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Prehistoric Egypt Corpus: The Corpus of Prehistoric Pottery and Palettes

W.M. Flinders Petrie

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PREHISTORIC EGYPT CORPUS

W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY AND PALETTES

BY

W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE

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THE CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY

It is hardly needful, after the discussion of the dating in the previous volume on Prehistoric Egypt, to describe the present corpus, or the mode of using it. It contains all the forms published in the various works enumerated at the beginning of the volume named, unified as a whole and provided with sequence dates. The practical use of it is by the graveside. So soon as a grave is cleared and planned, then the pottery can be laid out in order, each type searched for in the corpus, and noted by its letter and number on the card register. The limits of date can be copied out, and the resulting limits of the date of the grave may then be added as the date on the card. Such pottery as is worth removal, and especially any new type that should be drawn, can then be separated, and the remainder of common pottery be returned to the grave and covered in.

In unifying the various additions—some 700—which have been found since the 300 types of Naqada, many irregularities have been noticed, and some editing of the whole became absolutely necessary. Even different types had been given the same letter by different discoverers. In the Decorated pottery especially, the additions had made a complete revision of types 1 to 19 needful.

In this part, therefore, the present corpus makes an entire break with the previous registers. Some other slight changes became needful also in other classes, but the minimum of change has been made. All of these alterations of designation are completely stated on pl. lx, under the heading of each volume in which a type has previously appeared. On the same plate are conversion tables for reducing Reisner’s short corpus used in Nubia, to the present corpus numbers. Every change therefore between this corpus and previous registers is on pl. lx.

The changes of numbers from the previous English publications, were mostly due to those who made additions not recognising the principles of arrangement. Such principles may be arbitrary, but yet they must be kept up, or else a corpus would become so confused that identification of forms would be difficult.

The principles which must be observed in all additions to the corpus are as follow:

1. The forms are chiefly classed from the most open, such as shallow saucers, to the most closed, such as bottles. In carrying this out, the bowls are classed by the slope of the edge,—the most open, the most sloping, the almost upright, the vertical and the different degrees of incurving. Another criterion is the proportion of height to width; some large classes of vases are divided into those under or over certain proportions. In some cases obvious inversions of order occur, because some types continue to vary to a great extent, and after tracing out that line, a turning back to some other type has to be made. The indefinite variation over so large a number of features, makes any single-line order necessarily illogical. All that can be hoped for is to arrange the types so that they can be searched for in the shortest time. In all additions the principle of arrangement must first be observed before inserting a new form.

2. Another confusion has been caused by not noticing what is included in an established class, such as the black polished pottery in F class. Additions to this have been made into a new class, but are here restored to F.

3. A needless multiplication of new types has been made, when the differences from established types were but slight or imperceptible. Variations should be ignored when they are within the chances of copying; the two sides of a jar often differ perceptibly, and such slight differences are immaterial. Strictly, no vase is perfectly like another, and we must put together all those which
may reasonably have been intended to be alike. To separate them detracts from the value of the ranges of types in date.

4. Additions should be spaced apart in the lettering, not as a b c d but as c, g, m, r, so as to allow of intermediate forms being inserted. Of course variations closely alike may have consecutive letters. The lettering should follow the natural order of forms, as near as may be.

5. Differences of size and of material may be largely ignored. It is usual to find vases of the same form of various sizes, and even in different material, yet contemporary, as in B, P, and R.

The system of the corpus follows the classification in "Naqada" into nine classes, as no more distinctive method has appeared. The first object of all divisions must be the most rapid identification of a form, and the existing classes provide for that. The class of Late refers to distinctive styles of pottery, hard and thin, or else to the long jars sometimes brown and soft, in any case distinct from the previous classes. At the top right of each figure is the type number and letter. At the bottom left is the reference to the source, those without reference being from the Naqada corpus. At the bottom right is the sequence date of the reference. The works referred to are as follow:

Ab. Petrie, Abydos, I.

Amr. MacIver, El Amrah.
C. Ab. Peet, Cemeteries of Abydos.
De M. De Morgan Age de la Pierre.
Di. Petrie, Diospolis.
Ger. Wainwright, Gerzeh (in The Labyrinth, etc.).
Har. Engelbach, Harageh (not yet published).
Mah. Ayrton and Loat, Mahasna.
N. Naqada (not marked to types, only to tomb numbers).
N.D. No date.
Nub. 7. Reisner, Archaeological Survey of Nubia.
Nub. 8. Firth, Archaeological Survey of Nubia, 1908-9 (with references, E.D., etc., to classes).
R.T. Petrie, Royal Tombs.
Tark. Petrie, Tarkhan I and II.
U.C. University College collection, with N and grave number if from Naqadeh.

The date such as 32-38 means that the examples extend between 32 and 38; 32, 38 means that dated examples are only known at 32 and at 38; (32-38) means that only one dated example is known, in a grave of uncertain date between 32 and 38.

It should be observed that there is a different system in the corpus of white cross-lined pottery arranged by the forms, scale 1:6, and the U.C. examples in Prehistoric Egypt, scale 1:3, arranged by the subject of the designs.
THE CORPUS OF SLATE PALETTES

The plates of slates in Naqada were merely a catalogue of the forms found, without framing a regular corpus or excluding duplicate forms. Since that was issued many more forms have been registered, and some unification of the whole is necessary. The present corpus includes all the types that have been published in recent works. The references are:

Plain numbers, Naqadeh graves.
A. El Amrah, and cemeteries b, c.
C.A.I. Cemeteries of Abydos I.
D. Diospolis.
F. Firth, A. S. of Nubia.
G.W. Gerzeh, Wainwright.
M. Mahasna, Ayrton and Loat.
N. Naqada; with B or T, cemeteries.
R. Reisner, A.S. of Nubia.
T. Tarkhan.
T. II. Tarkhan II.
U. Hu (Diospolis) references, not drawn separately.
W.G. Wainwright, Gerzeh.

The top right number and letter is the type. The bottom left reference is the source, according to the letters just stated. The figures at the bottom right are the Sequence Dates; where several are known for a type, the earliest and latest are quoted, and the best defined are selected. The inclusion of so many new forms has made it necessary to adopt fresh numbers for this final corpus, mostly rather different from the mere catalogue numbers used in Naqada.

THE REGISTERS

On pl. xli are given the corpus equivalents of the numbers used by Dr. Reisner in the first volume of the Archaeological Survey of Nubia, 1907–8: these were abandoned in the succeeding volumes: also the alterations which have proved to be necessary in unifying all the corpus numbers of many publications. All these registers are needed when referring to previous works.

On pl. lxi is a list of the pottery types in University College, with reference to their sources when known: D, Diospolis; Gerz., Gerzeh; N, Naqada, with number of grave. Also a list of the sources of the type drawings of white Cross-lined pottery, with sequence dates when known; and the same for Black-incised pottery. Below are references to a few more types, so far as they can be distinguished in the photographs of Mahasna, by Ayrton and Loat, and four copies of the unusual types. The curved spray in 498 is unique; the figures of women with a fringe girdle in 100 K are very rare; the vase with animals along the length of it, is unique; and the hippopotamus hunt is very rare, see type 5 m.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. BLACK TOP. B 1-10.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. BLACK TOP. B 35-51.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. BLACK TOP. B 53-64.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. BLACK TOP. B 79-99.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. POLISHED RED. P 1-22.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. BLACK INCISED. N 50-80.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. WAVYHandled. W 1–23.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. WAVY HANDLED. W 24-47. XXIX.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY.

WAVY HANDLED. W 48–90.

A-B
C
D
E
F
G
H
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z

2:3

relief

incised

plain
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. DECORATED. D 15-29.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. DECORATED. D 43-49. XXXIV.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. ROUGH. R 1-40.

XXXVIII.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. ROUGH. R 87-100.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. LATE. L 17-32. XLVI.
CORPUS OF PREHISTORIC POTTERY. LATE. L 66-97.

1. Vases and pots from various archaeological sites.
2. Diagrams illustrate different types of prehistoric pottery.
3. Annotations include dates and descriptions for each piece.
4. The diagram includes various shapes and designs, indicating the diverse nature of prehistoric pottery.
CORPUS OF SLATE PALETTES. 76-87.
CORPUS OF SLATE PALETTES. 88-92.

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