online.

<sup>2</sup> See: Adams 1986; Ballet 1987, 1991, 2003, 2012; Bailey 1998; Beckh 2013; Bourriau 1981; Colmenero 2017; Czyzewska 2013; Dixneuf 2018; Egloff 1977; Faiers 2005, 2013; Gempeler 1992; Guidotti 2004; Hayes 1972; Lecuyot 2000, 2004; Pierrat 1991, 1996; Rodziewicz 1976; Wodzinska 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Hayes 1972, pp. 387-401.