Beer jars were a fundamental part of wage transactions across Egypt during the Old Kingdom, serving as both a container for beer and a measure of value. They provide us with a unit fundamental to Egypt’s economic structure that is particularly crucial when discussing the non-elite classes. According to most applications of craft production theory, beer jars could not have fallen under state supervision as attached specialists did not produce utilitarian wares. However, following this deduction too closely without evaluating the purposes, social roles, and structural implications of different object types precludes the ability to study the relationship of utilitarian wares to state institutions because such interactions are already deemed impossible. The logic becomes circular: the ware type (utilitarian versus fine) becomes the definition for production method (attached versus independent specialists, workshop versus household production), and production method then restricts and essentially defines ware type. If utilitarian wares were necessary for state control and inextricable from state activities, this simplistic relationship of wares and production would not hold true. Beer jars would have been crucial to the administration and function of the economic system by any level of authority, be it state or regional. As P. Wattenmaker has noted, “There are few explanations for specialization among the non-elite, perhaps because the existence of such specialization . . . is not widely acknowledged.”

Typology and Methodology

When discussing any utilitarian ceramic type, it is important to remember that archaeologists create etic-defined categories based on our understanding of the evidence, superimposing these categories and the logic

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1 See Chapter 3, pp. 72–77.
which they encode upon the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{3} Egyptian ceramics are typically divided between rough and fine wares based on the skill and beauty of the object’s execution; this division can sometimes act as a hierarchy for not only the value, but the importance, of the objects. Additionally, ceramists have, at least notionally, further separated necropolis production and settlement production as supra-categories, independent of the vessels’ ware type.\textsuperscript{4} By creating these categories, we strive to organize ancient Egyptian life by compartmentalizing it in ways which are understandable by modern individuals and accessible to modern questions and analyses. In some ways, cemetery and settlement are very real distinctions: one served as home to the dead, the other to the living. However, both served as homes in a very real sense. Necropoleis in their prime must have been hubs of activity for the living who built the tombs, interred their dead, practiced funeral rituals, and continued to celebrate the cult of the deceased. The dead were further understood to use the tombs as homes during the afterlife. Some vessel types were specifically interred in tombs, true, but this provenience does not necessarily remove the vessel from the living systems of production and distribution, nor from purpose and meaning as encoded by the living. Approaching ceramic corpora with the intent to divide between those dedicated to the dead or the living asks a simplistic question which ignores how fluid these categories could be. The Egyptians would not necessarily have understood these divisions or have been limited to them; our categories do not necessarily encode cultural meaning. Typologies are helpful and necessary for forwarding discussion and scholarly thought, but by enshrining such models we limit our own ability to continually test the archaeological record and question our own assumptions and categorizations.

Turning to standardization, one of the defining characteristics of specialization, helps one move past the self-defining loops characteristic of paired typologies like attached :: independent and settlement :: cemetery. Measuring the degree of standardization in utilitarian vessels without first turning to the self-referential categories of attached and independent specialists allows one to place the vessels into appropriate categories based
