



*Heavy stone hammers of diorite in front of an unfinished statue block*

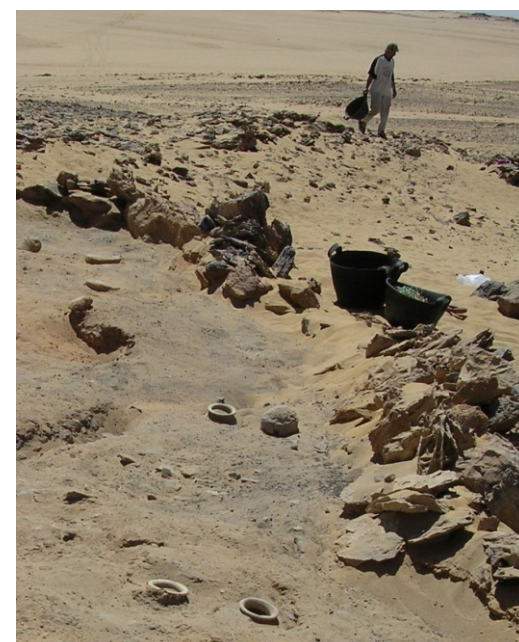


*"Blanks" of funerary vessels stockpiled in front of a quarry*

Chephren's Quarry is situated in the easternmost part of the Sahara and extends over 100 km of flat, hyper-arid desert, some 60 km west of Abu Simbel in southern Egypt. In the 3rd and 4th millennium BC, the quarry was used for extraction of stone for now world-famous sculptures and thousands of smaller funerary objects, especially vessels. Chephren's Quarry is situated in outcrops of a light banded anorthositic gneiss within a complex of Precambrian rocks. The quarrying of the Chephren Gneiss has uniformly targeted loose boulders of gneiss on the terrain surface, formed by in situ by spheroidal weathering over long periods of time. The gneiss boulders were worked with stone hammers and axes from local sources, leaving circular heaps of spoil. In addition to the extraction sites themselves, the quarry landscape displays roads, ramps for loading blocks, shelters, camps, wells, cairns and other features related to the logistical side of quarrying and maintenance of the labour force. The uniqueness of Chephren's Quarry is that it presents us with some of the earliest evidence for prestigious stone acquisition from remote areas in Antiquity, and (until recently) it is well preserved. As a physical landscape, the site may look "un-spectacular" at first sight, but when compiling the spatial distribution of quarries and ancient infrastructure, it reveals one of the supposedly largest 'industrial' landscapes of Early Antiquity in the world. Excavations were recently directed by the University of Liverpool. (Elizabeth Bloxam & Tom Haldal)



*Ramp for loading heavy statue blocks before transporting them to the Nile*



*Camp and bakery excavated along the transport route to the Nile*

*Shallow quarries of various sizes are scattered all over the area*

