FABRIC ANALYSIS OF NDERIT WARE

by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of Nderit ware based on the use of fabric analysis. Nderit ware was first recognized by L.S.B. Leakey who named it Gumban A. But it was later renamed Nderit, after a series of sites along the Nderit river. The ware occurs in three different ecozones but persists with the same decorative technique, motif and form. The aim of this study was to find out why this is so. Fabric analysis was chosen as the method of analysis because it not only reveals the texture of the paste, but could also indicate the likely source or sources of the raw materials used.

The study starts with a description of the sites where the ware occurs. The next chapter analyses the typology, decorative technique and sequence, while the following chapter gives macroscopic analysis of the fabrics. Finally, there is an in-depth microscopic analysis of the fabrics. It is concluded that Nderit ware manufacture was localized and the ware was thus a function of the economic activity of its makers. It is also argued that Nderit ware pre-dates the adoption of pastoralism. That is, Nderit ware was used by people who practised an aquatic
mode of life and briefly by people who practised pastoralism. Because of this transitory nature, the ware has been labelled a pre-pastoral neolithic ware (PPN), and was assumed to have been responsible for the late stone age cairns, previously named Germaic Pottery (Sutton 1967, 1972). But later research indicated that this pottery was not associated with the cairns and it was renamed Ngorit Ware after three sites along the Uaso Nyiro river where it was first recognized (Wandera 1979).

Ngorit Ware has been found in many and various environments. It has been found in river banks, in the Ngorit drift and Makalia in rockshelters as at Tugen (Bowey 1973); in open savannah as at Lakenya Hill and in shorelines as at Lopay and Koobi Fora, western edge of Lake Turkana respectively. In all these environments, the ware is associated with a different mode of subsistence. For example, in the lacustrine deposits, it has been found to be associated with fish bones and wild fauna. In open savannah, it is associated with wild fauna and grazing animals. Also, on the eastern side of Lake Turkana, the Ngorit Ware sites have been associated with carbon remains (Keesing 1977). This is probably an indication of specialisation in fishing, hunting, gathering, pastoralism and, may be, agricultural production.