

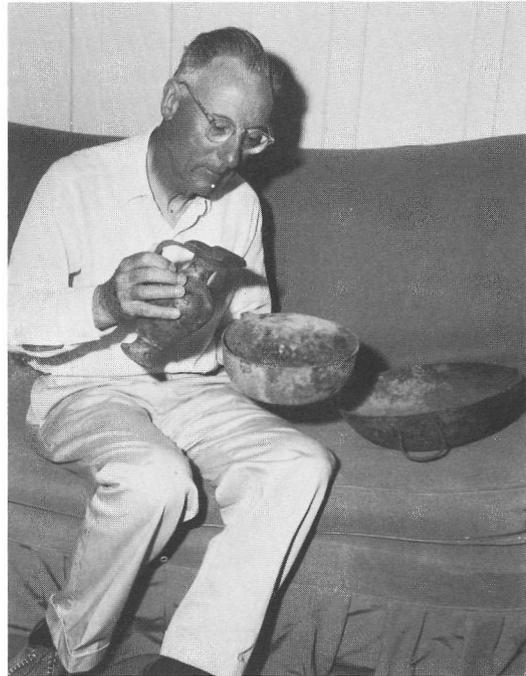
## The Nubian Expedition

KEITH C. SEELE, *Director*

Perhaps the most arduous and certainly the most painful duty connected with any archeological expedition is the preparation of the publication of its results. This fact is daily being brought home to the writer of these lines as he studies his thousands of finds and attempts to fit them into the picture of Nubia which an adequate final report must sketch. But, if progress is painful and slow, progress is being made.

The chief accomplishment of the past year has been the virtual completion of the pottery drawings for the publication. In his second year of voluntary labor toward this end, Mr. Donald Bickford, of Honolulu, has completed more than 1,500 such drawings, in addition to the plans of the cemeteries and the areas excavated. During the many months which he has spent in our Nubian "laboratory" at the

*Dr. Seele plays with three bronze vessels from Eighteenth Dynasty Grave V-48. At the left is a unique pitcher with built-on stand (retained by Cairo Museum). A separate bronze stand of similar design from this tomb came to the Institute. At right is the basin with handle supported on riveted brackets in shape of human hands.*



Oriental Institute he has worked *seven days a week*. This is pure devotion! Another major contribution to the drawing of our pottery has been made by Mr. Charles H. Joslin. Words are inadequate to express our appreciation to both of these good friends.

Ninety-nine per cent and more of the pottery already drawn consists of whole and complete pots. But, in addition, we have thousands of sherds, most of them of the beautiful, delicate A-Group ware. Now, five years after they were brought home from Nubian Adindan, they are still being studied and assembled by our faithful mending expert, Mrs. Theodore Ticken. Would that we had brought home to her all the missing pieces!

As study of the material proceeds we often pat ourselves on the back for our brilliant ideas and theories—only to find that a neglected report by one of our predecessors has beaten us to them by a quarter of a century. Nevertheless, we still make a few surprising discoveries among our treasures. For example, we recently found on four small

A-Group sherds a painted motif astonishingly similar to the quadruple spiral designs often found 1500 years later in Crete, Greece, and Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt. It appears very much as if we must consider this design to be of Nubian A-Group origin and to have traveled northward to those centers of its later occurrence. Again, the Eighteenth Dynasty Grave No. V-48, which produced our exquisite bronze mirror, contained among the other bronze objects an interesting basin with a loop handle held in place by two riveted brackets shaped like outstretched human hands. We have just discovered in a new publication of Phoenician objects found in Spain (on the mainland and on one of the Balearic Islands) several similar basins with closely parallel riveted brackets, human hands and all—excepting that the Phoenician specimens in two cases have hands with *six fingers*. Here, likewise, it seems that our Egyptian basin represents the prototype of the 800-year younger Phoenician examples. And yet again, from our famous Grave V-48 we have two examples of a well-known type of spindle-flask of imported, lustrous red ware which we always considered to be especially fascinating. Now we learn from a recently published doctoral dissertation that these strange vessels were exported from Cyprus as containers of opium, and, to judge from their wide distribution in Egypt and Nubia, they testify to a vigorous trade in that commodity. We have not yet analyzed the residual contents of the flasks from V-48 and other graves in which we found them to detect the presence of the drug.

Perhaps our most important find in Nubia is the white stone “pallet of the boats.” We found others similar to it in a number of the A-Group graves, and several of them are likewise adorned with much cruder representations of boats with high prow and stern. Much remains to be written and said about these objects, and it appears more and more difficult to us to consider the boats of foreign origin, as some scholars maintain. In working over the A-Group material, we are constantly entranced at the parallelism with well-known motifs from farther north. Curiously enough, we have some of these on scattered objects which are combined on one famous pre-dynastic pot in the British Museum, about which more will have to be said as our studies proceed.

Thus, here in a few paragraphs, we have to review some of the minutiae which enter into a scholar’s thinking as he plans the publication of excavated material. If, as we have attempted to demonstrate, Nubia may have created artistic patterns which traveled as far to

the north as Crete or Greece, if Nubia was affected or infected by imports of opium from Cyprus, then we are obliged to look in other directions also for influences or possible borrowings, that is, to the south, to see whether purely African cultural contributions are manifest in certain mysterious forms of A-Group pottery or in the very different C-Group incised wares, such as our wonderful red animal bowl, or in the virtually unique Meroitic artistry, so Egyptian and yet so wholly un-Egyptian in many of its aspects.

The year brought its disappointments as well as its little collection of minutiae. A hundred of our X-Group textiles had been shipped east to Miss Louise Bellinger for her expert craftsmanship in cleaning and mounting (and with the optimistic hope that she would eventually prepare a scientific report). Unhappily, Miss Bellinger did not live to complete the task, and we now have our textiles back in Chicago while we consider further plans to cope with them.

Our really huge program of photography has not yet begun. We do have the finds fairly well organized according to graves from which they came. Since we expect to present them more or less grave by grave, this represents a certain amount of progress for the year's work. Absolute mastery of the material is still a dream!