

# Two houses from the Third Intermediate Period settlement at Tell el-Retaba: a case study of activity-area analysis



**Abstract:** A Third Intermediate Period settlement continued to be excavated by a Polish–Slovak archaeological team working in Area 9 in Tell el-Retaba in 2019. Two houses, {1095} and {3111}, have been studied in detail, applying an activity-area analysis to determine the main occupation activities of the inhabitants in successive phases. The analysis is based on the archaeological assemblage recorded from these features, including small finds, pottery, and installations.

**Keywords:** Tell el-Retaba, Third Intermediate Period, settlement, household, activity-area analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Polish–Slovak Archaeological Mission has been exploring the site of Tell el-Retaba in northeastern Egypt since 2007. The site lies in the middle of Wadi Tumilat, approximately 35 km west of Ismailiya. In the 2019 season, attention was focused on Areas 4 and 9, west and east, respectively, of the modern road (for the location of both areas, see Hudec et al. 2020: Fig. 1, in this vol-

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ume). Unlike Area 4, where the remains of earlier occupation (Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom phases, see Hudec et al. 2020, in this volume) can readily be explored, the investigations in Area 9 are challenging for archaeologists in view of the thickness of the deposits and substantial remains of multiphase Third Intermediate Period settlement architecture. Exploration started in 2010, gaining momentum in 2016–2019. More than a dozen houses and other structures from this Third Intermediate Period settlement were completely or partly uncovered in an area measuring approximately 2000 m<sup>2</sup>. Excavations were completed in

houses located in earlier seasons and several new houses and a new stable were discovered in 2019.

The present report considers two of the domestic structures in detail. A thorough and precise exploration of Houses {1095} and {3111}, with full documentation of installations, small finds and pottery discovered within, marshalled extensive data for a reconstruction of the daily life of the inhabitants. The methodology applied to the finds, involving activity-area and clean/unclean spaces analysis, is instrumental to this reconstruction. The results are discussed in the context of the usefulness of this particular approach.

## 2. MATERIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSES

### 2.1 HOUSE {1095}

A big part of House {1095} that was not covered by a Late Period Tower house {2074} was excavated in 2016 (Rzepka et al. 2017: 59–64). The rest of the building was explored once the southern part of the late house was dismantled in 2019 [Fig. 2]. Four phases of occupation were distinguished, corresponding to Sub-phases C2b2, C2b1, C2a and C1 of the general phasing system established for Tell el-Retaba (for the phasing system, see Jarmużek, Rzepka, and Ryś 2019: 53).

#### 2.1.1 Phase 1 (Subphase C2b2)

House {1095} has a trapezoidal ground plan, roughly 9.00 m by 7.70 m, which did not change over time [Fig. 1]. However, the interconnections between the five rooms underwent significant alterations. There were two entrances originally in the south

wall. The western entrance, 0.55 m wide, led into Room 1. The door recess was on the inside of the chamber, but without a door socket attested anywhere. The room measured 3.90 m by 5.20 m. It was connected with three other chambers. The doorway in the western section of the north wall led to Room 2. Another doorway, in the eastern part of the wall, opened into Room 5. The third doorway in the east wall led to Room 4. The doorway between these rooms was previously thought to be from a later phase (Rzepka et al. 2017: 64). Upon closer examination, however, it turned out that it had been there from the beginning, but was later blocked.

A greyish-white floor (2183) filled the room. There were no installations of any kind in evidence. The floor layer yielded some broken pottery, animal bones, a small amount of ash, and several small finds.

The entrance to Room 2 in the north-western corner of the house was recessed on the inside. The corner chamber measured 2.90 m by 2.40 m. The floor (3229) inside the room consisted of a series of grey and brown laminae. Some pottery sherds, animal bones and four small finds were found inside the unit.

The adjoining Room 5 measured 2.70 m by 2.50 m. Finds from the whitish-grey surface of floor (3251) inside the room included a small number of pottery sherds, some animal bones and a fragment of a stone vessel.

The eastern entrance to the building was relatively wide. It measured roughly



Fig. 1. The phasing of House {1095} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

one meter and led to Room 4, which measured 2.60 m by 3.00 m. A grey cemented layer (2117) formed the floor in the whole room. The fill contained some ash, a small quantity of potsherds and animal bones, a grinder and a quern.

A doorway in the southern part of the east wall of the room led to a courtyard which was not excavated. A lime-

stone door socket was embedded in the northern recess. Another doorway, in the north wall of the room, gave access to Room 3. This room measured about 2.50 m by 3.00 m. Floor (2241) covered the entire room and there was no evidence of installations. There was no door socket inside the door recess inside Room 3.

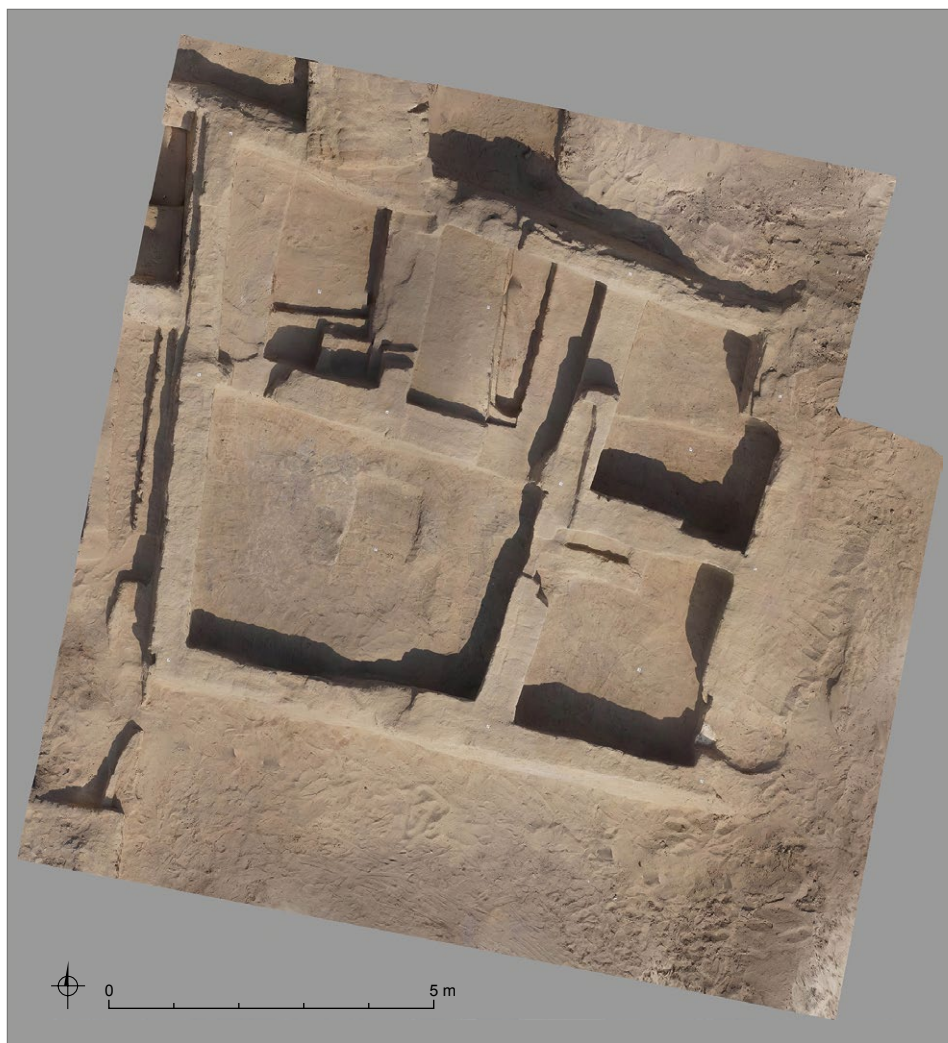


Fig. 2. House {1095} after exploration (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | orthophoto Ł. Jarmużek)

### 2.1.2 Phase 2 (Subphase C2b1)

Substantial changes, in terms of inter-connection between the rooms in House {1095} took place in this phase (Rzepka et al. 2017: 61–64). The eastern entrance to the building was blocked with mud bricks. A relatively thin wall screened off the doorway between Rooms 1 and 4. Thus, assuming no connection between Rooms 3 and 5, the eastern part of the house would have become a separate entity with its own entrance from the east through Room 4. The construction of the Tower house {2074} in the Late Period, which demolished the partition wall between the rooms, obliterated all evidence of a possible passage. The only thing arguing in favor of such a doorway between the rooms is the blocking of the doorway in the south wall of Room 3 in the following phase (see below). No other doorway could be traced in the standing walls of the room, hence the only possible location for a doorway in this phase was the west wall. Had this been so, then all the rooms in this building would have been accessible via the main entrance in Room 1.

The floor level in this phase was raised roughly 10–20 cm. New installations appeared in some of the rooms. Floor (2176) in Room 1 was a whitish-grey layer, filling the room and yielding a relatively small number of potsherds, animal bones and only four artifacts. A bin [2218] was found next to the west wall of the room, its walls only one-brick high. It measured 0.50 m by 1.70 m and was filled with an ash layer (2217) devoid of any finds. In case of Rooms 2 and 5, there were no new stratigraphic units which could be assigned to this phase. In Room 3, a new floor (2114) appeared; it consisted of a greyish brown

layer with some ash. Relatively insignificant amounts of potsherds and animal bones were found on the floor. The small finds counted 10 artifacts. There was also a door socket found *in situ* in the eastern recess of the doorway. Several bricks in the east wall bore traces of soot, but there was no clear layer of ash below them. In Room 4, structure [2157] was built in the northwestern corner. The narrow space between the structure and the wall of the room suggests that it was a kind of *mas-taba* rather than a bin.

The room was covered with a new floor (2116), which contained much more ash than the floor from the previous phase. This is consistent with traces of fire use noted in several places inside Room 4. A semicircular layer of ash (2153) was found next to the west wall of the room. Some bricks in the wall above the layer were burned and bore traces of soot. It proves that unit (2153) was not just an ash dump, but a fireplace in its own right. A second similar unit of ash (2154), deposited along the south wall of the room, did not coincide with traces of fire on the wall above it, whereas several burned bricks and soot observed on the east wall of the room had no counterpart in any trace of a fireplace on the floor surface. The layout of four spots of soot on the wall suggests two fireplaces. The spots are paired, two each, one above the other, the gap between them probably the result of wall erosion caused by floor (2090) from Phase C1 (see below).

### 2.1.3 Phase 3 (Subphase C2a)

A major change in the layout of the building was the closing of the doorway between Rooms 3 and 4, the blocking [2207] being made of rather regularly laid bricks.

A cut through the west wall of Room 4 was first thought to assure access from Room 1 (Rzepka et al. 2017: 64), but the data collected last season belied this idea. Room 4 appears to have been cut off completely from the other rooms. The only way to get in was the entrance in the east wall, from the area which probably served as a courtyard. Like the alteration in House {311} (see below), these changes could have resulted from fluctuations in household size. Similarly, the issue of access to Room 3 remains unresolved. However, as stated above, the entrance to the room may have well been in the west wall.

The bin [2218] in Room 1 was probably still in use at the beginning of the phase. No new floor was noticed. The end of use of the room is marked by two layers of debris (2173, 2172). In Room 2, a layer of ash (3223) was found near the entrance. It was probably a dump rather than a fireplace. It is quite surprising that it was situated in the doorway between Rooms 1 and 2. Apparently, Room 2 was not considered as a clean space by the house inhabitants. A thick layer of debris marks the time when the room ceased to be used (3212).

In Room 5, a new whitish grey floor (3230) was found. The floor level yielded potsherds and animal bones, as well as four small finds. No traces of debris were found. Room 3 did not receive a new floor in this phase and the layer of debris (2234) shows that it was no longer in use. In Room 4, the floor (2116) from the previous phase finally covered the mastaba located in the corner of the room. Covering the floor was a thick layer of debris (2113), deposited at the end of the phase.

#### 2.1.4 Phase 4 (Subphase C1)

The general layout of the building and the interconnection between rooms probably did not change from the previous phase. New floors were introduced on top of the layers of debris in all of the rooms. The floor (2100) in Room 1 was made up of a cemented grey layer of whitish shade covering almost the entire room. The floor layer contained potsherds, animal bones and a relatively high number of small finds.

A fireplace [2209] was found in the southwestern corner of the room. It was lined with at least two layers of bricks. The fireplace was filled with a layer of ash (2208). The last occupation of the room is marked by debris (2091) containing a relatively high number of small finds. Room 2 was filled with a large amount of ash (2122), the space obviously being treated again as a dump. The ash may have come from the fireplace in the corner of Room 1.

A fragmentarily preserved floor (3156) was found in the southern section of Room 5. The middle part of the floor was destroyed during the construction of the Tower house {2074}. In the northern part, two thick ash layers (3213, 3214) lay alongside the wall. Judging by the soot on the walls, they appear to be the remains of fireplaces. The floor (2093) inside Room 3 corresponded to the same type of layer in other rooms. On top of this floor was a debris layer (2070), which covered House {1095} when it was ultimately abandoned. A cemented, whitish grey layer constituted the new floor (2090) in Room 4. Pottery vessel 2133 was found *in situ* in the middle of the

room, placed in a shallow circular cut in the floor. Several big pieces of pottery vessels were found in the floor level and several small pieces of iron were embedded in it. The level also contained several stone tools and other artifacts.

All the floors described above were made approximately 0.40–0.50 m above the original foundation level of the building. The height of walls from Phase 1 cannot be determined of course, but it seems very likely that the roof level in Phase 4 had to be raised.



Fig. 3. The phasing of House {3111} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing Ł. Jarmużek)

## 2.2 HOUSE {3111}

The excavation of a building, which is the largest Third Intermediate Period house discovered so far in Tell el-Retaba [Figs 3, 4], was completed during the 2019 season. Three phases of occupation of the building were distinguished, corresponding to Subphases C4, C3b and C3a in the general phasing system of Tell el-Retaba.

### 2.2.1 Phase 1 (Subphase C4)

House {3111} consisted of two parts with independent entrances and an open space

(which became a closed courtyard in subsequent phases, see below) in the south-eastern part of the compound. The total surface of the area was at least 168 m<sup>2</sup>.

The eastern part of the building consisted of three rooms: a big room in front (Room 1, measuring 4.50 m by 2.90 m) and two smaller rooms (Room 2, measuring 2.00 m by 1.90 m; Room 3, measuring 2.20 m by 2.00 m) at the back [Fig. 5]. The entrance was probably in the south wall of Room 1. The wall was completely removed when the structure was recon-



Fig. 4. House {3111} after exploration (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | orthophoto Ł. Jarmużek)

structed at the beginning of the next phase (see below), thus the precise location of the entrance cannot be determined.

A thin, whitish-grey floor (3281) was found in Room 1. A circular fireplace [3267] lined with mud bricks, situated

roughly in the middle of the room, was one of three features on the floor surface. At least one mud brick abutted the west wall of the fireplace, forming a small platform. The space between the walls was filled with a layer of ash (3268). Pottery vessels (3269, 3271), *in situ*, were found in two cir-



Fig. 5. House {3111}: Rooms 1, 2 and 3 from Phase 1 (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | orthophoto Ł. Jarmużek)

cular cuts nearby. With time, however, all these features were covered with a new greyish-white floor (3231). The floor level yielded a large quantity of pottery sherds and animal bones, and 17 artifacts. Two doorways in the north wall of the room led to Rooms 2 and 3. In the latter case, a limestone door socket was found *in situ*.

Floor (3249) in Room 2 contained numerous pottery sherds and nine small finds. Remains of soot were noted on the surface of the north wall of the room, indicating the position of a fireplace, although no significant traces of ash were found on the floor. The floor (3266) in Room 3 yielded few artifacts beside some pottery sherds and animal bones.

The western part of the building was rather irregular in layout and consisted of three or four rooms. The entrance was in the east wall of Room 6. The size of this room is difficult to determine. The south and west walls of this part of the building were destroyed probably during the reconstruction of the building in the next phase (see below). A fairly uniform unit (3327) was introduced, extending from the north wall of the room to the southern limits of the compound. This would suggest a width between 4.60 m and 5.77 m, and a length of at least 7.50 m. Had these been the actual dimensions, the room would have been too big to be roofed. Another room (7) could be assumed to the south and then the wall separating Rooms 6 and 7 could have been situated where the east wall of the building turns east. Remains of a fireplace lined with mud bricks [3390] and a pottery vessel (3393) placed in a cut were found on the floor surface (3327) in the northern part of the room.

Room 5 was entered through a doorway in the north wall with a limestone door socket still *in situ*. The room measured 3.20 m by 3.00 m. Three floors were detected inside the room. The first floor (3349) consisted of a series of grey and brown laminae and yielded a few pottery sherds, animal bones and four small finds. The second, whitish-grey floor (3312) had a few pottery sherds and animal bones, as well as four small finds. The third floor (3335) was preserved only in the northeastern corner of the room (the bigger part of the floor having been destroyed by a modern cut). It consisted of whitish-grey laminae devoid of any finds. A fragmentary bin [3318] was found on the surface, abutting the east wall.

The entrance to Room 4, which was 2.60 m by 2.70 m in size, was located in the northeastern corner. The earliest sand-rich, brown floor (3314) yielded numerous pottery sherds, animal bones and 15 small finds.

The space in the southeastern corner of the compound, probably an open courtyard, was covered with a layer (3419) composed of brown and greyish laminae. The eastern and southern limits of the courtyard have yet to be determined. The northern part of the courtyard was cut off also by a ruined Building (3130) from an earlier phase. A relatively well preserved wall from this older structure set off an area suitable for dumping rubbish (most probably used also in subsequent phases, see below). The layer (3126) there consisted of black and grey ash, approximately 0.70 m thick. Since the northern part of the unit has yet to be excavated, the overall size remains unknown. The excavated part of the unit (3126) yielded

a considerable quantity of pottery sherds and animal bones, along with 24 small finds (mostly fragments of stone vessels and grinding tools).

### Discussion

The rooms with mud-brick fireplaces and pottery vessels placed in cuts in

the floors, present in both parts of this building, can be identified as the main living rooms. The layout of the eastern part resembles Bietak's type B1 (Bietak 1996), comprising one main living room and two rooms at the back. The layout of the western part is rather irregular and may have resulted from space con-



Fig. 6. House {3111}: Room 5 from phase 2 (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | orthophoto Ł. Jarmużek)

straints within the settlement. Textual sources indicate that ancient Egyptian households comprised both nuclear and extended families. Still it is difficult to trace any evidence of this in the archaeological record (Spence 2015: 84–86). The Amarna residential establishments were thought to exemplify this kind of social structure. They comprised a large main house (owned probably by the head of the household) and one or more small houses (used by the oldest son and/or servants), all within the same enclosure wall. The layout of House {3111} seems to comply with this general principle, although the lack of textual sources makes this assumption highly speculative.

### 2.2.2 Phase 2 (Subphase C3b)

House {3111} underwent a number of changes in Phase C3b. First, the south wall of Room 1 in the eastern part of the building was rebuilt. The dismantling of the old wall must have been complete because it left no debris. A new wall [3222], 0.60 m thick, was constructed about 0.80 m to the south, enlarging the room. A doorway with a limestone door socket still in position was set in the eastern part of this wall. A mud-brick bin [3293], 0.50 m wide and at least 1.20 m long, lined the northern face of the wall; its eastern part was destroyed. The bin was built directly on the floor (3231) from an earlier phase. With time, a new floor (3298) was put in place, abutting the walls of the bin. The unit yielded no artifacts. Another bin [3297], abutting the old one, was built on the surface of this floor. It measured 0.80 m by 0.70 m. A new, very thin, whitish-grey floor (3295) did not yield any artifacts. Rooms 2 and 3 remained

unchanged. A thick layer of debris (3224, 3165) in this part of the building marked the end of occupation in Phase C3b.

Changes were observed also in the western part of the building. In Room 6, a new floor (3330) covered the fireplace and a pottery vessel from the previous phase. The unit produced a large quantity of pottery sherds, a few animal bones and 12 small finds.

A new limestone door-socket was installed (on top of the previous one) in the doorway between Rooms 6 and 5. Mud bricks [3337] blocked the doorway between Rooms 5 and 4, cutting off Room 4 from this part of the building. While the reason behind this change is difficult to determine, it could have conformed with the overall evolution of the household structure. Numerous textual sources describe the lifecycles of households (e.g., from Kahun and Deir el-Medina), explaining the fluctuations of size (Muhs 2015). These changes may be visible in the archaeological record as subdivisions of the estate (e.g., House E13.3 at Amara West; Spencer 2014: 468–480).

In Room 5, a circular bin [3308] (0.63 m in diameter) was built next to the blocked doorway [Fig. 6]. A greyish-brown floor (3311) accumulated around this bin was extensively destroyed by a modern cut. A small section of the floor preserved in the northeastern corner yielded a relatively large quantity of pottery, animal bones, some shells, and 18 small finds. A bin [3318] from the previous phase was probably still in use. As already said, Room 4 could not be accessed from the western part of the building. An entrance, if it existed, would have been in the north wall, which was almost completely destroyed by a huge

modern cut. Also, the strata inside the room were almost completely destroyed by another modern cut. Only small fragments of the strata were preserved in the southeastern and northwestern corners of the room. In the southeastern corner, two sandy layers (3328, 3320) with fragments of bricks were found. In the northwestern corner, two layers of ash (3342, 3340) were separated by a layer of debris (3341). A floor-like, whitish-grey layer (3339) lay on top of the debris layer.

The area in the southeastern part of the compound was still used as a courtyard. A new layer (3282), similar to the previous one, covered the space and consisted of a series of thin brown and grey laminae. With time, the courtyard was closed by a semicircular wall. The wall [3286] was 0.46 m thick. The entrance to the courtyard was probably situated in the southern section of the wall. Another gap in the wall was found next to Building {3130}; however, it is possible that this part of the wall was destroyed by a nearby modern cut <3135>. The courtyard was 35 m<sup>2</sup> in area. Three fireplaces in the shape of a circular depression, filled with loose, grey ash (3273, 3275, 3277), were found in the western part. One of them (3275) contained a great deal of pottery sherds and seven small finds.

### 2.2.3 Phase 3 (Subphase C3a)

The layout of House {3111} changed significantly in the course of Phase C3a. The ground in the eastern part of the building was altered by the debris from the end of the previous phase. Moreover, the wall separating Rooms 1 and 3 was not rebuilt. Only two fragmentarily preserved floors were found.

Floor (3158) covered all of Room 2 and the northeastern corner of Room 1. It sloped down significantly from the south to the north. Large fragments of pottery vessels were found on the floor next to the east wall in Room 2. A pottery vessel (3160) was found placed in a cut in the southern part of the unit.

Another floor (3220) was found in the northwestern part of the building (Room 3 from the previous phases). The unit contained some pottery sherds and some large fragments of animal bones.

The western part of the building was enlarged by adding an entirely new wall, forming Rooms 7 and 8. The entrance to this part of the building was not found. It was probably somewhere in the east wall of Room 8. The room measured 3.80 m by 2.50 m. For unknown reasons, the inner part of the room was first filled with debris (3334) and then a floor (3333) was built on top of it. This poorly preserved unit yielded a few pottery sherds and a great number of fish bones. The poor state of preservation of the walls and a relatively higher level of the floor in this room made it impossible to trace the doorway between Room 8 and the inner rooms of the building.

Room 7 was 3.80 m long and probably 2.30 m wide (assuming that the destroyed wall of the room was aligned with the west wall of the building from the previous phase). The floor (3350) inside the room was relatively well preserved, but, apart from a few pottery sherds, contained virtually no other artifacts. The floor was approximately 0.25 m below the floor in Room 8. The entrance to Room 6 was located thanks to the door-socket found *in situ* in the north wall.

A thick layer of debris (3348) marked the end of occupation in this room. No new units in Rooms 5 and 6 could be assigned to this phase. Floors (3311, 3330) from the previous phase may have still been in use. Room 4 was still separate from the western part of the building. A fragment of the floor (3317) was found in the southeastern corner of the room.

The courtyard was probably still in use during this phase, but mostly as a dump. A thick layer of greyish black (3253) ash was found in the western part of the courtyard. It yielded a great deal of pottery sherds, animal bones and six small finds. Debris (3250) found on the surface of this floor came most probably from the collapse of Room 8.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. ACTIVITY-AREA ANALYSIS

A method based on activity-area analysis was applied to the study of the installations and artifacts found inside the houses. A basic assumption of the activity-area analysis is that the distribution of objects in a specific context reflects the use of space through human action (Pfälzner 2015). Depending on the context of the discovery, the type of the assemblage and the type of deposition, activities can be identified at different levels. Activity-area analysis needs to be applied to all contexts under study and is based on a thorough study of the archaeological indicators of activities. Four main categories can be distinguished:

- objects in active positions: when it is clear that the objects must have been used where they were found;
- objects in passive positions: when objects are not found where they were used (broken and discarded, stored for later use);
- refuse: unusable items left in the position where the activity took place, important indicators of food preparation, consumption or craft activities. The context of discovery determined division into three categories: primary (left in the

position where it originated), secondary (discarded elsewhere) and tertiary (transported to other than primary or secondary refuse by later, post-depositional processes);

- installations: all fixed features built in order to fulfil certain actions.

Objects in active positions, primary refuse and installations are the strongest indicators of activities, and they allow conclusions regarding the range of activities taking place in specific rooms. In case of the artifact assemblages from Tell el-Retaba, most of the objects were not found where they had been used. However, they are still important indicators of activities. They permit a reconstruction of the more general and larger areas of specific occupation.

In view of the extensive object diversity and the large variety of activities represented, Ian Shaw's system of artifact classification from Tell el-Amarna (Shaw 2004: 95; 2012: 127–150) was applied with some modifications. The installations, small finds, and pottery from the houses were grouped into the following categories of activities: Storage, Household Equipment, Subsistence, Craftwork and Private Religion. The number of objects

Table 1. Distribution of artifacts in House {1095}

Key: SF – small finds, P – pottery, IN – installations; objects from debris contexts in parenthesis

\* – numbers for Phases 1 and 2 combined because of the difficulty of distinguishing between phases

\*\* – numbers for Phases 2 and 3 combined because of the difficulty of distinguishing between phases

	Storage		Transport		Household Equipment			Subsistence			Craftwork		Private Religion			
	IN	SF	P	SF	P	IN	SF	P	IN	SF	P	SF	P	SF	P	
<b>Phase 1</b>																
Room 1			5		2					4*		53		4		3
Room 2										4		1*		1*		
Room 3			3		1					1		13				
Room 4			3		3					2		30				
Room 5			2*							1*		12*				
All rooms			13		6					12		109		5		3
<b>Phase 2</b>																
Room 1	1		5		6					1		78		3		
Room 2										4*		1*		1*		
Room 3			4		9			2		8		43		2		
Room 4			3		1	1	1	1	2			17				
Room 5			2*							1		12*				
Courtyard			2**									10**				
All rooms	1		16		16	1	1	3	2	14		149		6		
<b>Phase 3</b>																
Room 1	1		(3)		(1)					(1)		7 (10)				1
Room 2			(3)		(1)							3 (21)				
Room 3					(1)							(5)				
Room 4			(5)							(4)		(45)		(2)		
Room 5			4		3			1		2		34		1		
Courtyard			2**									10**				
All rooms	1		6 (11)		3 (3)					2 (5)		54 (81)		1 (2)		1
<b>Phase 4</b>																
Room 1			6 (14)		10 (16)				1	14 (9)		57 (42)		2		(2)
Room 2			2		4					(4)		44				
Room 3			2							1		19				
Room 4			16		8			1		6		121		2	2	
Room 5									1			17				
Courtyard			2									9				
All rooms			28 (14)		22 (16)			1	2	21 (13)		267 (42)		4	2	(2)

Table 2. Distribution of artifacts in House {3111}

Key: SF – small finds, P – pottery, IN – installations; objects from debris contexts in parenthesis

\* – numbers for Phases 1 and 2 combined because of the difficulty of distinguishing between phases

\*\* – numbers for Phases 1, 2 and 3 combined because of the difficulty of distinguishing between phases

	Storage			Transport		Household Equipment			Subsistence			Craftwork		Private Religion	
	IN	SF	P	SF	P	IN	SF	P	IN	SF	P	SF	P	SF	P
<b>Phase 1</b>															
Room 1			7		1				1	14	42				1
Room 2			3*		1*					3*	22*		3*		
Room 3															
Room 4			14							6	65		5		
Room 5	1		3		1					4	24		1		1
Room 6			7						1	5	23		2		1
Dump			25**		2**			1**		18**	252**		2*		
All rooms	1		59		5			1	2	50	428		13		3
<b>Phase 2</b>															
Room 1	2		(14)		(8)			(1)		(9)	2 (88)		(3)		
Room 2			3*		1*					3*	22*		3*		
Room 3*															
Room 4			3 (5)		(1)			1		2	14 (17)				
Room 5	2		2		1					6	44		6		1
Room 6			2							5	21		3		2
Courtyard	1		8		1				3	2	58		1		
Dump			25**		2**			1**		18**	252**		2**		
All rooms	4		43 (19)		5 (9)			2 (1)	3	36 (9)	413 (105)		12 (3)		3
<b>Phase 3</b>															
Room 1+2			14 (8)		4 (3)					(5)	55 (20)				
Room 3			1		1						3				
Room 4			(2)		(1)			(1)			(11)				(1)
Room 5	2		(3)					(1)		(10)	(19)		(7)		(2)
Room 6			(3)								(22)				
Room 7			3 (1)		(1)					(2)	5 (3)				
Room 8			1 (4)							(2)	1 (16)		(4)		
Courtyard			5		2					6	75				
Dump			25**		2**			1**		18**	252**		2**		
All rooms	2		49 (21)		9 (5)			(1) 1(1)		24 (19)	391 (91)		2 (11)		(3)

related to each activity found in each room of both houses in each period of its use is presented in tables [Tables 1–2]. Most objects come from floors and other types of units (e.g., fireplaces, dumps, fill of bins) directly related to the activities that could have taken place in a given phase. However, since objects found in the debris may also indicate activities from a given phase of a building, they are also included in the study. The numbers of objects from stratigraphic units of this kind are given in parenthesis.

### 3.1.1. Installations

Installations are one of the best indicators of activities. However, the two studied houses did not contain many features of this kind. Installations can be assigned to three types of activities. Vari-

ous kinds of fireplaces (with or without mud-brick walls) and ovens were assigned to the Subsistence category. Theoretically, a fireplace could be assigned to the category of Household Equipment, but it is impossible to determine which of them served only as source of light and heat. Several bins found inside the houses were assigned to the Storage category. The single example of a mastaba was assigned to the Household Equipment category.

### 3.1.2. Small finds

In most cases the examined small finds came from floor units (unless otherwise noted), but generally not where they were used. Many of them were probably displaced or removed from the original place of use. Hence they can be used to reconstruct only a more general pattern

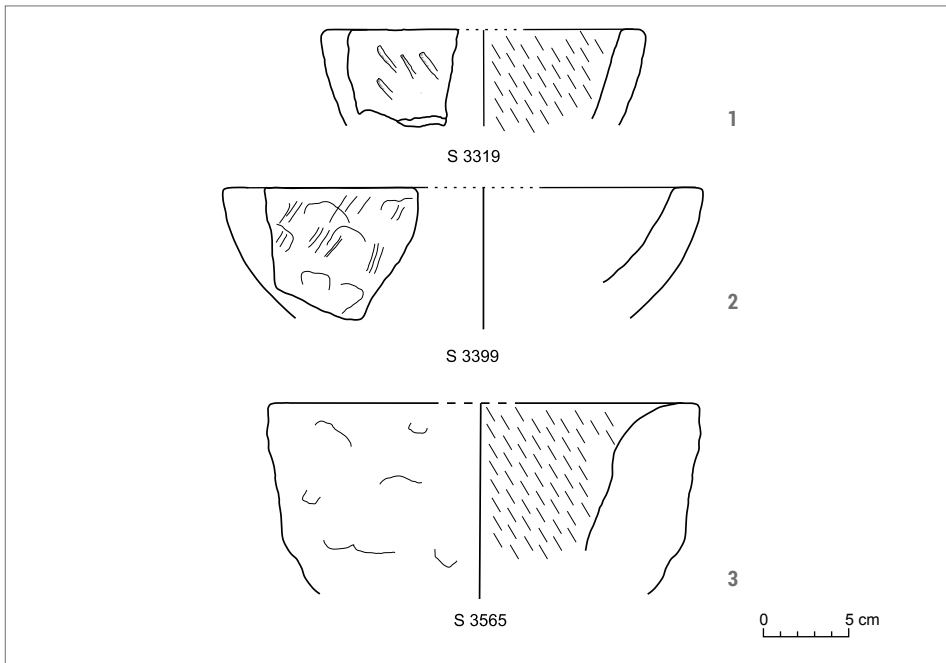


Fig. 7. Examples of stone vessel types: 1 – deep bowl (S3319), 2 – shallow bowl (S3399), 3 – mortar (S3665) (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing D. Sulecki)

of activities in these two buildings. The most important analytical step is the collation of particular types of small finds into given categories of activities.

The Storage category comprises objects connected with preservation inside the building. These are all containers or remains of containers, for example, jar stoppers.

The Household Equipment category includes all architectural elements found inside the building, such as door sockets and thresholds, as well as furniture (for example fittings, basketry, ropes). In the case of this study, this category is poorly represented: only two door sockets.

The Subsistence category includes all objects connected with activities taking place in the household and necessary for physical survival, namely food acquisition (agriculture, hunting, fishing) and food preparation and processing. This category includes: ground stone tools (if used to prepare food), stone vessels, weights (if used for food acquisition, for example, net sinkers), sickle blades and knives. Stone vessels are a problematic group, especially when fragmentarily preserved [Fig. 7]. Some of them could have been used as mortars, but also as food containers. For the purpose of this analysis they will be treated as objects connected with food processing.

The Craftwork category includes objects used in craftwork activities, such as ground stone tools (if—judging by their use-wear and features—they were not used for food preparation, e.g., whetstones, pounders, polishers), loom weights, pins, spatulas, spindle whorls, scrapers, disks and needles. The distinction between Subsistence and Craftwork is not always clear.

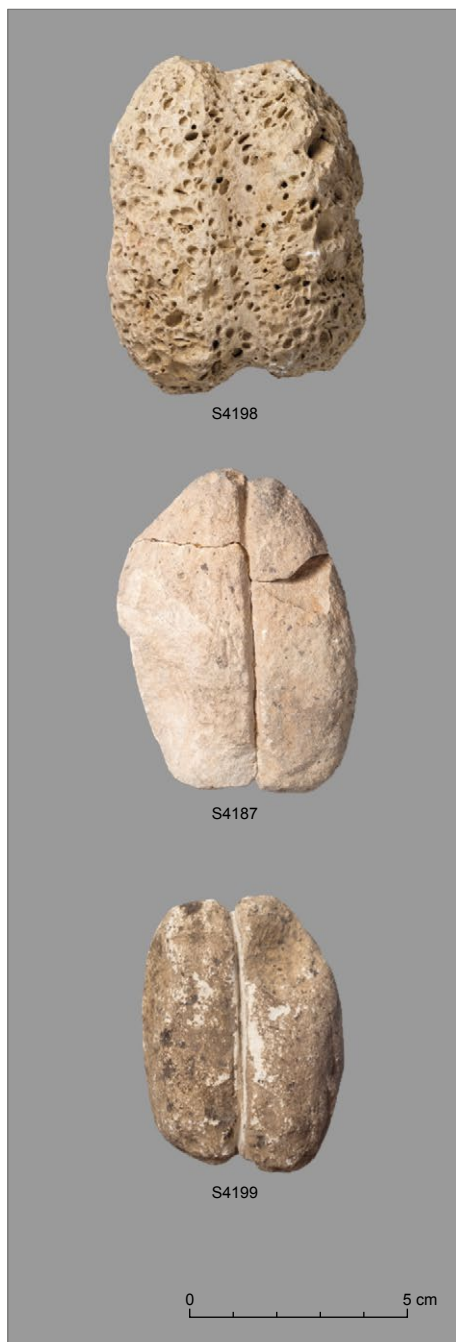


Fig. 8. Examples of limestone weights with incised grooves from Houses {1095} (S4187) and {3111} (S4199, S4198) (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photo M. Reklajtis)

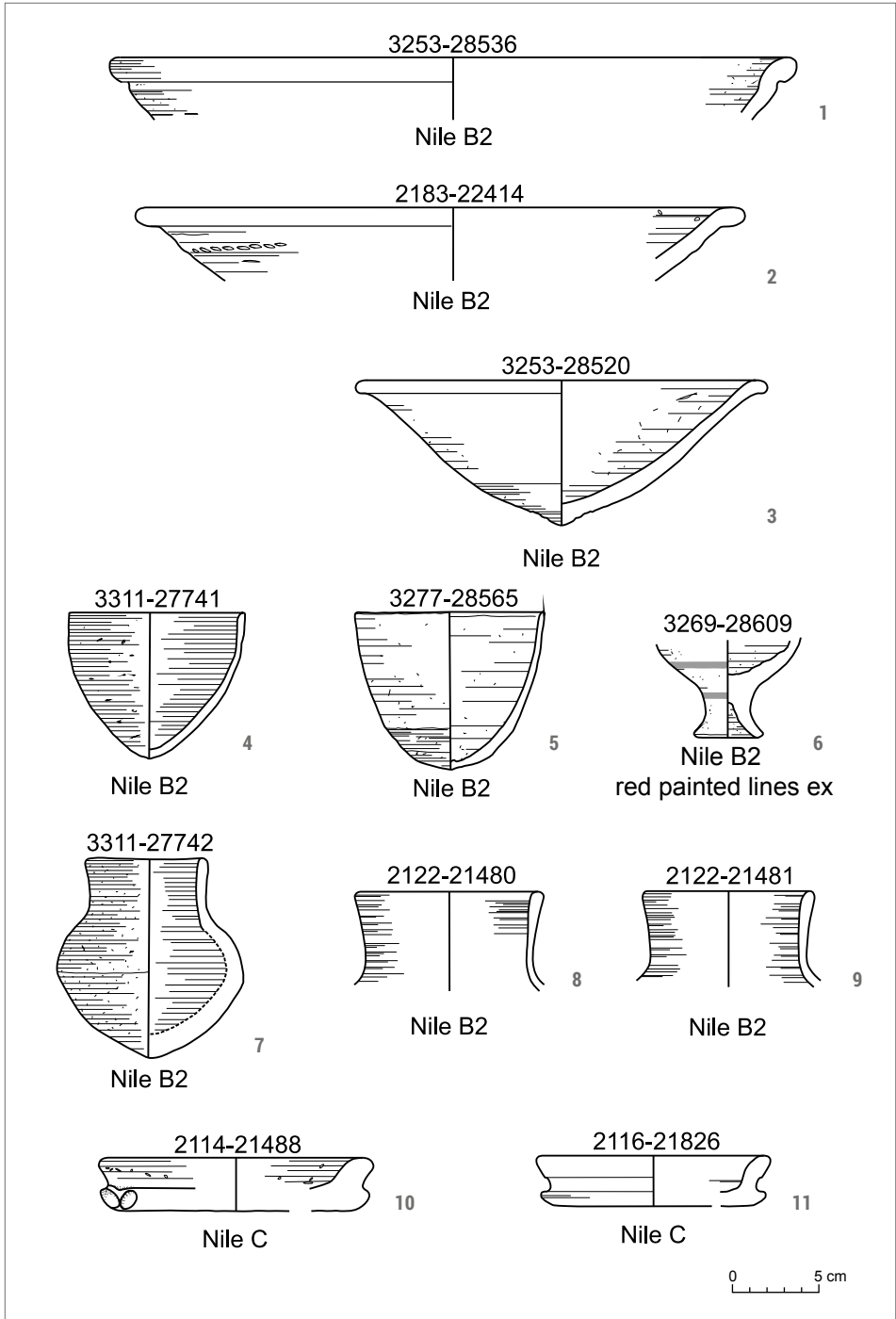


Fig. 9. Ceramic vessels used for food preparation (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing B. Jakubowska, K. Szymańska, A. Weźranowska and A. Wodzińska)

In the case of many grinders or pounders it is difficult and even impossible to determine the specific activities for which the tools would have been used. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, it was assumed that as long as they did not bear traces indicating other use, grinders were used for food preparation. Similarly, limestone weights with incised grooves [Fig. 8] were classified as net sinkers.

The identification of objects connected with Private Religion is occasionally problematic. The main concern is distinguishing objects used for secular purpose from those having apotropaic/religious function. This distinction is not always clear. For the purpose of this analysis, objects with religious imagery or objects which could be connected with religious practices/rituals were included in this category (Stevens 2006: 21–23). The same assumption was made for scarabs and scaraboids, which also have a protective function (Andrews 1999: 52–59).

### 3.1.3. Pottery

Pottery as well as ceramic small finds from the houses were found mostly in passive position. Pottery sherds were found mainly in floor layers, ash deposits and debris, but several vessels were found in active position, in shallow cuts made in floor surfaces. The classification of objects into categories of activities was also applied to ceramic material, even though not every activity was represented and some activities were weakly attested.

Most of the pottery can be associated with Subsistence, meaning all stages of foodmaking, including food preparation with and without heat, and serving of meals (Rice 1987: 238).

Pots, which could have been used for food preparation without the use of fire, are represented by bowls and basins of usually large diameter, simple conical body and ring base [Fig. 9.1–2]. Smaller bowls [Fig. 9.3], cups [Fig. 9.4–5] and goblets [Fig. 9.6] could have been used for serving food, although it cannot be excluded that they were used also at the preparation stage.

Vessels for food preparation with the use of fire comprise jars of various sizes but very similar shape [Fig. 9.7–9]. They have a simple, straight or slightly flaring rim, generally cylindrical neck, biconical body and circular base. They can be classified as cooking jars because in most cases there is soot and evidence of burning on their external surfaces.

Another category of pots used for food preparation with the use of fire is made up of handmade bread trays with flat bases and carinated bodies [Fig. 9.10–11]. Their surface is often blackened due to heating.

Ceramic objects of a specific kind could have been used as fire dogs [Fig. 10.1] They are usually found in fragments, always burned and with traces of soot.

Vessels with very narrow holes pierced in the base at the manufacturing stage [Fig. 10.2] can also be connected with food preparation. They are sometimes referred to as pigeon pots (Aston 1998: 550), but it seems more probable that they were funnels or lids (Trzcińska and Wodzińska 2020). Their external surface is sometimes burned, probably indicating use for cooking/baking.

The Storage category includes large jars [Fig. 10.3–4], often with two vertical handles [Fig. 11.1]. Jars of this kind are

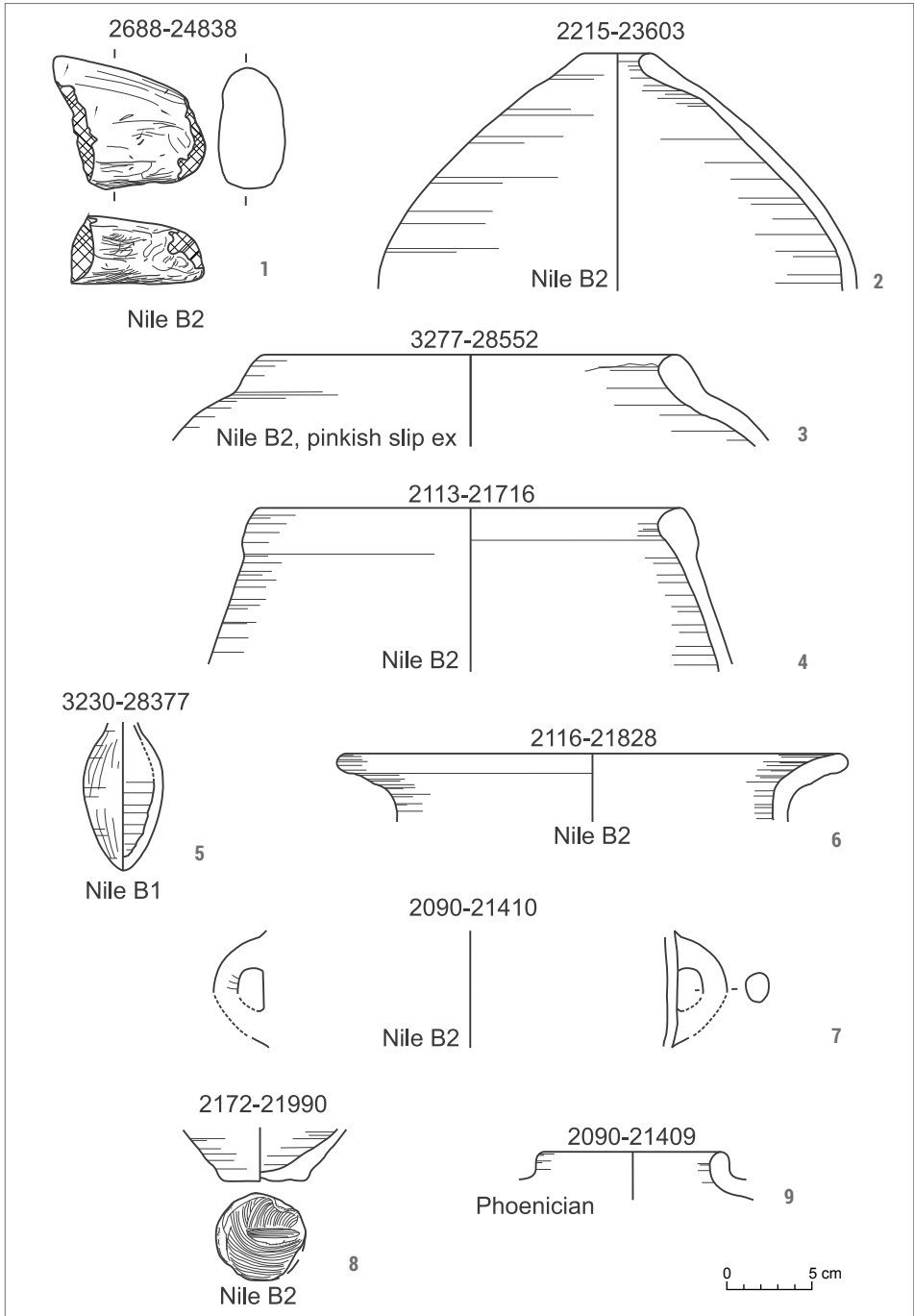


Fig. 10. Ceramic vessels: 1–2 – vessels for food preparation; 3–4 – storage jars; 5 – cosmetic container; 6 – chamber pot; 7 – possible spinning vessel; 8 – votive vessel; 9 – imported transport amphora (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing K. Danys, B. Jakubowska and A. Wodzińska)

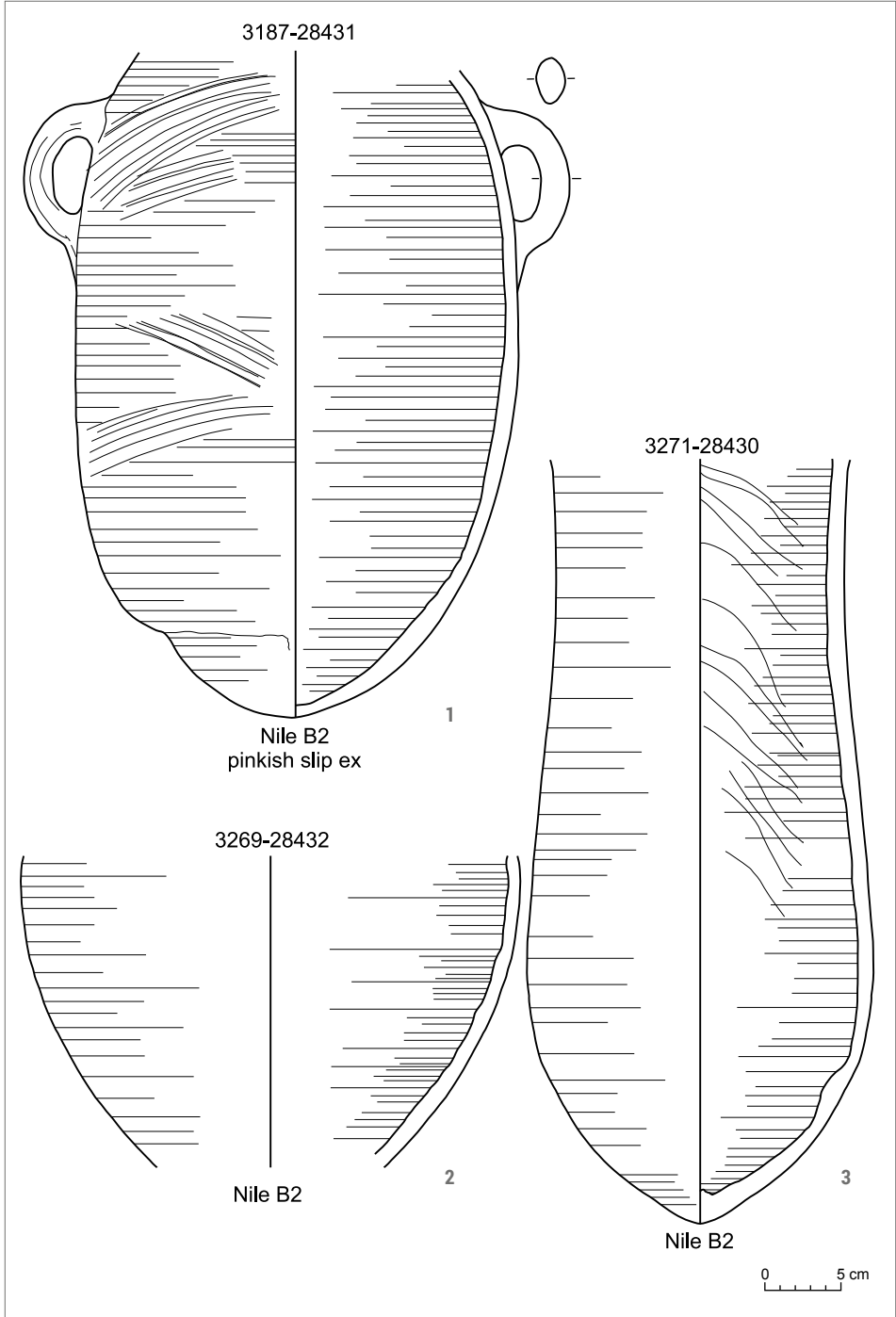


Fig. 11. Jars found in situ, placed in holes in the ground, probably used as containers for water (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | drawing A. Weźranowska and A. Wodzińska)

highly characteristic of the Third Intermediate Period and display many forms. Some of them were found *in situ*, placed in holes in the ground (Wodzińska 2019) [Fig. 11].

Small containers, presumably used for cosmetics, can be recognized as Household Equipment [Fig. 10.5]. One vessel importantly can be classified with a high degree of probability as a chamber pot (Aston 1998: 550, No. 2241) [Fig. 10.6]. The pot has a wide ledge rim, globular body and low ring base. The complete vessel had a small vertical handle attached to the upper part of the body. Interestingly, some of the pots contained a yellowish substance, which could not be subjected to laboratory analyses, but which appears to be the remains of urine.

Vessels used for Craftwork are difficult to identify. Many of them were probably reused vessels, their first function being associated with storage or food preparation. There is, however, one category of ceramic objects that could have been used for making textiles. These are handles of storage jars with horizontal notches in the middle, apparently made post-manufacture, when the vessel was being used [Fig. 10.7]. This notching is very similar to traces observed in the case of so-called spinning bowls from the Middle (Schiestl and Seiler 2012: 704–706) and New Kingdoms (Rose 2007: 202–203, SD.6). The fragmentary pots from Tell el-Retaba clearly belonged to jars not bowls. The process of spinning thread is difficult to imagine, but possible.

Private religion is even less obvious with regard to pottery. A number of small jars and plates with flat bases [Fig. 10.8] had bases cut during manufacture either

with string or with wire, leaving characteristic circular traces on the base. These vessels are hardly ever well made and do not have well finished surfaces. In the context of the Old and New Kingdom, such pots were often left as votive gifts at burial grounds. The subject needs more study, but inside houses vessels of this kind could have been used in private rituals performed in a domestic context (Wodzińska 2019: 98).

Transport as a category is associated with pottery alone. Containers made of organic materials (like leather or textiles) may have been in use, but have not been preserved. Amphorae imported from Phoenicia are classified as transport packaging (Aston 2007: 56, Fig. 53, No. 623) [Fig. 10.9]. Also included in this category are jars made of marl clay, a material not encountered locally at Tell el-Retaba. They must have been delivered to the site with their content and reused for storage purpose once they had been emptied.

### 3.2. CLEAN/UNCLEAN SPACE ANALYSIS

Another approach applied in this study is the concept of clean and unclean spaces used by Felix Arnold (2015) in the analysis of houses from Elephantine. House space is divided into areas where waste products accumulated and areas which were kept clean. Deposition of waste products may indicate not only certain activities but how a given space was perceived by the inhabitants, e.g., which space should be kept clean for activities requiring cleanness (e.g., receiving guests, sleeping). An obvious indicator of unclean spaces are the rubbish dumps (usually ash mixed with animal bones and fragments of discarded objects).

A second indicator is the quantity of discarded objects in floor layers. Even though many floors were not typical dumping places, the number of discarded objects can be relatively high. For people living in these rooms regular cleaning seems not to have been important. For the purpose of this analysis, non-diagnos-

tic fragments of objects were also taken into consideration. This is particularly important in the case of non-diagnostic pottery sherds, the quantities of which can be significant. Although they cannot be indicators of specific activities, large amounts of sherds in a floor layer would indicate a rather unclean space.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. ACTIVITY-AREA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1.1. Installations

Installations from the two houses are few. There is no evidence of fixed features from House {1095} in Phase 1. In the second phase, a rectangular bin was found along the west wall of Room 1, but there was nothing to determine its content. A small mastaba and two fireplaces were found in Room 4. Sets of this kind are common in many houses from the New Kingdom (Spence 2015) and are interpreted as indication of a “living room”. Such rooms served various kinds of social activities. In the case of Room 4, the position of fireplaces by the wall instead of in the middle of the room is unusual. The two fireplaces lack any kind of mud or mud-brick lining. There were no shallow cuts with pots typical of this kind of room.

The bin in Room 1 could have still been in use in Phase 3. All of the features in Room 4 were covered with a floor. A fireplace lined with mud bricks was installed in the corner of Room 1 in Phase 4. The position of the fireplace suggests that it was used for cooking. In “living rooms” fireplaces were usually placed in the middle of the room, allowing people to gather around them. The pottery vessel in the

middle of Room 4 was probably used for water storage (see below, § 4.1.3).

Similar types of installations were found in House {3111}. In Phase 1, features typical of “living rooms” were found in Rooms 1 and 6. In both cases, they were placed in the front room of the living unit. A round fireplace lined with mud bricks and two storage vessels were found in Room 1. A fireplace in Room 6 was rectangular; only one storage vessel was found. There were no traces of mastabas in either of the rooms. Remains of a storage bin were found in Room 5.

Major changes took place in the second phase. A floor covered the features in Room 1 and two storage bins were built by the south wall. Features in Room 6 were also covered by a new floor and no new installations were introduced. The alterations suggest different activities in these rooms compared to Phase 1. Remains from Room 5 show that the space was still used for storage. The doorway between Rooms 5 and 4 was blocked and a second bin was built. Three fireplaces, indicating cooking activities, were found in the western part of the courtyard. Remains of ashes in layers covering the courtyard (see below, § 4.2) suggest that activities of the same kind took place also during Phase 1.



Fig. 12. Examples of needles from Room 1 in House {1095} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photo S. Rzepka)



Fig. 13. Amulets from Room 1 in House {1095}: above, S3054 (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photos S. Rzepka)



Fig. 14. Spinning tool from Room 6 in House {3111} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photo M. Reklajtis)



Remains from Phase 3 of House {3111} were poorly preserved. The only new fixed feature was a pottery vessel placed roughly in the middle of Room 1. Storage bins in Room 5 were probably still in use.

Installations from both buildings belong mostly to two categories of activities: Storage and Subsistence. The mastaba from Room 4 in House {1095} is the only example of Household Equipment.

#### 4.1.2. Small finds

The share of artifacts in House {1095} is constant in all phases. Subsistence is the dominant category and includes objects connected with food processing and preparation (stone vessels, grinding tools, pounding tools), fishing (net sinkers) and agriculture (sickle blades).

Objects connected with subsistence constitute the bulk, especially in Phase 4, when they make up almost 80% of the total finds. The numbers are smaller for the preceding three phases, but still considerable. Rooms 2 and 3 were the only ones not to yield any finds related to this category in Phase 3.

The distribution and number of objects connected with craftwork activities is also similar in all phases. Artifacts are connected mostly with spinning/weaving [Fig. 12]; they are attested particularly in Room 1. The possibility of cloth making in House {1095} is also confirmed by pottery finds (see below, § 4.1.3). However, no traces were found which could be related to weaving installations, such as a loom, for instance. The Craftwork category includes objects connected with abrasive/smoothing activities. It comprises whetstones, which can be connected with the production of bone or wooden objects

(Jeuthe 2019: 61; Prell 2019: 228) as well as bead-making (Flexner, Fleisher, and LaViolette 2008). There are also potsherd scrapers, the presence of which can be associated with pottery-making, leather-working, woodworking or soft-stone working (for a discussion, see, for example, Raedler 2015). There is no evidence of production on a scale larger than necessary to meet household demand.

Objects connected with religious activity were found only in Phase 1. These include three faience amulets from Room 1, one poorly preserved (S3046), but two in a complete state. One is in the form of a bust with the head of a lion- or cat-headed goddess, with the uraeus and sun disk (S3054) [Fig. 13 above]. The other is in the form of a standing figure of a cat-headed goddess (S3108) [Fig. 13 right]. The pendants represent most probably Bastet or Sakhmet (Andrews 1994: 33; Rzepka et al. 2017: 60).

The artifact pattern characterizing the assemblage found inside House {3111} is similar to that from House {1095}. Groups of objects connected with subsistence activities constitute the bulk of the material. They are mainly connected with food processing and preparation (stone vessels and ground stone tools) and fishing. There are also objects used in craftwork activities. A relatively large group comprises ground stone tools which were not used for food preparation because the use-wear traces on their surfaces and the nature of the raw material argue against it. These are abrasive/smoothing tools which could be associated with the production of stone or bone objects. Activities could not be assigned to given rooms because of an absence of waste products

and installations. It could have also been a small-scale production. Use-wear traces on the bone pin (S4379) from Phase 2 in Room 6 indicates either spinning activi-

ties, textile weaving or netting production [Fig. 14]. A relatively large number of net sinkers makes the latter idea more probable.



Fig. 15. Clay figurines from House {3111}: left, S4233, right, S4274 (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photos M. Reklajtis, processing A. Ryś)



Fig. 16. Faience stamp seal S4151 from Room 1 in House {3111} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photos, M. Reklajtis, processing A. Ryś, drawing P. Sójka)

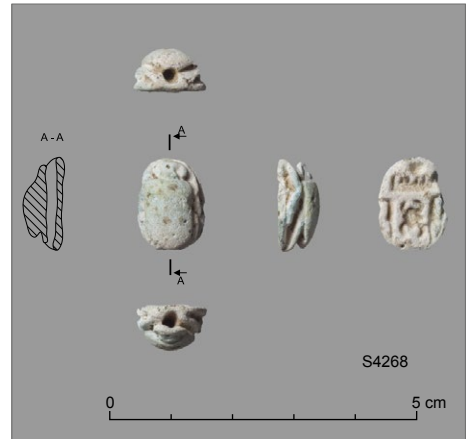


Fig. 17. Faience scarab S4268 from Room 6 in House {3111} (University of Warsaw Tell el-Retaba Project | photos M. Reklajtis, processing A. Ryś, drawing P. Sójka)

Artifacts connected with private religious practices were found in all phases. Among them are fragmentarily preserved faience pendants depicting divinities endowed with a protective function. The two other specimens are hand-modelled figurines made of Nile silt, rectangular in shape, with plain surfaces decorated only with formed lumps applied to their upper parts [Fig. 15]. In both cases, the top parts are broken. Based on their shape and available parallels, they can be identified as simple versions of cobra figurines. Their relation to apotropaic rituals has been assumed.

Two inscribed objects from House {3111} can be assigned a protective function. The first one is a faience seal (S4151), found in Room 1 of Phase 1 [Fig. 16]. Its bundle-back handle is decorated with an indication of gathered lines. The inscription on the base is quite poorly executed and difficult to read. It may have contained the sign “*mn*”, while the vertical line to the left could be an “*i*”, and the horizontal line underneath could be an “*n*”; thus, the inscription would include the name of Amun. This type of small faience seal inscribed with a god’s name on the underside is also recognized as a protective amulet (Andrews 1999: 54, Fig. 55). The scarab (S4268) was found in Room 6, in a Phase 2 context [Fig. 17]. It is made of blue-glazed faience, has its base decorated with the name Menkheperre; the *kheper* sign is flanked by two *maat* feathers. It is a popular composition on scarabs from the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty to the Late Period, also imbued with protective powers (Andrews 1994: 55).

The artifact assemblage from Houses {1095} and {3111} confirms the multifunctionality of Egyptian houses (Spence 2015:

83–97). The same room could be used in a different manner at different times. There are no indicators to connect a specific room to specific activities. Moreover there is no visible separation between space for “life” and for “work”. It is possible that activities generating a large amount of waste took place outside the household.

The everyday life of the inhabitants of Houses {1095} and {3111} was focused on activities such as agriculture, fishing and food preparation. Based on the number of objects connected with craftwork activities, it can be assumed that this type of production was limited to household needs and concentrated on the manufacture of everyday artifacts, such as textiles, nets and small objects. There is no evidence of production on a larger scale, notably large amounts of waste, casts or specialised installations.

#### 4.1.3. Pottery

The ceramic material found in both houses can be divided into diagnostic and non-diagnostic pieces. House {1095} contained 3762 non-diagnostic and 869 diagnostic fragments; 6865 non-diagnostics and 1113 diagnostics were found in House {3111}.

The largest group of pottery found in Houses {1095} and {3111} consists of vessels used for food preparation. Such pots were found basically in every room, hence it is very easy to assume that every room was associated with food preparation and serving of meals. Breaking down the general group into more detailed categories: preparation without fire, preparation with fire (cooking jars, bread moulds and fire dogs) and serving, does not change

the picture significantly. Therefore, one cannot say whether any of the rooms were used for more specific purposes. Most of the vessels are larger and smaller bowls used for food preparation without fire and for serving. They generally make up 50% of all of the pots found in each room of both houses.

The second group are cooking jars (20%), followed by bread moulds (5%). The statistics vary between rooms but the general trend is more or less the same. The only difference is in the presence of fire dogs, but one does not easily recognize a pattern. The examples found on the floors of House {1095} came from Room 4 in Phase 1; Rooms 1 and 3 in Phase 2; and Room 3 and the courtyard in Phase 4. In House {3111}, fire dogs were found in Rooms 1, 4 and 6 from Phase 1; Room 4 and the courtyard from Phase 2; Rooms 1 and 2 from Phase 3.

The vessels categorised as Storage constitute an overall 15–20%, together with transport jars, which were probably often reused as storage vessels. The statistics are more or less the same for each room in both houses.

A number of pots was found *in situ* in both houses: House {1095} – Room 4 (Phase 4); House {3111} – Rooms 1 (Phases 1 and 3) and 6 (Phase 1). The vessels can be divided into two groups: large jars of various types [see *Fig. 11*] and conical cups [see *Fig. 9.4–5*]. It appears that some of the jars were reused as possible storage vessels. They were placed in holes in the ground. Strikingly, they seem to have been associated with conical cups used probably for drinking. Thus, the most plausible idea is that the storage jars placed more or less in the middle of

the rooms contained water for drinking but also for cooking.

Chamber pots represent Household Equipment. Four of them were found in House {1095}: two fragments in Room 3 (Phase 2) and two in Room 4 (one in Phase 2 and one in Phase 4). House {3111} also contained four chamber pots: one fragment in Room 1 (Phase 2), two pieces in Room 4 (Phases 2 and 3), and one in a dump (Phase 1). It is difficult to be sure in this case, but it seems that rooms with chamber pots could have been used as bedrooms, at least for some time. The idea works best for Room 3 in House {1095} with adjacent Room 4 which could have acted as a vestibule with a multifunctional space inside it. Room 4 in House {3111} could have also been used as a bedroom with Room 5 serving as an entrance space. A small juglet fragment [see *Fig. 10.5*] from Room 5 (Phase 3) of House {1095} could be seen also as Household Equipment, assuming that it had been used as a container for cosmetics or medicaments.

Only two pottery fragments associated with Craftwork, possibly textile making, were found, and this in House {1095}. They were collected from Room 4 (Phase 4).

Ceramic vessels considered as markers of Private Religion were found in Room 1 of House {1095} (Phases 3 and 4). The room was apparently used in many ways. Nothing from this category was found in House {3111}.

Like the small finds, the pottery from the two houses under examination shows mainly all stages of food preparation and consumption with a clear pattern of storage jars found *in situ* and used most probably for water.

## 4.2 CLEAN AND UNCLEAN SPACES

### ANALYSIS

There are no rubbish dumps anywhere in House {1095} in Phases 1 and 2. From the perspective of the numbers of artifacts coming from the floor levels (including non-diagnostic objects), the level of cleanness is similar in all of the rooms. There is not one space from which discarded objects were removed regularly by the inhabitants. The courtyard was a place for dumping ash in the second phase (and probably also in the first phase, but these layers were not excavated). Phase 3 of House {1095} was short-lived, producing little in the way of remains (apart from the debris). The accumulation of ash in Room 2 in this phase clearly indicates dumping activity. The room was used for the same purpose also during Phase 4. The ash must have come from a fireplace in Room 1. Significant amounts of ash were also found in Room 5. The courtyard was still used as a dump for ash. The quantity of objects of all types in units from this phase was relatively high and did not suggest any particularly clean space. The small quantity of objects from Room 5 is related to the poor state of preservation of the layers. The quantities of objects (including non-diagnostic fragments) found in the floor level of Room 4 indicates a relatively unclean space.

The most obvious unclean space from Phase 1 of House {3111} was placed outside the proper house. The ruined Building {3130} was probably used as a place for dumping rubbish all through the existence of the building. The dump contained extremely large amounts of ash, pottery sherds and animal bones. The source of ash was probably an oven, which

has yet to be located. Remains of animal bones prove that also food remains were dumped there. The second unclean space was the courtyard, but the dump deposits in this case were different. The layer in the courtyard consisted of intercalated black ash and brown sand laminae. Ash, most likely from provisional fireplaces, were apparently dumped from time to time and subsequently covered with windblown sand. Three such fireplaces were traced in the courtyard from Phase 2.

The inner spaces of House {3111} were relatively clean and no specific dumping place was noted. The low artifact content of the well-preserved, relatively high-volume floor level suggests that Room 3 was kept very clean. By contrast, the sheer quantity of artifacts of all kinds scattered in the floor level inside Room 4 suggests relative uncleanness. The numbers of finds from this room are comparable with those for Room 1, despite the lower floor volume in Room 4. A similar situation was observed for Phase 2 with Room 3 still being very clean and Rooms 4 and 5 yielding large quantities of finds despite low-volume and poorly preserved floors. The extremely poor state of preservation of layers from Phase 3 precludes any conclusions except for the thick layers of ash found in the courtyard, which suggest that the main dumping place had shifted from the ruined Building {3130}.

The analysis has demonstrated that the inner spaces of both houses were kept relatively clean. Large dumps were located outside, in the courtyards or in ruined buildings. The sheer volume of all kinds of objects from the floors indicates that some rooms (Room 4 in House {1095}

from Phase 4, Rooms 4 and 5 from House {3111} from Phases 1 and 2) were not considered as clean spaces. Perhaps they were used for manufacturing activities and did not require regular cleaning. Other rooms, like Room 3 in House {3111} from

Phases 1 and 2, show regular cleaning. Considering the location of the room, at the back of the unit, and its small size, it seems probable that the high level of cleanness was due to its use for sleeping rather than receiving guests.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The architectural features of both houses presented in this paper, despite some differences, share many characteristics. Size and layout are what differentiates them the most. House {3111} occupied an area of 116 m<sup>2</sup> with a courtyard of 35 m<sup>2</sup>. The structure comprised up to eight rooms. House {1095} had approximately 80 m<sup>2</sup> with a courtyard of at least 4 m<sup>2</sup>. It consisted of five rooms. The layout of the eastern part of House {3111} resembles Bietak's type B1 (Bietak 1996), comprising one main living room and two rooms at the back. The layout of the western part is rather irregular and may have resulted from space constraints within the settlement. The layout of House {1095} resembles Tietze's type "b", which comprises the main living room with smaller rooms abutting the two sides (Tietze 1985; 1986). House {3111} was originally, in Phase 1, separated into two units with independent entrances. In the successive Phases 2 and 3, a third independent space (Room 4) was separated out. House {1095} was originally a single living unit (Phase 1 and presumably 2). It was separated into two units with independent entrances in Phases 3 and 4. Frequent changes of layout are notable in both structures. They should probably be linked with changes of the resident family structures. Irregular wall construction is another feature noted in

both buildings. The wall thickness, varying from one to two bricks, does not represent any clear pattern (e.g., the outer walls of House {3111} limiting Rooms 4 and 5 are much thinner than outer walls elsewhere).

From the perspective of an activity-area analysis the two structures share many elements. Installations, the best indicators of activities, are unfortunately rather rare. They indicate mostly storage activities and allow certain spaces to be designated as "living rooms". Neither house has any structures indicative of manufacturing activities, e.g., ovens, quern emplacements. Alterations of installations in Room 1 of House {3111} is another example of multifunctionality in ancient Egyptian houses, especially those of small and medium size (Spence 2015).

The analysis of activities based on moveable objects, although the weakest indicator, confirms the multifunctionality of the rooms. The bulk of diagnostic fragments of small finds and pottery (reaching about 80% of the total number of objects) indicates activities connected with subsistence. Much less represented are remains of objects connected with storage and transport (about 10–15% of all objects). Remains representing different types of craftworks and private religion constitute less than 1% of all of the objects. More importantly, these proportions are the same for both

houses in all phases. Distribution of activities according to rooms also shows that from the perspective of moveable artifacts different activities could have taken place in the same room in the same phase.

The analysis of clean and unclean spaces revealed a fairly clear pattern. Waste prod-

ucts were kept mostly outside the house proper. The pattern is recognized in houses from other Egyptian settlements (Arnold 2015). In most rooms, fragments of discarded objects were regularly left on the floor. However, there are spaces which were evidently kept very clean intentionally.

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