



## **Egypt's Heartland: Regional Perspectives on Hierakonpolis, Elkab and Edfu**

**Thursday July 18, 2019**  
**St Antony's College and Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford**

### **ABSTRACTS**

#### ***Beverages of Power: The contribution of Hierakonpolis***

Renee Friedman

While beer in Ancient Egypt is generally considered a drink of the people, which together with bread was a staple of daily life and available to all, this was not always the case. The numerous breweries at Hierakonpolis, including the earliest known for production on an industrial scale, indicate that in the Predynastic period beer was an important commodity worthy of elite investment in its infrastructure and attendant specialists, facilitating both feasting and feeding. This interest in beer, first documented at Hierakonpolis, had an important effect on the growth of other specialist activities and socio-economic systems both at Hierakonpolis and across Egypt, and its influence can be tracked in the trajectory and development of the early Egyptian state.

#### ***The settlement of Elkab: results of recent fieldwork***

Wouter Claes

The Upper Egyptian site of Elkab was an important provincial centre during the early stages of Egyptian history. Despite intensive archaeological investigations since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, initially by British and since 1937 by Belgian archaeologists, our knowledge of the occupational history of the site is still limited and biased since past research mainly focussed on the large funerary and religious monuments. Little or no attention was devoted to the study of the origin and development of the settlement.

Since 2009, the archaeological mission of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels is carrying out new excavations in the settlement area of the site with the specific aim of investigating the origin and development of the habitation at Elkab. Prior to this, the actual existence of *in situ* settlement remains

of this provincial town had never been firmly demonstrated. In this presentation, we will focus on some of the results of recent fieldwork in the Elkab settlement area. These excavations have revealed the presence of a vast habitation area with well-preserved *in situ* mud brick buildings and other settlement remains, dating to the terminal phases of Egyptian prehistory, the period of state formation and the early phases of pharaonic civilization.



#### ***'Holyrubbish'? Human statuettes from the Hierakonpolis Main Deposit***

Liam McNamara

The spectacular cache of objects excavated by Quibell and Green in the 'Main Deposit' at Hierakonpolis in 1897–1898 included hundreds of fragments of human statuettes carved from hippopotamus and elephant ivory. Ranging from more or less complete examples to the detached heads, arms, legs, feet and bases of many others, the group represents men, women and children in a variety of poses and costumes. The challenges faced in conserving the decayed ivory were such that most of the statuettes have never been



systematically published, and therefore remain largely unknown. The majority of the Hierakonpolis ivories were presented to the Ashmolean Museum soon after their discovery. An on-going project to catalogue the collection has now identified more than 700 pieces, including some 323 fragments of human statuettes.

Debate continues concerning the date of their manufacture and the reason for their deposition. Re-analysis of Green's original excavation notes has shed new light on their archaeological context, as well as

opening up alternative interpretations of the site's significance during the period of state formation. This paper will present the results of a study of the corpus, relating the Hierakonpolis statuettes to comparative material from deposits found at other sites including Elephantine, Abydos, Tell Ibrahim Awad and Tell el-Farkha, before challenging the standard interpretation of such deposits as discarded temple offerings and proposing an alternative explanation of the contexts in which they should be understood.

***Elkab and Hierakonpolis: tombs of the Second Intermediate Period and the artist Sedjemnetjeru***  
Vivian Davies

It is well established that the 'scribe of forms' Sedjemnetjeru played a major part in the decoration of the tombs of the priest Horemkhauf at Hierakonpolis and the governor Sobeknakht at ElKab. Based on recent research in the field and on the archival record, this paper presents further data (from the two tombs in question and others) bearing on Sedjemnetjeru's reach as an artist and role in the funerary ritual. It will also present for the first time a record of Horemkhauf's 'second stela', a painted parallel for his famous stone stela now housed in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.



***Nubians, Nubians Everywhere!***  
Aaron De Souza

This paper takes you on a whirlwind tour through more than one thousand years of Nubian activity at El Kab, Hierakonpolis, and Edfu. From the Nubian A-Group through to the Classic Kerma culture, we will encounter some of the biggest and the earliest, as well as some of the rather unusual, material that fills a hitherto inexplicable gap in the archaeological record. Nubians were indeed everywhere and, despite what the Egyptians might have us think, their presence on Egyptian soil was not entirely unwelcome.

***Preliminary results from the newly discovered early New Kingdom elite quarter at Tell Edfu***  
Gregory Marouard

In 2018, the Tell Edfu Project (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) resumed its work on the upper part of the ancient tell (Zone 1). The main goal was to explore settlement remains that are situated to the north of the previously excavated Governors' Palace (Middle Kingdom) and silo courtyard (Second Intermediate Period). Under several Late Period domestic installations and thick layers of refuse dated to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, a large building complex has been discovered. The size of the structure and its architectural features point to an urban villa dating to the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, for which rare parallels are only found at Tell el-Dab'a, Tell el-Amarna and Malqata. This building corresponds to the first New Kingdom urban remains ever exposed at Edfu. In the largest room of this building, the remains of a small private shrine dedicated to the worship of ancestors were uncovered. The undisturbed archaeological context in addition to its significant finds (several stelae, a small statue and an ancestor bust) shed new light on the various elements belonging to the sphere of private religious practices. Comparable installations are mainly known from Deir el-Medineh and Amarna which date to later phases of the New Kingdom, making the new example at Edfu the earliest known so far for this period. This paper will focus on the context and the associated finds in addition to providing further insights into the administrative roles of the inhabitants of this villa at the beginning of the New Kingdom.

***The figural graffiti of Tomb 3 in Hagr Edfu***  
Susanne Woodhouse

Situated in the elite necropolis of Hagr Edfu, a mountainous area located 3.5km to the west of Edfu, recent fieldwork in a late 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tomb has revealed an unexpected 'treasure'. Throughout the New Kingdom, and perhaps as early as the Second Intermediate Period, visitors carved and inked figural as well as hieratic graffiti on the undecorated walls of this tomb. To date, about 250 individual graffiti, the majority figural, have been identified, among the largest number attested in any one space so far in Egypt. This paper presents for the first time an overview of the figural material and explores the reasons for its presence in such quantity.

***Pious visitors, tourists or vandals?***  
Rob Demarée

A quick check in the most recent publication (2001) on graffiti from pharaonic Egypt might lead to the conclusion that in Upper Egypt such writings are only recorded at Thebes, Gebel Silsila and Aswan. Some results from epigraphic work in tombs at Edfu, Elkab and Hierakonpolis will show a different picture. Various graffiti dating to the early and mid- 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty and later periods have been recorded and some are a little more than ordinary.

***Family Portraits: Exploring the representation of female relatives in the Elkab necropolis***  
Ellen Jones

This paper analyses the tombs of Pahery and Ahmose, son of Ibana, investigating how the mother, wife/wives, sister(s), and daughter(s) of the tomb owner were portrayed relative to one another, to explore whether differences in size, outfit, captions, and scene placement (etc.) may have been used to highlight internal familial hierarchies. Were mothers given the most iconographic prominence? Are there kinship roles which were depicted in similar ways or were interchangeable within the iconography? What can the portrayal of female relatives within tombs propose about ancient Egyptian kinship and family structures?

***Composite snakes in second millennium iconographies: Amduat, apotropaic wands, and the Book of Two Ways***  
Jordan Miller

Composite images, which combine parts of different objects, are common in Egyptian art; however, the significance of their forms and distribution is relatively underexplored. I discuss how they were used in the Amduat, focusing on those which incorporate ophidian

elements. I relate the Amduat to two earlier categories of material: the Book of Two Ways, and apotropaic wands. The three categories represent different overlaps of solar themes, chthonic associations, and imagery of guarding and protection. These intersect with traditions of magical practice, mortuary ritual, knowledge display, and use of pictorial-textual compositions. The forms and distribution of ophidian composites reflect interrelationships between these aspects, mediated by the decorum of each category.

***Late & Graeco-Roman graffiti from Elkab: 'Informal Writings' contributing to the history of a site.***  
Luigi Prada

Since 2016, the Oxford Expedition to Elkab has included in its documentation work the Late and Graeco-Roman Period epigraphic material—mostly graffiti—found in the necropolis and in the adjacent Wadi Hilal. The monuments concerned include the Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Reneny, the Ramesside/Ptolemaic hemispeos, and the temple of Amenhotep III. Samples of the graffiti collected so far in the tomb of Reneny will be used as a case study to demonstrate the potential that such 'informal writings' can have in reconstructing the history and transformation not only of a single monument, but of an entire site.



***A tomb from the reign of Ptolemy III in the main necropolis of Elkab***  
Luigi Prada and Susanne Woodhouse

First documented by Richard Lepsius in 1844, a small private tomb that is dated to the second half of the third century BC on the basis of the cartouches of Ptolemy III and Berenike II was relocated in the main necropolis of Elkab and is now being documented and studied by the Oxford Expedition. The painted decoration of the cult-chamber consists of religious scenes as well as of scenes depicting worldly activities which might relate actual events from the tomb owner's lifetime. With the hieroglyphic royal cartouches and some demotic captions in a priestly cortege being the only texts in the tomb decoration found so far, the tomb owner remains, for the time being, anonymous.

## EVENING SPECIAL LECTURE

### *New insights into relations between center and periphery: The evolution of the administrative quarter at Edfu from the Old Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period*

Nadine Moeller

The recent fieldwork by the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, team at Tell Edfu has focused on the excavation of two administrative town quarters located on the eastern side of the tell. In an area close to the later Ptolemaic temple several structures of monumental size dating to the reign of Djedkare -Isesi (Dynasty 5) have been found, which are linked to an increased interest by the central government in establishing an important base at Edfu for expeditions departing into the Eastern Desert. A significant number of clay sealings mentioning the title of 'overseer of prospectors (sementiu)' in addition to evidence for copper smelting activities and copper ore attest to this activity of acquiring important raw materials from the Eastern Desert. This part of the town is an ex-nihilo foundation directly built onto the natural bedrock and probably constitutes an enlargement of a much smaller settlement at Edfu during the earlier Old Kingdom. Over time, the administrative center at Edfu saw a significant evolution until the Middle Kingdom for which a large administrative building complex has

been excavated further south that had probably functioned as the residence of the local governor. Numerous clay sealings and other finds attest to the administrative activities carried out in this building. By the early Second Intermediate Period this building complex was gradually abandoned but in its last phases of occupation a shipment of goods had arrived from north naming the Hyksos ruler Khayan, which is attested by more than 40 clay sealings. After the abandonment of the governor's residence, a large silo-court was constructed during the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in this area. These silos once held the grain reserve of the town and can be considered the last phase of official institutions occupying this part of the ancient city, which was completely abandoned some time during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Both the Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom remains provide much new evidence for the interaction between a provincial capital in the south and the capitals in Memphis and Thebes, respectively.

