



*Broken fragments of vessels in front of a "classic" deposit; lens-shaped serpentinite (dark) with a soapstone margin (light)*

Situated between Marsa Alam by the Red Sea and the Nile Valley, Egypt, numerous soapstone quarries at Rod el-Baram constitute a fascinating quarry landscape; the terrain is scattered with hundreds of holes and caves from quarrying. Soapstone, a rock composed of talc and other soft minerals, was predominantly used for cooking vessels, in Egypt as well as several other places in the world. Soapstone is easy to carve due to its softness, it does not break when heated and has good heat storage capacity. The soapstone occurs in the margins of lens-shaped bodies of serpentinite, clearly visible on a large scale in the area. The quarries are predominantly small in size, but occur in large quantities. Semi-finished and broken vessels are found all over the area, witnessing long periods of production. The quarries have probably been active since the Late Roman Period and onwards, and soapstone vessels were used by the Bedouins in the area until recently. Investigations in the area have been carried out by Prof. James Harrell, Univ. of Toledo.

*(Tom Heldal)*

*One of the quarries displaying rounded depressions from extraction of vessels*



*Broken fragment of soapstone cooking vessel*



*Tool marks (axe) from a quarry face*

