
Interregional contacts in late prehistoric Egypt: study of 'fibrous ware' and related decorated pottery in the Upper Egyptian Nile Valley

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Résumé

The aim of the proposed paper is to contribute to the reconstruction of socio-economic and cultural dynamics of complex societies of Egypt in the 4th millennium BC, by offering a comprehensive examination of a specific ceramic production and critical review of interregional connections that it may reflect.

The object of investigation is the so-called 'fibrous ware' pottery, made of a fine clay, likely of alluvial origin, with distinctive thin organic, sometimes wavy, temper and occasionally featuring-equally distinctive-impressed or incised decorative bands. This type of pottery has been documented more frequently in Lower Egypt, where it has been considered to be typical for the Buto-Maadi (or Lower Egyptian) ceramic tradition. However, given its presence also in Upper Egyptian ceramic assemblages, the question of whether it represents a "*Lower Egyptian cultural trait*" or rather it is part of a wider "*'Egyptian' cultural system in the Nile Valley and Delta*" has been debated. Recent in-depth analysis of fibrous ware samples from a number of Lower Egyptian sites has greatly improved our knowledge of this pottery, especially of its techno-morphological features, although could not clarify its place of production nor its origin. Fibrous ware pottery has occasionally been reported from sites in Upper Egypt, where it is generally regarded as an import from the north, however the full-albeit limited-records of these ceramics from the southern part of Egypt have yet to be scrutinised comprehensively and their wider significance evaluated.

In order to fill this lacuna, a new study of the corpus of pottery made of fibrous ware and vessels decorated with incised/impressed designs related to this distinctive ceramic production, and thus far known from the Upper Egyptian Nile Valley, has recently been conducted. Preliminary results from technological, typological, quantitative and distributive analyses, that have involved both direct re-examination of unpublished ceramic materials and re-assessment of published ceramic data, will be presented in this paper, along with their potential contribution to a better understanding of Upper-Lower Egypt interactions in the Egyptian Late Prehistory.

Mots-Clés: Egypt, Late Prehistory, Predynastic, ceramic analysis, fibrous ware

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