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## **Knobbed bowls of the Late Predynastic - Early Dynastic Period**

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Knobbed bowls are bowls of pottery or stone with a row of cones or projections below the rim. While this type was widespread in Palestine from the Chalcolithic into the Early Bronze Age (Kantor 1942:185-187; Guy and Engberg 1938:22, fig. 21), at the sites of Megiddo (Kantor 1942: pl. 3, 31-32; pl. 72:10-11; Engberg and Shipton 1934: chart 18, fig. 16k), Beth-shan (Fitzgerald 1935), Gezer (Macalister 1912: vol. 3 pl. 149:25), Beth-Yerah (Fitzgerald 1935:5-22), Jericho (Fitzgerald 1936: pl. 37:12), Afula (Amiran 1969: pl. 9, 10; 1936 152-153, pl. I, 7-8), Tell Beit Mirsim (Albright 1932: pl. VI 44-46, 35), only few examples of it are known from Egypt dated to the Late Predynastic-Early Dynastic period (Fig. 1 and 4).

Until recently, this type of bowl was known mostly from Upper Egypt, where some whole examples and some bowl fragments were found at Abusir el-Meleq (Scharff 1926:34, pls. 21:156, XLI: 5), Naqada (Petrie 1921: pl. 15, 5a), Mostagedda (Brunton 1937: pl. 34:15) and Maadi (Rizkana and Seeher 1987: pl. 55, 2). However two pieces are also known from the Delta region: a very fine example of a small basalt bowl with knob ornaments was found by Hamid Yosef and Mohammed Abd el Fatah in 1991 at Tell el-Daba' (Daqahlia), Eastern Delta and the bowl of the Munich collection (Müller 1975:193ff.) which could also have come from the Delta. Continued investigations in the Delta region at Predynastic-Early Dynastic sites could possibly reveal more examples of this type.

The knobbed bowl of the Egyptian collection in Munich (Inv. Nr. ÄS 5985) is a small, very fine bowl with a round base, convex sides expanding to a contracted mouth with a sharp rim ornamented with a row of twenty small knobs just below the rim pierced horizontally (Fig. 2b). It is of hard yellow limestone with red-brown veins (diameter of the rim 11.8 cm, diam. on the knobs 14 cm,

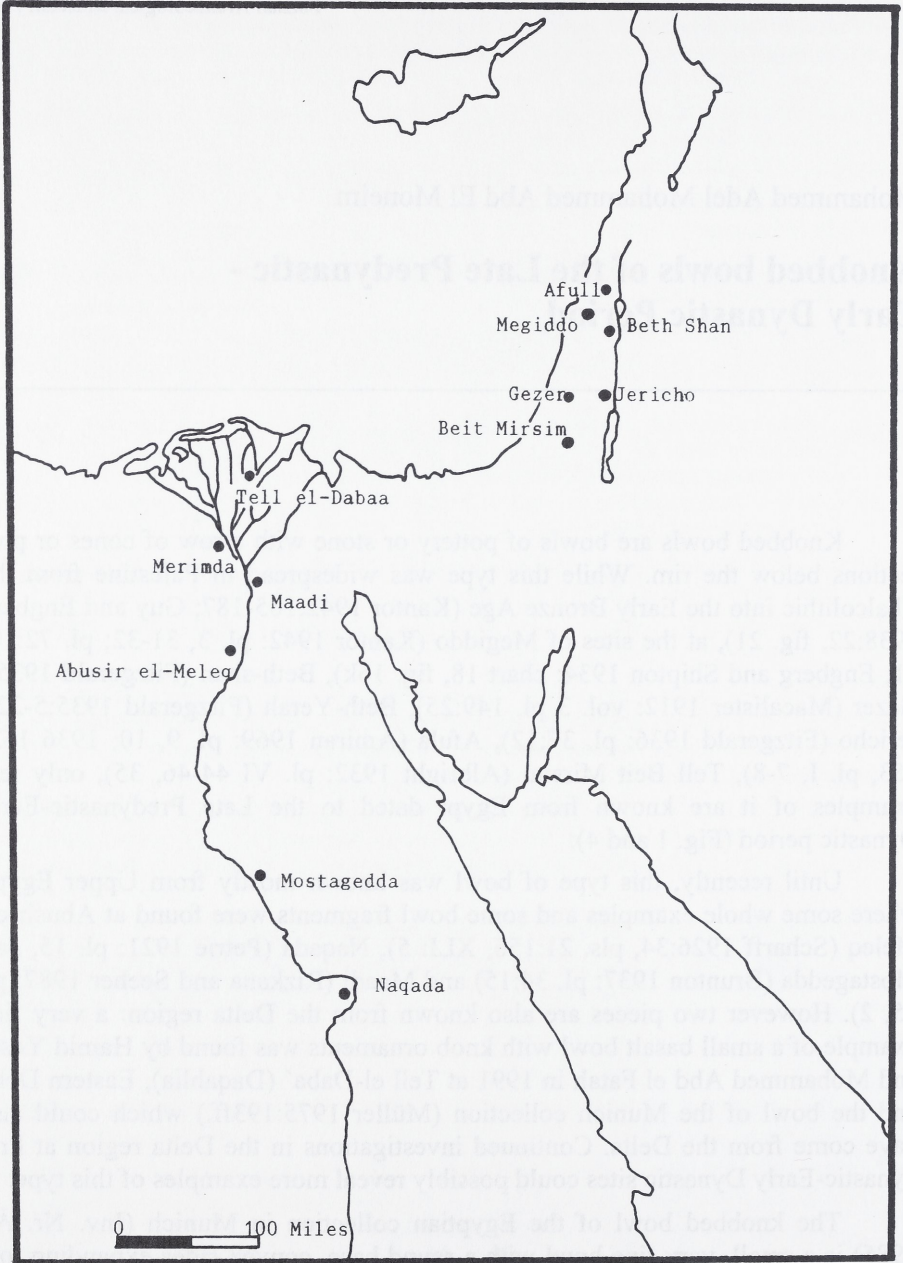


Fig. 1. Sites where "knobbed bowls" were found.

height 5 cm) and is dated by Müller to the Early Dynastic period. It was bought from a dealer in Cairo and its provenance is unknown.

This small knobbed bowl is the only one of stone found in Egypt (except for the new find from Tell el-Daba') and perhaps also in Palestine where all the examples of knobbed bowls and fragments thereof are made of pottery (except one from Megiddo see below).

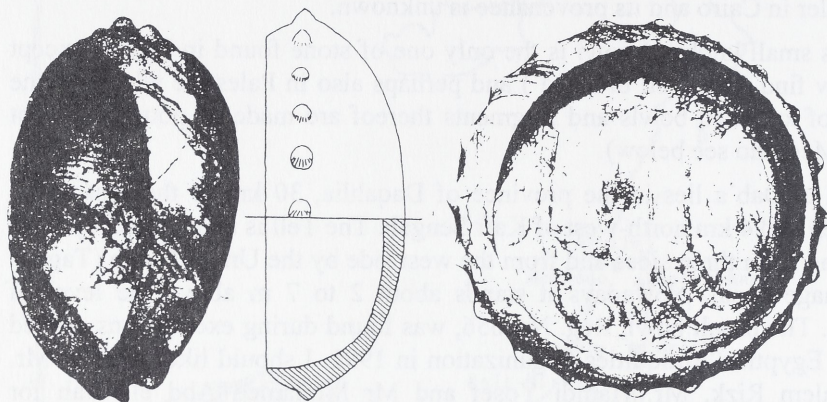
Tell el-Dab'a lies in the province of Daqahlia, 30 km to the east of el-Simbalawen and 4 km north-west of Kafr Sengab. The Tell is surrounded by agricultural land from three sides and from the west side by the Um el-Dieab (Tag el-Aes) drainage canal. Nowadays it stands about 2 to 7 m above the level of cultivation. The basalt bowl, Reg. Nr. 656, was found during excavations carried out by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization in 1991. I should like to thank Mr. Abd el-Halem Rizk, Mr. Hamdi Yosef and Mr Mohamed Abd el-Fatah for helping me with information and photographs concerning this object.

The knobbed basalt bowl of Tell el-Daba' (Fig. 2b and 3) is a small very fine bowl with round base, convex sides, contracted mouth, ornamented with a row of twenty-one small knobs placed horizontally below the rim (diam. of the rim 10.3 cm, height 4 cm). This bowl can be dated to the beginning of the First Dynasty according to find context within the excavation. The grave type and its contents, such as the presence of the so-called "wine-jars" which were found in many variations (large fatter type and small slender type) as also the other types of pottery jars and stone vessels all indicate a First Dynasty date.

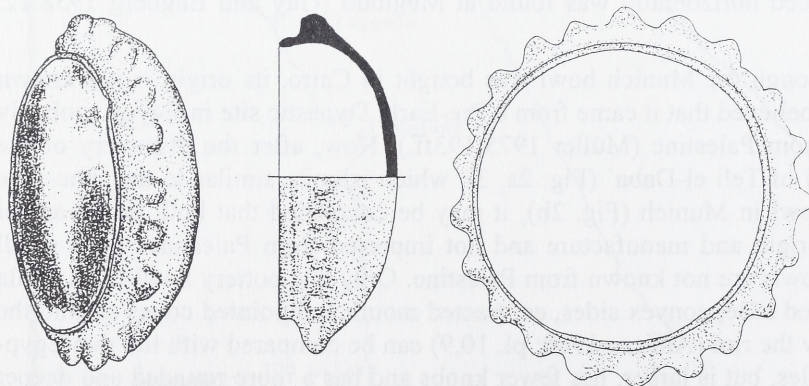
This type of small knobbed bowl is the only one of basalt found in Egypt but a larger basalt knobbed bowl (Fig. 4k) with supporting legs and large sharp cones, pierced horizontally was found at Megiddo (Guy and Engberg 1938:22, Fig. 21).

Although the Munich bowl was bought in Cairo, its origin is not known and it was believed that it came from a Pre-Early Dynastic site in Egypt, probably imported from Palestine (Müller 1975:193ff.). Now, after the discovery of the basalt bowl of Tell el-Daba' (Fig. 2a, 3), which is quite similar to the limestone knobbed bowl in Munich (Fig. 2b), it may be concluded that both bowls are of Egyptian origin and manufacture and not imported from Palestine. Such small knobbed bowls are not known from Palestine. Only one pottery bowl from Afula with rounded base, convex sides, contracted mouth and pointed cones around the bowl below the rim (Amiran 1969: pl. 10,9) can be compared with the two Egyptian examples, but is larger, has fewer knobs and has a more rounded and deeper base (Fig. 4m).

Knobbed bowls were also found at some other Predynastic sites. At Maadi, a deep ceramic bowl (Fig. 4a) with thick external rims and flat base also carries a



b: bowl from Tell el-Daba'.



a: bowl in the Munich Collection.

Fig. 2.

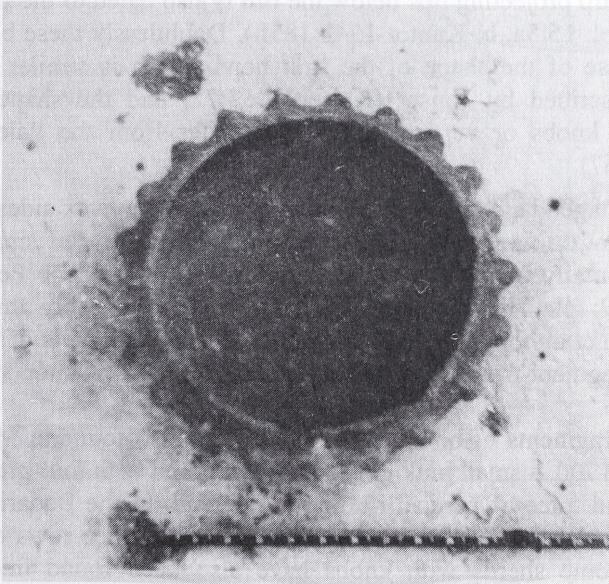


Fig. 3. Bowl found in Tell el-Daba' (Daqahliya).

thick rope-like application around the bowl (Rizkana and Seeher 1987: pl. 55:2) and may be related to a different, earlier type of carinated bowls (Tutundzic 1993:48). This type is found in Palestine earlier than other Proto-Urban pottery groups (Hanbury-Tenison 1989:125, 253, fig. 23) as for example a deep bowl with flat base, flared rim and waving projection around the shoulder from Afula dated to the Chalcolithic period (Fig. 4h).

At Abusir el-Meleq a small bowl (Fig. 4d) with convex sides, contracted mouth, flat base and large projections raised horizontally around the bowl below the rim, is dated to the very late Gerzean or Naqada III (Scharff 1926:34 pl. 26:156; pl. 41:5; Tutundzic 1993:48). The projections of this bowl do not have sharply slanting sides as the examples from Naqada and corresponds to the type known from Palestine like those of Megiddo (Fig. 4i, 4j) which are low, wide bowls, grey burnished, red polished or with a reddish-brown wash and ornamented with conical knobs (Guy and Engberg 1938: pl. 3 31-32; Engberg and Shipton 1934:18).

Two ceramic bowls with knobs were found at Naqada. One with flat base and convex sides expanding to a contracted mouth, with large slanting sides knobs with sharp tips around the bowl below the rim is dated to the Gerzean period (Fig. 4c). The other is a small shallow bowl (Fig. 4b) with flat base and convex sides expanding to a contracted mouth with only eight large slanting knobs with sharp projecting tips below the rim is also dated to the Gerzean period (Petrie 1921: pl. 15:5a, b; Kantor 1942:185f.). Doubtlessly these bowls are local product because of the shape of the first bowl which is similar to P-Ware of Naqada II described by Kaiser (Kaiser 1957:72) and the shape of the large slanting sides knobs or vertical knobs that differ from the Palestinian knobs (Hennessy 1967).

At Mostagedda, a deep red polished bowl with convex sides expanding to a contacted mouth, flat base, ornamented around with row of small knobs protruding horizontally below the rim is dated to the Predynastic Period (Fig. 4e) (Brunton 1937: pl. 34:15; Kantor 1942:187). Most probably this bowl is an Egyptian product although it is similar to the Palestinian bowls of this kind such as the bowl fragment from level XV of EB I at Bet-shan (Kantor 1942:186; Fitzgerald 1935).

Some fragments of bowls with knobs were also found at Mostagedda. In the town area 1700, a small pink grey sherd was found with four projections close to the edge and trace of vertical ribbing at one end. In the Badarian grave 594, fragments of a deep, rough brown bowl decorated by three rows of knobs were also found. Some sherds with knobs have also been found in Pre-Amratian context and Caton-Thompson has published a Badarian sherd with three rough knobs (Brunton and Caton-Tompson 1928).

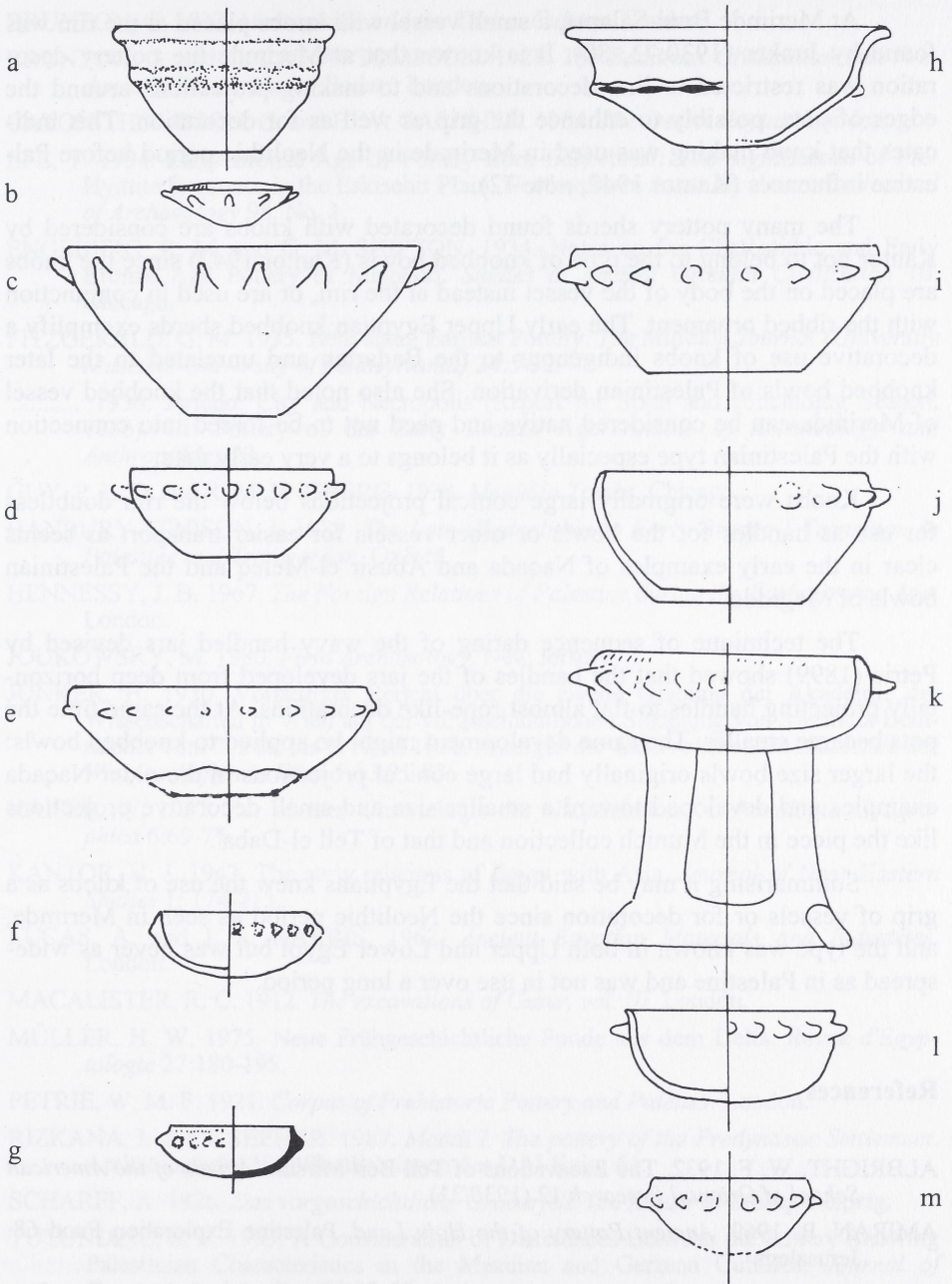


Fig. 4.

a-g: Egyptian bowls; h-m: Palestinian bowls.

At Merimde Beni-Salama, a small vessel with knobs placed at the rim was found by Junker (1930:73, 80). It is known that at Merimde the pottery decoration was restricted to line decorations and to making projections around the edges of pots, possibly to enhance the grip as well as for decoration. This indicates that knob making was used in Merimde in the Neolithic period before Palestine influences (Kantor 1942, note 72).

The many pottery sherds found decorated with knobs are considered by Kantor not to belong to the type of knobbed bowls (Kantor 1942) since the knobs are placed on the body of the vessel instead at the rim, or are used in conjunction with the ribbed ornament. The early Upper Egyptian knobbed sherds exemplify a decorative use of knobs indigenous to the Badarian and unrelated to the later knobbed bowls of Palestinian derivation. She also noted that the knobbed vessel of Merimde can be considered native and need not to be forced into connection with the Palestinian type especially as it belongs to a very early date.

Knobs were originally large conical projections below the rim doubtless for use as handles for the bowls or other vessels for easier transport as seems clear in the early examples of Naqada and Abusir el-Meleq and the Palestinian bowls of Megiddo.

The technique of sequence dating of the wavy handled jars devised by Petrie (1899) showed that the handles of the jars developed from deep horizontally projecting handles to flat almost rope-like decorations. At the same time the pots became smaller. The same development might be applied to knobbed bowls: the larger size bowls originally had large conical projections in the older Naqada examples and developed toward a smaller size and small decorative projections like the piece in the Munich collection and that of Tell el-Daba'.

Summarising it may be said that the Egyptians knew the use of knobs as a grip of vessels or for decoration since the Neolithic period as seen in Merimde, and the type was known in both Upper and Lower Egypt but was never as widespread as in Palestine and was not in use over a long period.

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