

The ship timbers of Ouadi el-Jarf  
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The preliminary analysis carried out from September 27th to October 2nd gave the opportunity to examine the collection of the various timbers that were collected in Ouadi el-Jarf since the beginning of the excavations in 2011. Because of the discoveries of ship timbers in the galleries Ayn Soukhna and Mersa Gawasis, the wooden pieces found in Ouadi el-Jarf are expected to provide some parts that may belong to one or several crafts.

Our preliminary examination reveals that the investigation will face various difficulties:

- 1) The most difficult task will consist in making out between ship timbers and other pieces of furniture. The keys are the size of the wood components, expected to be significant for a ship, and the presence of mortises and lashing holes. At least some of the ship timbers we have examined show they have been recut, revealing they have been reused for another purpose.
- 2) The ship timbers may thus not belong to one craft, but various crafts. The initial number of ships, their tonnage and their type before they were dismantled and stored in the galleries is unknown.
- 3) The low number of reference examples that span over a long time period. The preferred example for now is the Royal Ship of Cheops (Lipke 1984), since the 4th-dynasty rulers could have employed the same shipwrights. The investigation will also rely on earlier or later boats and craft fragments found in Abydos (Ward 2006), Abou Rawach (Tristant 2015), El-Licht (Haldane 1992; Ward 2000), and Dahshur (Creasman 2005). Nevertheless, those examples are Nilotic crafts with a funerary function, unlike the sea-going vessels of Ouadi el-Jarf that carried merchandise from Sinai. The purpose of the investigation will consist in determining how Cheops' shipwrights, who usually built Nilotic crafts, adapted their construction techniques to build sea-going ships. For this reason, the comparison with the ship timbers found in Ayn Soukhna (Pomey 2011, 2012, 2014) and Mersa Gawasis (Ward and Zazzaro 2009), although they belong to respectively the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom, might help to better understand this issue.

The timbers of Ouadi el-Jarf will provide significant information about a dead spot in ship archaeology. It will help better understand the Egyptian ship construction in the Old Kingdom, a period poorly documented. It will also show how the Nilotic construction techniques were adapted outside of the valley in a maritime context.