

solide et généralisable, et face à l'inévitable difficulté à distinguer *a priori* les variations significatives de celles qui ne seraient qu'incidentes, il demeure cependant indispensable d'éprouver encore l'attribution de chaque vase à tel type (en particulier vis-à-vis du matériel issu de fouilles anciennes, dont la sobriété des publications et l'usage de types Petrie souvent mal définis rendent malaisée l'identification précise) ainsi que les critères de délimitation entre les types.

La publication et l'étude extensive et protéiforme que consacre ici Rita Hartmann à la céramique d'Umm el-Qaab constitue indubitablement un jalon crucial pour aboutir à une typo-chronologie utilisable sur l'ensemble de la Haute-Egypte prédynastique. L'ouvrage

se révèle particulièrement précieux pour l'appréhension des phases les plus hautes de la culture nagadienne, jusqu'ici mal connues en raison de la pauvreté de leur matériel céramique autant que du caractère incomplet de la documentation. Le chapitre 7 semble bien identifier désormais plusieurs tombes à dater avec un haut degré de certitude de Nagada Ia/b à Umm el-Qaab mais aussi dans les cimetières environnants, en particulier Mahasna, Nag' ed-Dêr ou Hemamieh. Nous espérons que la typologie systématique élaborée à partir de l'impressionnant travail ici accompli par Rita Hartmann pour Umm el-Qaab pourra être rendue accessible dans un avenir proche sous la forme d'un manuel ou d'une base de données numérique par

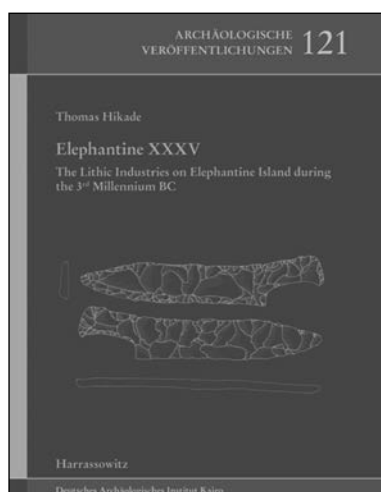
exemple, qui permettrait d'associer, d'une manière plus directement exploitable, description, longévité du type et catalogue d'occurrences. Au-delà des limites imposées par la présentation d'une image idéal-typique pour illustrer chaque catégorie de la typologie, de tels dispositifs permettraient en effet, en donnant à voir la variabilité au sein d'un même type, de contribuer à la compréhension et à la diffusion efficace de ce nouveau système de classification. Dans tous les cas, cet ouvrage s'impose d'emblée comme un incontournable des études prédynastiques, par l'ampleur et la richesse de l'étude réalisée autant que par la documentation exceptionnelle à laquelle il ouvre désormais accès.

Axelle Brémont

## Elephantine XXXV. The Lithic Industries on Elephantine Island during the 3rd Millennium BC

Thomas Hikade

Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 121, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2014  
210 pages, 61 figures, 77 tableaux, 46 planches, ISBN 978-3-447-10131-8



“Stones do not tell stories however hard they are squeezed or however accurately they are dated” with this quotation from Clive Gamble, the analysis of lithic industries from Elephantine Island by Thomas Hikade is meaningfully introduced. Certainly, this citation should not be understood in the literal sense of the word, but it clearly illustrates the importance of the archaeological

context for a sound analysis of stone artefacts. Single “squeezed” stones will always remain as either singular typological or chronological classifications, but will lack further possibilities of archaeological interpretation.

In this sense, the contribution of T. Hikade, published as the 121st volume of the Archäologische Informationen of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo, begins with a broader classification of the Elephantine lithic material in the context of the Egyptian Predynastic stone tools (first chapter), describes the raw materials and their procurement in ancient Egypt (second chapter) and continues with the presentation of the history of Elephantine from the end of the 4th to the end of the 3rd millennium BC (third chapter). These introductory chapters, which comprise nearly one-third of the volume, were given much scope, although they are sometimes a bit detached from the actual subject and the lithic material itself. The largest part of this volume is rightly reserved for the presentation of the stone tool assemblages from Elephantine Island (fourth

chapter), in which the lithic artefacts are presented, separated by the different settlement areas and building structures, in which they were excavated. This detailed analysis at hand comprised the knapped stone artefacts of the 1984 to 2004 archaeological campaigns from various locations of the Elephantine Island, an impressive corpus of 10 480 objects dating from the Early Dynastic Period to the First Intermediate Period. The final book chapters on the one hand summarise the results of the Elephantine stone artefact analysis (fifth chapter) and on the other hand place these outcomes in the wider context of the Egyptian economy and its stone tools of the 3rd millennium BC (sixth chapter).

The volume ends with an impressive display of 46 plates, three of them in colour, illustrating the different raw materials, which is commendable. Certainly, a small drawback is the third colour plate, on which the captions are unfortunately disordered and do not fit to the associated figures above. Subsequently, the 43 black and white plates illustrate a selection of the 465 drawn stone artefacts.

It is positive to note that the focus is not only directed on retouched stone tools but also on primary products, for instance cores, of which 90 are also illustrated in drawings. In the volume's catalogue (seventh chapter), all 465 depicted artefact drawings are described in more detail; comprising typological and technological characteristics of each piece, its absolute measurements (length, width and thickness all in cm as well as weight in grams) and its location in the Elephantine excavations. Last but not least, the chronological assignment of each listed stone artefact to the Elephantine ceramic sequence (established by Dietrich Raue) and to the herewith associated archaeological period of Dynastic Egypt is given.

The Elephantine volume starts with a brief overview – surprisingly – not of the Dynastic lithic artefacts but of the preceding Prehistoric and Predynastic stone artefacts of Egypt. This outline describes roughly the Early Holocene developments in the Western Desert and the Eastern Desert, from around 8000 BC, over the Middle Holocene lithic material to the Predynastic stone inventories (e.g., Merimde-Benisalame, El-Omari, Naqada) of the Egyptian Nile Valley. As rightly mentioned in the beginning of the book: “The flintknappers of Dynastic Egypt stood in a long tradition of stone tool manufacture” and hence their work can be most appropriately explained against the background of former artefact traditions. However, it is slightly unfortunate that some of the most recent – but important – research references (e.g. IFAO research in Kharga/Dush) are missing in this, hereupon incomplete and not very comprehensive compilation. This is probably due to the fact of a certain time gap between the research and the publication of this volume.

Raw Material and its procurement are the topics of the following chapter, in which all raw material groups – used for the Early Dynastic lithics on Elephantine Island as obsidian, quartzite (siliceous sandstone), rock crystal, carnelian and flint – are described. The author rightly chooses to use the term flint. “The distinction is rather arbitrary and in some cases difficult to maintain for Egypt since in one lithic artefact or nodule one might get all shades of colour from gray [sic!], to brown, beige or even reddish.” The six different flint varieties of the Elephantine material can be distinguished by the naked eye based on colour and on texture. As they are

all reproduced on the colour plates, it is possible for other researchers to do a first simple comparison with other lithic inventories. The considerations about the procurement of the raw materials are rather general in scope and have unfortunately little relation to the Elephantine site. It is for instance not clear, why, with Nazlet Khater, a Palaeolithic raw material procurement site is considered in an analysis of Dynastic lithic material.

A short summary of the archaeological research as well as the architectural and building history of Elephantine Island, which was inhabited from the end of the 4th millennium BC onwards, follows the introducing chapters. Various topographic maps and drawings of the reconstruction of the islands' fortress give the reader a good insight into the recent status quo of Elephantine's research history. Obviously, the largest part of this volume addresses the stone tool assemblages from Elephantine Island and its related archaeological features. In this main chapter, the presentation of the stone artefacts respectively follows the archaeological record of the various sites on the island. This course of action allows the reader to connect the analysis of the stone artefacts with the specific function of the excavated areas such as dwellings, workshops, and palace or temple areas, and it puts the artefacts in the context of the settlement history. The five localities listed below are distinguished: Northeast Town, Satet East, East Town, Central and Southern Quarters as well as Area XII (southwest of the Old Kingdom town enclosure). Each case is introduced with a description of its archaeological locality, its chronological assignment and its development over time. Several topographic maps and reconstruction drawings of the buildings help to visualise the author's descriptions. Tables, depicting the chronological correlations of various excavation areas with the different chronological periods, the phases of fortification, the building layers and the absolute dating, as well as the dating based on the pottery analysis, are very helpful in this chapter to understand the complex architectural history.

The presentation of the lithic data follows more or less the same systematic structure for each locality; starting with quantitative information of the artefact inventory and continuing with the different raw materials used. Generally, flint was the dominant

raw material in all localities. Since the book starts with a separate chapter about “Raw Material and Procurement”, in which six different flint varieties were distinguished, it is regrettable that these categories are no longer used in the further analysis. The differentiation in contrast, into “mined flint” and “pebble flint”, is difficult and often not sufficiently determinable for knapped stone artefacts. The mostly high percent values of the alternatively used residual category “either mined or pebble flint”, seems to support this argument. Subsequently, the primary products (e.g. flakes and blades) are always represented first and are followed by the description of the secondary products (retouched artefacts). The specific tool types of the inventories are listed and described in detail directly following this. It is unfortunate that for some primary and secondary products as well as for some specific tool types only an average measure was calculated for its size and its weight. In these cases, scattergrams could be of interest in which the outliers and the large mass are also comprehensible. All in all, the main part of the volume gives a detailed overview of the stone tool assemblages from Elephantine and its cultural context.

The results of this comprehensive overview are subsequently summarized in the following chapter. The concluding part of the book is interesting, in which the lithic assemblages of the 3rd millennium BC from Elephantine Island are compared with other Egyptian lithic inventories, for instance Hierakonpolis, Abydos, Saqqara, Giza, 'Ain-Asil, and the delta sites of Kom el-Hisn, Tell Ibrahim Awad and Buto. Hereby, the stone artefact material of the Elephantine Island is not only considered on its own but is rather put in the broader cultural context of the Dynastic lithics from Egypt.

In the final part of this volume T. Hikade concludes with his reconstruction of the Elephantine reduction sequence (*chaîne opératoire*) of the 3rd millennium BC. The island can be seen as a part of a wider distribution network in Egypt because the island's stone artefact inventory shares several features with other archaeological sites during this time period. A comprehensive catalogue describing the 465 drawn stone artefacts rounds off this volume on 3rd millennium stone artefacts from Elephantine Island and will be welcomed by archaeologists working with Dynastic lithics in Egypt.

*Karin Kindermann*