

THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 'EGYPT AT ITS ORIGINS' PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC EGYPT

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The 8th International Conference
"Egypt at its Origins"
Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt



Presentations

The abstracts are arranged alphabetically according to the last name of the first author.

A

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UNCOVERING THE ORIGINS OF THE STEP PYRAMID: A MASTABA TOMB FROM THE FIRST DYNASTY AT ABYDOS

The Step Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara is widely considered to be the first pyramid built in ancient Egypt. However, the origins of this iconic structure remain somewhat shrouded in mystery. This conference paper presents the results of a recent excavation at Abydos, where a mud bricks mastaba tomb dating back to the First Dynasty has been discovered. This tomb, which predates the Step Pyramid by several centuries, appears to be the oldest known tomb of its kind in Upper Egypt, if not all over Egypt. It is located in the Early Dynastic cemetery at south Abydos, a site that is somehow associated with the early rulers of Egypt. The tomb is thought to be the burial place of a high-ranking official or nobleman, possibly even a royal family member. The tomb's structure is generally similar to that of the Step Pyramid, with a series of terraces leading up to a flat-topped structure. However, the Abydos tomb is very much smaller in scale and lacks the elaborate internal corridors found in the Step Pyramid due to the landscape nature of Saqqara. Despite these differences, the tomb provides important insights into the development of pyramid-like structures in ancient Egypt. The presence of this tomb at Abydos suggests that the idea of building a pyramid may have originated in this region rather than at Saqqara, as previously thought. Further analysis of the Mastaba tomb and its contents may help to shed light on the cultural and historical context in which the Step Pyramid was built. It is possible that the builders of the Step Pyramid were influenced by the Mastaba tomb and other similar structures at Abydos, incorporating elements of their design into the larger, more elaborate pyramid at Saqqara.

In conclusion, the discovery of the Mastaba tomb at Abydos adds an important new piece to the puzzle of the origins of the Step Pyramid. Further research on this and other early pyramid-like structures may help to uncover the mystery of how and why the ancient Egyptians began building these iconic structures.

Sergio ALARCÓN ROBLEDO

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SURVEYING THE NORTH SAQQARA PLATEAU

This paper presents an update of the ongoing research of the archives related to the excavations of the North Saqqara plateau in the Early Dynastic Period, focusing on the results of a season of topographic survey in the North Saqqara Plateau, which will be conducted in October and November 2023 with three objectives: (1) The detailed documentation of the topography of the area as it is today, (2) the integration of archival spatial data into a comprehensive plan of the necropolis in the Early Dynastic Period, and (3) the assessment of the current state of preservation of the structures that remain exposed. In the first half of the 20th century several archaeological enterprises uncovered a large number of tombs in the North Saqqara plateau. Various circumstances prevented the comprehensive publication of the excavation results, and more than 160 of these structures, dating to the First, Second and Third Dynasties, have hitherto remained largely unknown to the scientific community. The preliminary investigation of the archives related to this site revealed that a comprehensive plan of the site has not survived, and further work with the archival documentation only allowed for a partial reconstruction of the layout of the cemetery—as presented in Origins 7. Numerous mudbrick structures remain partially visible at the site, and the Ministry of Antiquities has granted permissions to conduct a detailed photogrammetric survey of the area. Several thousands of photographs will be taken with a 7.5 m. pole, which will allow for the creation of a detailed Digital Elevation Model and an orthomosaic of the site as it is today. This paper will not only present the results of this fieldwork, but it will further present how this data serves as the basis for the tracing of a detailed plan of the plateau, integrating and enrich partial surveys of the necropolis built from the plans and documents of the works of W. B. Emery and C. M. Firth in the 1930s and the 1940s.

B

Jade BAJEOT

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TECHNOPREGYPT: OUTCOME OF A TECHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PRE-DYNASTIC POTTERY FROM THE NILE VALLEY

This paper aims at presenting the results of the technological study carried out on pottery from several Predynastic sites investigated in the Aswan region by the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project, and on the museum collections of the Museo Egizio, Turin, and from the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint Germain-en-Laye. The analysis was carried out in the frame of the project TECHNOPREGYPT, funded by the National Science Centre of Poland (POLONEZ BIS reg. No. 2021/43/P/HS3/O3262), whose purpose is to investigate the modes of pottery production in Predynastic Egypt (4th millennium BCE) to reach a deeper

comprehension of the predynastic society. This time, however, with a bottom-up approach as the technological analysis, whose premises are based on the study of learning and transmission systems of technical traditions, allows to obtain an anthropological reading of material culture and to investigate ancient societies from the point of view of artisans. The analysed material, that ranges from Naqada IC to Naqada IIIB (c. 3700-3100 BCE), comes from several domestic and funerary sites of Upper Egypt and from a Middle Egypt site. During the presentation the various *chaînes opératoires* identified will be illustrated and we will follow their evolution over time. Alongside the traditional method to study the ceramic fragments kept in Egyptian storehouses (naked eye and binocular microscope), it was possible to apply X-rays microtomography to a series of samples from the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint Germain-en-Laye. This non-destructive technique allows to investigate the inner structure of complete pots and sherds by producing images and 3D models useful for highlighting the characteristics of the clay paste and the manufacturing techniques. The outcomes and potential of this non-destructive analysis will therefore be shown.

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***GRAIN, BREAD AND STONE. STONE TOOLS FOR FOOD PRODUCTION AS A
SYMBOLIC ELEMENT OF MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE EARLY DYNASTIC
AND OLD KINGDOM PERIODS. A VIEW FROM TELL EL-MURRA
SETTLEMENT***

Stone tools such as quernstones, grinders, hammerstones represent one of the most numerous categories of artefacts discovered in settlements scattered throughout Egypt (and beyond). It is also this category of mass artefacts that is being gently marginalised, in favour of effective stone vessels, art pieces, flint knives or other artefacts made of other raw materials. Quernstones and grinders were the basic tools for processing cereals into flour and other cereal products (grains, seeds or herbs). They undoubtedly played an important role during the production of food, especially bread - which also had a symbolic dimension. Food preparation using stone objects has been common in various cultures over thousands of years and almost identical everywhere. As settlements and production centres developed, stone tools continued to be an integral part of life and food preparation at the time.

Many of these tools (such as quernstones and grinders) were extremely important pieces of equipment for individual houses, economic structures, workshops or places for mass food production. Most were made of the hardest varieties of stone such as quartzite sandstone and basalt. From the point of view of the settlement that took place in Lower Egypt, these raw materials were brought in from neighbouring areas because there are no rocks of this type in this area.

This presentation will provide an insight into this overlooked category of monuments that have accompanied society/people in his daily life. It will be based on a number of examples from excavations in the Nile Delta at the Tell el-Murra site, which come from sedimentary layers dating to the Early Dynastic period and the beginning of the Old Kingdom. They occur in a regular settlement, as in part of a cemetery that was already abandoned at the time. In the

context of individual graves, small stone slabs and pebbles, which were intentionally deposited in individual burials, are also an interesting category (although relatively few in number). Such practices are familiar from other cultures and societies, living and functioning in different parts of the world. They are identified, for example, with evidence of pottery and, from a religious studies perspective, such objects were attributes of divine patronage and protection.

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THE VARIABILITY OF THE PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC FUNERARY LANDSCAPES AS SEEN THROUGH SUBADULTS BURIALS

Despite the great interest that our subdiscipline has shown towards funerary archaeology, we still require an exhaustive analysis of how social identities were expressed and constructed in Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt. This is particularly true for age identities, especially subadults. We lack an overall understanding of the funerary customs associated with foetuses, infants, children, and adolescents, and of how age and incorporation into society might have affected mortuary treatments. Thus, this project has collated a dataset of subadult graves in Egypt from the 4th millennium BC in order to develop a social analysis of the relationship between age identities and burial rituals. Data emerges from unpublished excavations, published reports, and work in archives and museum collections. The current paper will focus on the spatial dimension of these graves and the significance of their location in the funerary landscape by analysing the similarities and differences between (and within) burials spaces, including community cemeteries, settlement burials, child cemeteries, and isolated graves. The possibility of ephemeral burials that might not leave material trace is also discussed. Data from over 1300 subadult graves from 82 communal cemeteries, 18 settlement areas, 5 children's necropoleis, and at least 6 isolated graves, located in both Upper and Lower Egypt, and spanning the whole Naqada Period, is drawn in this study. The results show clear differences between the demographic profiles of these spaces, with various subadult age cohorts targeted in each type of site. Differences (and similarities) can be found as well in terms of body position, treatment of corpse, types of grave goods offered and overall provision/richness, which allows to discuss the distinct rationalities behind burials of children in different points of the funerary landscape. Finally, differences are not only found between types of burial location, but also within. This can be seen in previously unnoticed spatial patterns of infants and children within communal cemeteries: from random spatial inclusion to marginal distribution and clusters of children inside burial plots. These divergences show changes in burial spaces and rituals as the personhood acquisition and socialisation process advanced, mediated by individual differences in grief and emotional expression, too. Certain conclusions will be drawn: the results allow us to explore the dynamic burial landscape of prehistoric societies in Egypt and to problematise the idea that a cemetery is an ideal and complete representation of the community. Although taphonomic factors should not be overlooked, there is evidence for various burial spaces for children that account for their common underrepresentation (especially infants and young children) in general cemeteries, as attested ethnographically. The necessity to create finer age categorisations to unveil emic age identities of past societies is

also defended, rather than work with a simplistic children vs adults dichotomy. Finally, differences in the demographic composition, offerings and ritual practices between spaces allow us to discuss the diverse meanings and rationalities behind these varied burial locations, including personhood, grief, social position, and cosmology. It is proposed that archaeologists should be aware of the spatiality of burials when interpreting Egyptian funerary customs.

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MOBILITY AND THE MANUFACTURE OF POWER IN THE EARLY EGYPTIAN STATE: RETHINKING THE NATURE OF CONTACT WITH THE SOUTHERN LEVANT DURING THE FIFTH AND FOURTH MILLENNIUM BCE

Prior investigations into the nature of interaction between communities in Egypt and the southern Levant during the Pre- and Early dynastic periods have traditionally explored contact through the lens of culturally bounded identities tied to geographic place, with a focus on the nature of interaction during the late fourth millennium BCE. While nomadic communities likely played a central role in connecting groups in the southern Levant and northeast Africa during the fifth and early fourth millennium, they are often portrayed in passive roles carrying objects of trade between sedentary communities. However, several scholars have argued for understanding the origins of the early Egyptian state in the mobile pastoral communities of the Neolithic Nile Valley, wherein many practices and symbols of power of the early Egyptian state trace their origins. Traditionally, however, little attention has been paid to how the practices, identities, and conceptions of space borne out of such interregional interaction with the southern Levant during the late fifth and early fourth millennium BCE may have also impacted on the curation of a distinct early Egyptian political identity. Importantly, recent research on such interregional interaction is beginning to temper this picture by exploring the blended identities and practices that materialized due to the uneven interaction across the landscape of the southern Levant.

This paper seeks to further nuance our understanding of the important role played by Nile Valley communities in the rise of the early Egyptian state by arguing key symbols of early Egyptian power can be traced back to collaboration, cooperation, and competition with groups in the southern Levant during the fifth and fourth millennium, resulting in a need to rethink how the region was conceptualized after a millennium of interaction. Specifically, I propose the mining of copper-bearing greenstone minerals (and thus copper) came to play an increasingly important role in fostering contact between communities, impacting on the construct of shared communal identities, ideologies, and technological practices. This proposal will be supported through a survey of several lines of evidence suggesting the sharing of craft knowledge and burial rites of passage. Specific elements of the Nahal Mishmar hoard, a cache of over 400 metal objects hidden in a cave in the Judean Desert, will also be re-examined. While the hoard has long been dated to the late fifth millennium BCE, several lines of evidence warrant a reconsideration of such a date. I therefore raise the possibility that the cache was deposited during the late fourth millennium and reflects a complex communal identity that was the product of economic cooperation between mobile and pastoral groups in the southern Levant,

Nile Valley and Delta over the course of a millennium. By reevaluating selected objects in the hoard, I maintain we can complicate our understanding of the interaction, identities, and power dynamics between individuals from Egypt and the southern Levant during the Pre- and Early dynastic periods, and how such cooperation and competition played a factor into the rise of an early state identity.

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NICHED FAÇADES IN EARLY EGYPT: ARCHITECTURE AND SYMBOLISM

This paper explores the early uses of niched façades in the Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom, both in architecture and two-dimensional representations. Oftentimes scholars assume a fairly straightforward relationship between representations of so-called palace façades (or serekhs), and their early and exclusively royal use, and royal architecture. As the name “palace façade” suggests, this has most often been assumed to be the royal palace, a type of building of which we have no early extant examples and that we are not certain existed at all in the period in which the serekh became an important icon. Here we gather and examine extant examples of Early Dynastic and early Old Kingdom architectural façades that are niched, only then asking about the relationships between those examples, potential un-preserved genres of architecture, and the possible relationships of actual architecture to symbolic representations. These relationships continue to be problematic in later periods, with scholars assuming that the serekh, or representations of niched façades more generally, were always recognizably related to architecture. Later uses have also influenced interpretation of the early development of niched architecture and serekhs. Would all niched façades on early Egyptian architecture have been understood as belonging to a single category and communicating a single message? Was that message connected to kingship, and if so how is it related to the use of the unambiguously royal serekh? On one hand, niched architectural façades are known from the earliest royal buildings extant, but only on royal temples rather than royal tombs; they are also found on (presumably) non-royal tombs at Saqqara. Niched façade representations, on the other hand, are associated with Early Dynastic royal tombs at Abydos. In looking for patterns between the uses of both actual niched façade architecture and its representations, we will examine who was able to use and see each of them. In doing so, we will question how royal both the architecture itself and its representation actually are, as well as how their meaning changed over time.

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'FROM HAIR TO HISTORY': THE POTENTIAL OF THE CURRENT REASSESSMENT OF NAQADA'S 'GREAT CEMETERY' EXEMPLIFIED THROUGH A CONTEXT ANALYSIS OF HAIR ADORNMENTS

The NUBTI project (Naqada Unified Base for Tomb Information) aims at re-assessing the exact contents of each tomb in the “Great Cemetery” of Naqada using the various archival sources and museum material available. Amongst these mostly unexploited sources are the exact pottery lists for each tomb as well as the tomb plans sketched in Petrie and Quibell’s notebooks. Building on the database resulting from the project’s work, this paper will show the potential of such a re-examination with the example of the 115 hair adornments (combs and ‘hairpins’) found in 86 tombs within this site. The recent rediscovery of the “pottery lists” by Alice Stevenson in the Petrie Museum is especially precious as it helps to refine the dating (loosely defined between Naqada IB and IIC) of this type of material, building on the now more accurately documented pottery assemblage of each tomb. The project database also includes a GIS (with an updated map of the cemetery) which enables to create a map of the distribution of this kind of artifacts, in order to investigate possible clusterings. The archaeological context and placement of grave goods can be reconstructed for 58 of these tombs through the sketches in Petrie and Quibell’s notebooks. While the possibility of a gendered pattern would be a very interesting research question, it can only be investigated with caution and strong comparisons with other sites, given the uncertainties in the sexuation of skeletal material from Petrie’s excavations. On the other hand, the sketches offer the possibility to analyze in depth the position of the different objects, in relation to the body and the general space of the tomb, which will help reveal the significance of these implements in the funerary setting. The use of statistical analysis can point us to new directions in studying this kind of objects; for instance, correlation analyses will help explore how often they are associated with other artifacts, such as weapons, beads, other animal depictions, etc. Because of the frequent confusions in museum samples between objects from Ballas and Naqada, this paper will focus exclusively on tombs known in the notebooks or numbered 500 and upwards, to avoid such confusions.

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LATEST DATA FROM TELL EL-ISWID, THE END OF A NEARLY 20-YEAR PROJECT

In 2006, a multi-disciplinary programme was initiated by the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology (IFAO). It planned to integrate the study of Tell el-Iswid site (eastern Delta) into a project that investigated the interactions between humans and the environment. The aim was

first to determine the ancient topography of the location by means of core drilling and archaeological soundings, in combination with magnetic surveys.

Between 2010 and 2014, excavations focused on the western part of the site (area 4), revealing one of the first mud-brick buildings for the delta and its subsequent architectural transformations during the Naqada IIIA2-B period. Then, during the last few years, one of our goals was to refine the stratigraphic sequence of the earlier Buto period in order to clarify changing dynamics in the Delta during the fourth millennium and identify the factors driving these changes.

The last project undertaken (2022-2025) is focusing on spatial analysis. Indeed, the question of the overall organisation of a settlement at that time remains open. Thus, on the one hand, the aim is to understand the organisation of the settlement on the periphery of the Naqadian domestic units excavated up to 2014. On the other hand, based on initial results, the settlement of the Buto period appears to be more complex than expected, its evolution showing both permanence and mutations that need to be explained.

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PREDYNASTIC CEMETERY M IN ZAWYET SULTAN, MIDDLE EGYPT

Zawyet Sultan is located 10 km south of the modern city of el-Minya in Middle Egypt. The most prominent monument of the site is a minor step pyramid dated to the early Old Kingdom. Raymond Weill discovered a predynastic cemetery ("nécropole M") near the pyramid in 1913 and published a list of tombs and their associated burial equipment, however without photos and drawings. The cemetery is therefore poorly discussed in the research literature. A substantial part of the excavated material is today kept in the Louvre Museum. In 2023, the University of Cologne resumed excavations around the pyramid and revealed a series of predynastic pit burials in this area. The human remains and the material culture of the burials are excellently preserved. The excavated pots and the objects in the Louvre Museum suggest a date for cemetery M in the Naqada IIc and IId periods. This talk presents the results of the excavation and puts them up for a discussion of predynastic burial customs in Middle Egypt, the historical dynamics of the time and the local context of the cemetery.

C

Marcelo CAMPAGNO

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BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS. THE ORIGINS OF THE EGYPTIAN STATE AND THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF A THEORETICAL PROBLEM

“Origin of the state. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt”: this was the title of the first of our meetings, held in Krakow in 2002. Since then, it has been the name of the seven conferences that have followed, including this one, back in Krakow. Recently, however, *The Dawn of Everything* (2022), a book by David Graeber and David Wengrow which has become a very influential bestseller and which focuses, among other things, on Ancient Egypt, has a chapter entitled “Why the State Has No Origin”. What has happened? Is it just a kind of inertia that leads the organisers of these meetings to keep the same name for a subject that has changed so radically to the point of disappearing? Is it what we can expect from those “enfants terribles” that appear from time to time in the academic world? Is it something in between? I will try to argue that what is in between is the theoretical problem of the emergence of the state. From my point of view, today this problem is caught between two forces. The first comes from the still strong (neo-) evolutionist matrix out of which the problem was forged decades ago. The second comes from the more recent postmodern critique, which tries to suggest that everything was wrong with previous approaches. The problem is thus caught between Scylla and Charybdis. In this paper, I will try to look at it from the perspective of Odysseus. The archaeological evidence from the Nile Valley for the existence of the process of change commonly referred to as the “origin of the state” will be re-examined, as well as the theoretical approaches that have been proposed in the past to interpret it. I will suggest the possibility of continuing to think about the theoretical problem of the origin of the (Egyptian) state far from both its old evolutionist forge and its new destituent phantoms.

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SMALL FINDS FROM CENTRAL KOM AT TELL EL-FARKHA

Hundreds of objects, so called small finds, were discovered during the excavations at Tell el-Farkha. These are items lost or abandoned by the inhabitants of the settlement. They can testify to both the wealth of the society and its economic activities. These are objects or fragments of items made of stone (including semi-precious stones), bone, copper, gold and clay.

The most numerous group is made of items that prove commercial activity of the society. These are rare cylindrical seals and much more numerous seal imprints with hieroglyphic signs. Fragments of seals with preserved imprints of fabrics and objects to which they were attached



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are very common. Counters of various shapes – conical, spherical or lenticular are also probably related to commercial activity inhabitants of Tell el-Farkha.

The second group consists of objects related to economic activities within the settlement. They may prove the importance of fishing. These are harpoons and hooks made of copper and bone. In addition, a number of other copper objects or fragments (chisels, pins, etc.) were discovered.

Jewellery constitutes a large collection of artefacts, testifying the wealth of the society. These are beads and amulets as well as fragments of bracelets. Mostly, they are made of various stones, including semi-precious ones. But there are also beads made of gold, bone or ordinary clay.

A considerable collection includes object or their fragments whose function is difficult to determine. The intensity and kind of objects found in different archaeological layers/chronological periods are varied. This proves both changes on the wealth of the inhabitants and its economic activity over the history of the site.

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***EXCAVATION AT WESTERN KOM AT TELL EL-FARKHA (1998-2023). THE
BREWERY CENTRE RECONSIDERED***

Tell el-Farkha, excavated for more than 20 years by a Polish mission, is one of the most important sites in the Eastern Delta. Results of these researches changed completely the old hypothesis and allowed to put a new more convincing theories. The site is actually marked by three mounds: Eastern Kom, Central Kom and Western Kom. The excavations at the Western Kom unearthed the layers connected with Lower Egyptian culture (ca 3700 – 3450 BC), in which a few breweries was discovered. In the next phase of occupation the first settlers from the South appeared. They erected the monumental building on the place of mentioned breweries. The edifice was burnt about 3350 BC, and an administrative-cultic centre was established on the same spot. It was composed of several rooms of different destinations. In two of them votive deposits were discovered. The Western Kom was abandoned at the beginning of the First Dynasty (ca. 3000 BC). The excavations in the area are almost finished and analysis of architectural remains is now conducted. In the layers connected with Lower Egyptian culture remains of ten breweries were discovered. Three of them were unearthed during the last campaigns. The architectural remains composed of wattle and daub constructions, as well as mud brick walls, shed new light on the organization of the area during existence of brewery centre.

D

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC REMAINS AT BIR UMM TINEIDBA

Since 2014, the ElKab Desert Survey Project of Yale University and the Royal Museums of Art and History Brussels (EDSP) has explored a swath of the Eastern Desert of Egypt, from Sharawna in the north and the southern border of the Wadi Abad to the south, stretching out beyond the tributaries of the Wadi Schaghab to the east. Within this broad area, the EDSP began to work in the northern portion of the Wadi Umm Tineidba during the 2017-2018 field season. Marked on earlier maps as the location of a well, no previous archaeological survey has been conducted in the wadi and its environs, and no ancient remains associated with the Wadi Umm Tinediba appear previously to have been recognized. In 1909, F.W. Green claimed to have checked the area in 1902, concluding that “there is little to interest the archaeologist.” Green was hastily dismissive of the area, however, which is home to a small but interesting set of archaeological features and epigraphic sites. The ancient remains of Bir Umm Tineidba, and closely associated areas of the Wadi Umm Tineidba, present a remarkable opportunity for examining the interactions of archaeological and epigraphic material in the Eastern Desert. Most of the ancient remains in Wadi Umm Tineidba concentrate in the area of Bir Umm Tineidba, a now dry water source. Rock art sites dating to the Predynastic and Protodynastic Periods appear at three main locations, the two largest of which are associated with extensive scatters of lithic material. The rock art ranges in date from the Naqada I Period through the early Old Kingdom, and reveals a blending of Nilotic iconography with what appear to be local traditions. The lithic material at the sites is consistent with what one would expect from a settlement context. Near the middle of the Bir Umm Tineidba site, not far from the central concentration of rock art, are large burial tumuli of Late Predynastic to early Protodynastic date. These, like the rock art, reveal the presence at Bir Umm Tineidba of people moving between the Nile Valley and the farther reaches of the Eastern Desert. To the west and slightly south of the main well area is a group of small burial tumuli with associated stone alignments. These tumuli predate the bulk of the archaeological material within the wadi proper; though heavily robbed, the abundant ceramic remains demonstrate a Tasian-Badarian affiliation for the site, again revealing the presence of at least a small population with Nilotic and desert associations. The alignments find parallels in Kharga Oasis and at Kurkur Oasis. Of much later date, two large settlements in the area, one at Bir Umm Tineidba proper and the other a short distance to the south, within the Wadi Umm Tineidba, demonstrate the presence at the site of a desert group with strong Nile Valley associations during the sixth century CE. The material at Bir Umm Tineidba reveals the presence of groups moving culturally and physically between the worlds of the Nile Valley and the Eastern Desert for roughly four millennia.

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INTRUSIVE BURIALS OF TELL EL-FARKHA: AN INTENTIONAL PRACTICE OR A COINCIDENCE?

The Proto-and Early Dynastic graves known from the site of Tell el-Farkha are interpreted as representing two cemeteries belonging to two following phases of the history of the site. Although distinct, they are characterised by numerous similarities suggesting a kind of continuity in burial customs. Unfortunately, the exact relation of the people buried in the older and younger graves remains unexplained, which generates numerous questions. One of such issues is the case of graves that occupy the same or nearly the same location. Among them, there are structures that simply overly themselves, or others that cut a small part of those positioned deeper without any major damage to the older structure. However, there is also a group of burial pairs representing two different periods, but built in the way that younger tombs adjusted to the pre-existing ones. Interestingly, the orientation of all such Early Dynastic graves was twisted toward the east in a sector where the exact north-south position seemed favourable clearly matching the Protodynastic rule. Therefore, the younger graves were built into the massive superstructures of the older ones just next to the older burial chamber, but without any intrusion in it. They were constructed that close to each other so they seemed to create a single composite structure together. In my presentation, I would like to show various cases of intrusive burials recorded at the site and discuss to what extent or if ever the new users were aware of the presence of older and already abandoned graves. I am also going to demonstrate that, as usually in the early context, possible ways of interpretation of the phenomenon of intrusive burials are complex.

F

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***IMPORTS AND INFLUENCES IN THE PREDYNASTIC CERAMIC
ASSEMBLAGES AT HIERAKONPOLIS: AN UPDATED REVIEW***

In 1992, Adams and Friedman presented a discussion of the ceramics and other materials of foreign origin or influence known at that point from Hierakonpolis (in Van den Brink (ed.) *The Nile Delta in Transition*). Since that time, the number of non-local ceramics found at the site has grown considerably as a result of continuing investigations and the examination of earlier excavated materials. Our understanding of this pottery and its origin has also been greatly enhanced over the ensuing years. Recently, the Hierakonpolis material has been the subject of re-examination and re-assessment in light of new data and research available today. Employing mainly comparative analyses of style and technology, ceramics from the Southern Levant, Lower

Egypt and Nubia have been identified, together with others that are less securely attributed. The proposed paper will present this corpus of pottery and its context, along with highlighting its contribution to a better understanding of the connections that this early centre once had with other communities in Egypt and beyond, during the Predynastic.

G

Maria Carmela GATTO

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BURIAL PRACTICES IN THE REGION OF THE FIRST NILE CATARACT IN THE 5TH AND THE 4TH MILLENNIA BCE

In the past decades, the intensification of archaeological research in the First Cataract region has brought to light a heterogeneous set of Predynastic burial practices. The presentation will discuss the funerary evidence discovered along the Nile and its desert hinterland by the Aswan-Kom Ombo Archaeological Project, which dates to the 5th and 4th millennia BCE. The earliest evidence, dated to the 5th millennium, consists of tumuli from the desert southeast of the Kom Ombo plain. The evidence dated to the 4th millennium comes from the Nile's west bank. Community cemeteries are close to their villages, and intra-site variability in grave typology results from chronological and social diversity. An exceptional elite stone funerary monument overlooking the valley of Nag el-Hamdulab, the place of the Dynasty Zero royal artistic cycle, provides evidence for graves related to the mobile segments of the society.

Gwenola GRAFF

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USE AND DECLINATION OF THE IMAGE OF VIOLENCE AT A LOCAL LEVEL FOLLOWING WADI ABU SUBEIRA'S DATA (EASTERN DESERT, ASWAN REGION)

The iconography of violence and domination is a major theme in Predynastic imagery, particularly in Naqada I and III. It is traditionally seen as accompanying the establishment of the state, or more precisely of the forces of coercion, despite resistance. In the wadi Abu Subeira wadi, we have a substantial corpus of engraved panels depicting scenes of violence. And yet, in these marginal territories, we are far removed from state issues. It concerns other dynamics, other aspects of the relationships that involved the populations living in the 4th millennium in the eastern desert, upstream from the 1st cataract of the Nile. On the basis of this data, we will consider the different levels of use of violence and domination in Naqadan society, which can then be placed in a perspective of both environmental resilience, at a time when increasing aridity is putting greater pressure on resources, and the management of uncertainty and unpredictability in social relations.

H

Elizabeth HART

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INTERPRETING DESERT ACTIVITIES AT WADI UMM TINEIDBA

While surveying in Wadi Umm Tineidba, east of Elkab, the Elkab Desert Survey Project (a joint expedition of Yale University and the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels) found a number of Predynastic rock art panels. A large amount of lithic artifacts and chert nodules were visible on the surface below these panels, leading to the possibility that the site could be a quarry or raw material procurement site. This is a particularly interesting possibility since few flint sources are known for the Predynastic period. Analysis of surface collections of lithic artifacts from in front of two of these panels was done to understand the nature of activities associated with the sites. Preliminary results are that, though it was likely a site of raw material surface procurement, the high frequency of lithic tools indicates that a wider variety of activities must have taken place at the locality, beyond just procurement and initial processing. This paper will compare the artifact frequencies and types to those from other lithic procurement sites as well as Predynastic settlement sites.

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USING IN SITU LUMINESCENCE PROFILING TO RECONSIDER HUMAN SACRIFICE AT UMM EL QA'AB: PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This paper critically reassesses the archaeological evidence at Umm el Qa'ab, Abydos, for postulated human sacrifice in the 1st Dynasty. While discussing the interpretations of apparent from past work at the site, and examining more recent scholarly contributions to this debate, this paper will primarily focus on presenting new data from the tombs of King Djer and Queen Meret-Neith obtained during excavations in 2023. Specifically, this paper will present the results from recent fieldwork which sought to reconsider the idea of human sacrifice using a combination of architectural, archaeological and portable luminescence data. In particular, the application of portable optically simulated luminescence (pOSL) profiling has been used to evaluate the likelihood of subsidiary chambers being constructed at different times to one another and to the main burial chambers; it has also investigated the potential order in which chambers were built. This research therefore presents new, and amongst the first, scientifically derived evidence for considering the long debated question: did the First Dynasty rulers practice human sacrifice at all?

J

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GEBELEIN LINEN - A NEW RE-ARRANGEMENT AND RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESERVED FRAGMENTS

Interpretations of some of the objects shown on the Gebelein linen are unclear, thus the meaning of the whole depiction is the subject of debate. This is even more dubious primarily due to the poor state of its preservation and the hypothetical arrangement of the preserved fragments. The aim of the current paper is to present a new interpretation of some parts of the depiction and a re-arrangement of the location of several fragments of the textile. The textile was found in pieces by Giulio Farina in 1930, in one of the tombs at the Northern Necropolis of Gebelein, and now it is exhibited at Museo Egizio in Turin (Sup. 17138). A hypothetical arrangement of the preserved fragments, made by Bruce Williams and Thomas Logan (1987), is commonly reproduced. It is based on the closest known analogy for the linen, the wall painting from Tomb 100 from Hierakonpolis. However, since the publication aforementioned article, knowledge about the Predynastic Period iconography has developed. New publications, especially those considering boat depictions, their construction, sailing methods, and symbolic meaning provided a new light on this topic. In addition, some new artefacts with boat representations have been discovered since that time. The current studies on interpretations of predynastic boats allow us to revise the old reconstruction, provide a new understanding of individual items depicted on the linen, propose a fresh hypothetical arrangement, and finally elaborate on its meaning. An examination of the depictions of the boats on the Gebelein linen and the comparative analysis with other navigation scenes makes it clear that the fragments of the textile should be presented in a new order. It is very likely that the boat with the hypothetical depiction of a ruler should be shown as towed by two smaller ones. The representation of oars only on one side indicates these small watercrafts' location on both sides of the main hull. Further, the dancing women should be divided into three sections, with the smaller ones at the bottom of the scene. This would make the boat procession the central element of the linen. Also, a new interpretation of some of the depictions can be proposed, which aims the understanding the whole scene. The trapezoid black object with zigzag lines below can be interpreted as the clap net used for capturing birds. Another hunting item is a bottle-shaped type of fish trap. Both motifs, as well as the representation of hippopotamus hunting, have their analogies in so-called "marsh scenes" known from Old Kingdom tomb. This type of decoration is refer to the establishment of the cosmic order. Furthermore, the species of the depicted animals indicates that the event is taking place during the inundation season. The beginning of this season was also the inauguration of the Egyptian New Year in later times and in the following periods, celebrations were related to the re-establishment of the kingship, of the cosmic order, and were celebrated by processions of watercraft on the Nile.

K

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***THE EMERGENCE OF URBANIZATION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 4TH
MILLENNIUM BC: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DOMESTIC AND PUBLIC
ARCHITECTURE IN THE NILE DELTA AND SOUTHERN LEVANT***

It is commonly believed that in the second half of the 4th millennium BC in Southwestern Asia and Northeastern Africa, human settlements were established at a level of complexity never present before. The number of inhabitants and the size of these settlements exceeded the ones known from preceding periods. The accumulation of these features has been noticed by many researchers, indicating in numerous publications the period of the Early Bronze Age I/the Predynastic period in Egypt as the time in which urbanization processes led to the emergence of the first cities. During the presentation, results of research carried out on the basis of the remains of settlement architecture from the second half of 4th millennium BC in Northern Egypt and the Southern Levant will be shared. The presentation will discuss beginnings of urbanization in the above-mentioned regions and methods applied to answer the question of how architectural remains can be a determinant of the urbanization level. Recent excavation data suggests the existence of settlements with a dense layout of buildings and a top-down level of planning. The study that will be presented aims to integrate theories like Christaller's Central Place Theory and Rank Size Criterion with empirical data concerning domestic and public architecture discovered at some of the settlements of this period. It seems that this approach can provide insights into the level of urbanization and socio-political complexity of the communities in which they were built. Presented theories and hypotheses will be confronted with archaeological data relating to settlement architecture in order to capture and discuss the process of urbanization in the discussed period.

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NEW TECHNOLOGY ILLUMINATING ANCIENT EVIDENCE

Debates and scholarly acceptance surrounding the existence of female rulers during the First Dynasty persist, with one particularly contested issue being the attribution of the debated serekh belonging to Meretneith. In 1954, Emery's publication of a line drawing and photographs of seal impressions recovered from Saqqara tomb S3503 depicts four serekhs, three side-by-side, with a gap before the fourth. While Emery confirmed that the first serekh belonged to Djer, he described the others as possible serekhs that did not bear the name of

Djer or the Horus falcon symbol. Notably, Emery's line drawing showed the second serekh from the left was surmounted by the Neith standard, and the inner fields of the second and third serekhs suggested the repetition of the hieroglyphic sign of the hoe for 'mr' (U6). Various arguments have been put forth to dispute the idea that the serekh belongs to Meretneith. Anthes rejected the reading of Meretneith's name, owing to the spelt-out format, while Kaplony remained unconvinced that it identified Meretneith's name specifically. Roth also dismissed Meretneith's ownership, citing differences in the representation of the name compared to her other epigraphical sources. However, these arguments fail to consider Emery's 1961 acknowledgement of her ownership; which is further supported by the additional inscribed material within the same tomb that records Meretneith's name, including her title as 'hnt(?) - She Who is Preeminent/Foremost of Women.' Now, digital methods are shining new light on these old arguments. Precise Digital Imprint Restoration© (PDIR), developed through a collaborative study with Crystal Miller from Macquarie University, offers a transformative approach to analysing and visualising delicate artefacts. Comparable to the age-old technique of charcoal rubbing, the PDIR method allows researchers to capture the intricate details recorded on seal impressions. This ground-breaking digital method utilises advanced software tools to enhance, manipulate, and reconstruct ancient text and images with unparalleled accuracy and clarity.

With the PDIR method, ancient artefacts and their inscriptions are no longer confined to the limitations of physical preservation. Compared to traditional methods like Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), which captures an object's surface shape and texture, PDIR can be applied to photographs or scans of artefacts. This was done recently to high resolution scans of Emery's original black-and-white photographs of Meretneith's serekh. By presenting this study's technological advancements and compelling findings, the authors aim to contribute significantly to the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding First Dynasty female serekh holders and offer a prime example of how digital methods can enhance our understanding of ancient artefacts and challenge long-standing assumptions. Future application of these cutting-edge techniques can help document fragile archaeological materials and provide a means to explore and analyse them in previously unimaginable ways. By combining a rigorous examination of the archival material with the precision afforded by digital tools, this research promises the potential to reshape our understanding of Meretneith and her political role in the First Dynasty. As technology advances, the PDIR Method offers a glimpse into the future of archaeological research, allowing us to uncover minute details held within ancient artefacts.

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WHAT MAKES A QUEEN A QUEEN? NEWS FROM THE RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN THE TOMB COMPLEX OF 1ST DYNASTY QUEEN MERET-NEITH AT ABYDOS/UMM EL-QAAB

The new DAI/University of Vienna excavations in the tomb complex of queen Meret-Neith at Abydos/Umm el-Qaab started in Autumn 2021 and have since produced a plethora of new evidence surrounding this mysterious queen of the 1st Dynasty. This new material

complements and significantly adds to what Flinders Petrie had excavated in 1899-1900. This paper will provide a comprehensive summary of the archaeological, architectural, chronometric, scientific and epigraphic data collected and preliminary results achieved to date. It will also aim to look at these results from the many different perspectives that actually make this tomb complex and its owner so special. This will be achieved by trying to answer a range of questions, such as: what was Meret-Neith's chronological position in the line of 1st Dynasty rulers? Was she really king Den's mother as has been postulated in the past literature? How can her tomb complex be compared to that of the other 1st Dynasty kings? What was possibly the reason why she was the only queen of that time who had her own monumental tomb in the royal ancestral cemetery at Abydos? What was her role and function in the early nascent state of Egypt? And ultimately, what makes a queen a Queen?

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REPRESENTATIONS OF STATUES IN DECORATED WARE VESSEL COMPOSITIONS

Decorated Ware (D-ware) vessel compositions with human representation hold a wealth of material about the social complexity of those that painted the images, yet their visual language has not yet been fully deciphered. Previous studies of two-dimensional human figures focus exclusively on the activities they perform or the symbolic value human figures hold, taking the human form at face value. These approaches completely overlook the information imbedded within the components and form of the human figures themselves. Because of this, human figures on D-ware vessels have consistently been categorized into two groups, males and females, based on assumptions about markers of gender. The trouble with this approach is that it focuses on features that are not necessarily those emphasized by the Predynastic painter and relies on modern interpretations of ambiguous elements, such as the stroke at the pelvic region and the ratio between the waist and hips. Moreover, the current reading of the so-called female figures as dancing while male figures contribute a musical component via clappers is unsupported when subjected to the formal analysis explained in this paper. The effectiveness of an art historical formal analysis for Predynastic human figures, presented as a poster in the Origins7 conference, was demonstrated by focusing on the detail of human heads to determine the directionality of the human figures. Continuing with this methodology, human figures were deconstructed into their most elementary components, which allowed the elements that were emphasized by Predynastic painters to be seen more clearly and human figures to be categorized in a more productive way. The results show that the main differentiating factor between the human figures on the D-ware vessels is their mobility and lack of mobility and that human figures are better understood when classified in this way rather than by gender. This paper will explain the categorization of the human figures into two new types, geometric and schematic, and explore the characteristics of the motifs as revealed by an art historical formal analysis that these more appropriate categories draw out. This reclassification of the human figures suggests an alternative reading for the D-ware vessel scenes with human figures. The results from formal analysis effectively reveal that the geometric human figures, previously

interpreted as dancing females, are in fact statues, at times, but not always, accompanied by specialized supporting human beings. Recognizing these figures as statues demonstrates how the application of art historical analysis continues to add to the understanding of the imagery through investigation of form and method and reveals new aspects of the social and ritual complexities of the society that depicted them.

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ABUSIR EL-MELEQ: RE-EVALUATION OF A CEMETERY

Between 1905 and 1906 the German Egyptologist G. Möller excavated about 900 tombs in the Pre- and Early Dynastic necropolis of Abusir el-Meleq, a project financed by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (DOG). Möller died in 1921 without finishing the publication. It was then his successor at the Museum in Berlin, A. Scharff, who was carefully studying the notebooks and notes left by G. Möller. Even though A. Scharff published his manuscript in 1926 including a tomb catalogue, a full and detailed analysis of the whole necropolis is however lacking until today. It is one of the main objectives for the next years to revise critically this important necropolis, studying the information provided by the objects stored in different Museums and collections as well as the archival material (field diaries, tomb lists and photographs). Fortunately, in 2023 it was also possible to find and identify some of the human remains that had been sent to Berlin in 1906. For a long time it had been believed that they had been lost and destroyed in the turmoil of the Second World War. Most of the skeletons and skeletal fragments can still be assigned to the individual graves, so that scientific investigations will provide new information about those persons (14C; Genetics etc.). In this paper first results of the archival, museums and anthropological research will be presented.

L

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***REGIONAL STYLE IN EGYPTIAN PREDYNASTIC ROCK ART: THE ROLE OF
'FROND BOATS' IN EXPLAINING VALLEY-DESERT RELATIONSHIPS AT
EGYPT'S ORIGINS***

Rock-art research is assuming a deserved greater role in Egyptian archaeology. However, the disparate nature of historic professional and non-professional missions has previously given it something of a marginal character compared to excavations. Recording has been spread over a long time period utilising different methods and levels of training and expertise. Nonetheless, a considerable portion of the work in the Central Eastern Desert has been synthesised by members of the EDS and RATS surveys, while additional information regarding the Kom Ombo

Basin area, and associated material west of the Nile by Yale and the Hierakonpolis Expedition, and near Aswan by the IRD and AKAP, is available. In attempting to interpret the petroglyphs, 'Niloticising' of the desert, 'Rites of Passage' analysis, and the presence of desert dwellers or nomadic herders have been proposed to explain connections between the desert and the valley Naqada culture. Michael Berger made the early observation that a regional style was flourishing. This is based upon the evident similarity between elaborately decorated sickle boat petroglyphs at Hierakonpolis site HK61 and a concentration of similar examples in the southern Central Eastern Desert, with a lesser number in the Wadi Hammamat area. While we should not overlook the dominance of fauna in the rock art, the presence of boats of a particular style, often seemingly involved in the hunting or control of animals, is notable. Although regional and spatial studies have been a component of rock art research for some time, they have not hitherto played a significant part in Egyptian rock art studies. This presentation contributes to remedying this by identifying regional styles and demonstrating routes connecting desert and Nile Valley Naqada culture sites to shed light on the motives of the rock art creators. Most of the Predynastic petroglyphs appear intimately connected with the Nile Valley culture. It seeks to determine whether there are regional styles based on the 'frond boats' and the figures with arms raised and incurved above the head. It particularly examines their regional distribution and connection with the Valley, especially Hierakonpolis, El Kab and Nubt/Naqada, in terms of three suggested explanations-as the creation of: mobile herders using the 4th millennium moister area as subsistence for their herds; desert dwellers with a close knowledge of Nile Valley Naqadans' symbolic world; or Nile Valley incipient elites undertaking journeys to the liminal zone and returning transformed in supernatural power and status.

M

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POTTERY TRADITION AT TELL EL-FARKHA AFTER 25 YEARS OF STUDIES

The archaeological research at Tell el-Farkha has been carried out since 1998. For the last 25 years of fieldwork, pottery has been the most common find. Each trench on each of the three koms provided a huge amount of ceramic sherds and a limited number of complete or almost complete vessels. The studies of their technology and morphology have provided data on the social, economic, and even ideological aspects of communities from the Lower Egyptian culture until the Early Old Kingdom period. Due to the continuous occupation of the site over almost 1000 years, it has been possible to study the pottery traditions and their development. The presentation will revise the data published by the author on the pottery tradition at Tell el-Farkha in 2004 in the proceedings of the first conference "Egypt at its Origins" held in Kraków in 2002. They will be analysed in the context of the pottery studies of the last 25 years held not only at that site but at other locations in the Nile Delta. Some important issues including the origin of pottery production in Lower Egypt, the Naqadan presence in the north, and the organisation of pottery production will be studied as well.

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TELL EL-MURRA BUILDINGS AND ECONOMIC FACILITIES OF THE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD. THEIR CONSTRUCTION, FUNCTION AND EVOLUTION OVER TIME

During the Early Dynastic period, the entire area of present-day Tell el-Murra was covered by varied forms of development. In the south-western part of the site a cemetery was located, remains of which have been exposed within trench S3 (along with older and younger settlement structures). To the north and north-east of the local necropolis, there were residential and economic buildings, identified to date within the north-eastern part of trench S3 and within trenches S2, S3B, S4 and T5.

The precise extent of its various zones or districts within the settlement is still difficult to determine. It appears that during the Early Dynastic period the division of the present tell into two parts, separated by waters of the floods, was still in operation. In the south-western part of the site, to the north and west of the cemetery (trench S3), less impressive domestic and economic buildings, equipped with ovens and silos, have so far been exposed. These structures were also of the most ephemeral nature, with the settlement in this part of the site occupying the cemetery area at particular times. The results obtained during the last research seasons within trench S3, make it possible to present, not previously discussed, the structures exposed in this part of the site.

Slightly further to the north-east the buildings probably took on a more stable nature, also displaying features typical of a regular, residential and economic settlement on the turn of the 4th and 3rd millennium BC. On the other hand, the buildings exposed in the northern part of the site (trench T5), where the centre of the settlement at that time was presumably located, should be regarded as the most complex and providing the most data. The Early Dynastic buildings identified within trench T5 are characterised by a relatively high degree of stability in the overall plan of the development and its broadly defined function, while at the same time there is clearly visible variability within the individual structures of an economic nature and the living quarters.

This presentation is aimed to show the aforementioned structures and installations along with technical and functional changes made within them, using also the new data obtained during the latest season. An analysis of the recorded instances of alterations made on an ongoing basis during the use of the space in question, together with an assessment of the archaeological material found within the various rooms and installations, will provide a better understanding of what the settlement at Tell el-Murra was and how it operated in the second half of the Early Dynastic period. The results will be placed in the context of the site as a whole and neighbouring settlements of the period. This will allow a better understanding of what was and how functioned Early Dynastic settlements located in the densely populated area of the north-eastern Nile Delta.

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PREDYNASTIC LITHIC PRODUCTION AT HELIOPOLIS, EGYPT: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN OLD COLLECTIONS AND NEW EXCAVATIONS

The presence of a late prehistoric phase of occupation at Heliopolis, Nile Delta, Egypt has been known since the beginning of the 1900s thanks to the excavations of the Italian Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli, at that time the Director of the Museo Egizio of Turin, and Head of the M.A.I. (Missione Archeologica Italiana). During the excavation of the so-called “Prehistoric village” Schiaparelli collected approximately 3000 pieces that were brought to Museo Egizio. In the framework of a memorandum of understanding signed between the SABAP-TO, the CNR-ISPC, the Museo Egizio, and the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo di Bracciano, Rome, the collection has been temporarily transferred to Bracciano where it is currently being studied within the PREMUC – Prehistoric Egypt in Museum Collections – project. More recently the team has been involved in the study of the lithic collections excavated by the Egyptian-German Heliopolis Project. The discovery in the spring of 2019 of a rich lithic assemblage (about 3000 pieces), mud-brick walls, pits, and brewery installations in Area 251 shed new light on the Predynastic occupation of Heliopolis that is poorly understood, and it has the potential to contribute to the debate concerning the development of the Predynastic communities that lived in the Delta during the 4th millennium B.C. In this paper, we present some preliminary results concerning the techno-typological study of the lithic assemblage, which is both quantitatively and qualitatively extraordinary. Not only does it comprise a few thousand pieces, but it contains retouched tools, cores, and debitage, reflecting all the stages of the *chaîne opératoire*. Our research includes also archaeometric analysis of the Egyptian flint sources, which are compared to the archaeological artifacts.

The entire lithic assemblage shows us the strategies of raw material acquisition, the knapping activities that took place at the site, and how the manufacture of chipped stone-tool was economically integrated within the society. The analyses of the recent excavated assemblage enabled us to better understand and refine the chronology of the Turin museum collection, and to shed light on how the two lithic assemblages can be connected to different functions and use of the areas of the village. This study shows the vital importance of integrating as much data as possible, not only coming from new excavations, but also from the study of the materials in storage that have been ignored for decades. Together, they will help enhance and perhaps totally update our knowledge of some aspects of ancient Egyptian culture.

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HYBRID ANIMALS AND ONTOLOGICAL CHANGE IN EARLY EGYPTIAN ART

Hybrid animals appeared in Egyptian iconographic record at a time of vast socio-cultural transformation. By the end of the 4th millennium BCE, a territorial state had emerged in Upper Egypt, cities had prospered where there had been hamlets a century before, far-reaching trade routes had been opened, and a clear artistic canon had been developed. New forms of leadership emerged that would have been unthinkable before, and an extensive process of social differentiation was set in motion with deep social and economic consequences. All of this would have been impossible without an equally extensive transformation at the ontological level, that is, in how people understood the world they lived in and their role in it. It is logical to suppose that art forms, as products of human activity, accompanied or reflected some of these changes. In this presentation, I will concentrate on Predynastic hybrid animal imagery, visual devices that combine traits or parts of different animal species into a single, composite body. I will argue that such images were created with the distinct intention of affecting both the people that encountered them and the world in which they lived, within the context of the formation of these new elites in the Nile Valley. Hybrids not only serve as key elements in the construction of a symbolic narrative which accounted for the formation of a permanent ruling group with, but they express a shift in the way the local population saw and experienced the world around them. Different explanations have been tested to account for the peculiarities of Predynastic animal imagery: They are seen either as reconstructions of “real” prehistoric animals from fossil remains; as semi-accurate depictions of real-life conjoined twins; or just failed portraits due to inexperience. Based on the conviction that Egyptians had an astounding knowledge of the animals that inhabited the land, I will propose that hybrids in art do not express a distancing from the animal world, but a will to intervene in said world, while creating a new image for the rising elite. In short, the 4th millennium BCE was the setting for a change of ontologies, of ways of relationship between non-humans and humans, and of logics of social organisation. All of which is eloquently expressed through hybrid iconography.

Béatrix MIDANT-REYNES and Eric CRUBEZY

CNRS TOULOUSE, FRANCE

THE EASTERN CEMETERY OF ADAIMA: NEW DATA AND NEW RESULTS

The Eastern cemetery of Adaima has been excavated from 1996 to 2006. In the following years it has been subject of in-depth analysis and is now ready for publication.

It offers exceptional potential for studying funerary rites, their evolution and transmission.

It contains 500 intact burials excavated using current anthropological methods, well dated by ceramics and grouped into two distinct sectors, one in the southern part with only child tombs, mainly dated to the Naqada IIIA phase, and the other, to the north, with adults and children belonging to the phase between the first and the third dynasty.



Organisation of the conference has been supported by a grant from the Faculty of History under the Strategic Programme Excellence Initiative at Jagiellonian University.

We will discuss here the methods used and focus on a few specific aspects of the funerary practices and their evolution over the period under consideration.

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WHAT DOES A QUEEN NEED? THE SMALL FINDS DISCOVERED IN THE TOMB OF MERET-NEITH (ABYDOS, UMM EL-QAAB, 1ST DYNASTY)

Despite the many lootings and cult activities since antiquity as well as Petrie's excavation campaign (1899-1900), the recent excavations at Tomb Y at Abydos - Umm el Qaab have yielded a very large number of artefacts. Petrie had selected some of the 'beautiful' objects that had survived these disturbances for publication and many of them are today held in museums around the world. Since 2021, the new excavations by the DAI and the University of Vienna have produced a large quantity of fragments of different materials. The old and new excavations form two corpuses of material that we are in the process to analyse. The first step is to bring together all the diagnostic material in relation with their archaeological contexts into a database. In this paper, we focus on the small finds, i.e., non-ceramic artefacts. As this paper will outline, one key challenge is to arrive at a definition and categorization of these kinds of artefacts, and for various reasons, we choose to group the small finds by functional categories. Another methodical aspect to be discussed is the quantification of each category. The difficulty lies in the fragmentation and wide context distribution of the artefacts. Our approach is to use calculations based on the minimum number of individuals, which seems obvious for stone vessels, but not necessarily for wooden/ivory furniture or other kinds of objects. We also have to take into account the complex taphonomic history and the potential mix with spoil heaps from different royal tombs and subsidiary tombs in the cemetery. It is hence our objective to find a method that will allow us to counterbalance these difficulties and to hopefully reconstruct, as closely as possible, the "trousseau funéraire" of this queen who was buried among the kings of the First Dynasty.

Vera MÜLLER

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TOMB INVENTORIES AT TURAH: WHAT WAS COMMON, WHAT WAS UNIQUE?

Thanks to the rather meticulous documentation for its time of excavation and publication, the number and range of grave goods in the Turah cemetery can be reconstructed to a great extent. In contrast to Flinders Petrie who was mainly focused on chronological questions, Hermann Junker tried to represent a rather complete picture of the number and type of grave goods encountered in the tombs – with the exceptions of the majority of sherds which were only roughly taken into account. Besides these flaws, the documentation reflects quite well, what

was chosen for grave goods and what not. Although there probably never existed something like an ideal „funeral kit”, it is nevertheless rather telling if items are singular or more common, if they can be subsumed under specific categories, such as „bowl” or „container” for pottery or stone vessels, or if they are unique. It is also interesting to note, if objects only rarely deposited in Turah are more common at other places and vice versa. In this paper the occurrence of grave goods will be addressed which were common and those which seem to have been rather peculiar in the context of this cemetery. The evaluations will give insights into the position of Turah in a wider perspective: are unique items local peculiarities or can they be integrated into wider networks? Do they reflect individual preferences or can they be taken as indicators for a specific social status?

O

Martin ODLER

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METALWORK WEAR OF THE PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC COPPER ALLOY TOOLS

The research of the copper alloy tools from the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Period rarely ventured beyond macroscopical studies of their morphology and typology. Rare exception in this regard is the catalogue of the axe blades in the collection of the British Museum, published under the title „Catalogue of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum. 7: Tools and weapons; 1: Axes” by Vivian W. Davies. The catalogue entries on the Predynastic and Early Dynastic axes described also their use wear, in relation to the chemical composition and production processes, as uncovered by metallographies. But a fresh and detailed look on the Predynastic and Early Dynastic copper alloy tool blades is necessary, focused on the artisan tool categories of axes, adzes, chisels, and saws. My paper will present the interim results of the project „EgypToolWear – Metalwork Wear Analysis of Ancient Egyptian Tools”, a post-doctoral fellowship at the Newcastle University, under the guidance of Prof. Andrea Dolfini. This is the first ever project to deploy Metalwork Wear Analysis in a systemic way to precisely understand how copper-alloy tools were used in early Egypt, for what crafts, and with what bodily gestures and engagements. The research is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach combining metalwork wear analysis (both low- and high-magnification) with (a) a critical reassessment of written and iconographic sources (which are abundant and often detailed in this context, but all later than Predynastic and almost all later than the Early Dynastic, with the only rendering of artisan tool kit in the wall paintings of Hesyre’s tomb at Saqqara); (b) metallurgical analysis; and (c) experimental archaeology. The presentation will focus on the evaluation of the metalwork wear documented on the tool blades of Predynastic and Early Dynastic dating, compared to the later tool blades, as the commonalities and differences will be highlighted, within the contexts of the ancient Egyptian crafts that used such copper alloy tool blades. Question of the deposition of the full-size functional tools vs. „models” can be addressed anew as well. Finally, the problem of the regularization of the tool blades, their size and weight

standardization, and their connections to the Early Dynastic weighing standards, especially of copper deben, will be studied. Thus, copper alloy tool blades can serve as rather complex, and until now not sufficiently understood, specimens of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic material culture. These specimens reflect also wider issues of the early ancient Egyptian crafts and society in general, but we need to study them in significant detail, in order to understand them better within all their contexts.

P

Paweł Lech POLKOWSKI

POZNAŃ ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, POLAND

SEARCHING FOR LINKS: AN ATTEMPT AT DEFINING THE SHEIKH MUFTAH ROCK ART TRADITION

In the 4th and 3rd millennia BC, the aridification process in what is now Egypt's Western Desert, was already highly advanced. This period was labelled by Rudolph Kuper and Stefan Kröpelin as the Late Holocene marginalisation phase, during which most of the occupation in the desert was possible only in ecological niches, such as the western oases. The impulse for further development was now centred along the Nile, while the remaining habitation zones in the west became largely isolated. Archaeological works of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, IFAO, Cologne University and other missions, provided however extensive data on late prehistoric occupation of the oases, Dakhleh and Kharga, in particular. Sheikh Muftah, the archaeological designation for material culture of the late Neolithic pastoralist communities, marks the last indigenous 'cultural unit' of the central Western Desert. It is now quite evident that Sheikh Muftah groups must have sustained some contacts with the Nile valley in both Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods, until the eventual colonisation of the region by Old Kingdom Egyptians. Certain typical Sheikh Muftah artefacts, such as Clayton disks and rings, were found in the Nile valley, as well as Predynastic and Early Dynastic material culture was recorded in the oases and along the routes leading to them. Nevertheless, the extent and nature of the relationships between the desert pastoralists and the Nile valley dwellers is still rather vague. One type of remains that have not been so far analysed in detail in respect with the Sheikh Muftah and its possible connections with the Nile valley communities, is rock art. First major obstacle is our inability to define and recognise petroglyphs that could have been produced by the Sheikh Muftah groups. This paper, therefore, is meant to be one of the first such attempts at reconsideration of the available materials and distinguishing a potential Sheikh Muftah rock art tradition in Dakhleh (and Kharga). In the process, I will also refer to other fourth to third millennia BC rock art traditions from Upper Egypt and Nubia, searching for potential links reflected on the iconographic level. The study will hopefully shed some light on the still obscure relationships between the west and the Nile valley during the final stages of the desertification process.

R

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THE NAQADA REGIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY: THE RESULTS OF GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY AND TEST EXCAVATIONS IN 2022 AND 2023-24 SEASONS

The site of Nubt is encroached upon by agricultural fields and to a lesser extent urban expansion, initial survey visits in 2017 and 2018 were encouraging in terms of the preservation of the original urban, religious, and funerary landscape. In order to ascertain the extent of the site today, both to aid in selection of appropriate areas to be surrounded by protective demarcation walls, as well as to pinpoint the location of archaeology for future investigations, a geomagnetic survey using a Bartington Instruments Grad 601 dual sensor fluxgate gradiometer was conducted by Barker in April 2022, supported by the Friends of the Petrie Museum. This survey returned results for three areas of Nubt: Temple Spur (urban areas and the Temple of Seth), South Town Spur (urban and funerary, with cemeteries N East and N West), and the Tumuli Spur (funerary). two main areas of the site. The pyramid area was not surveyed due both to the interference of the magnetic survey by a modern brick wall and nearby electricity pylon, but also the frequency of shaft burials. The areas of the Temple Spur, South Town Spur, and Tumuli (including T cemeteries, including N T north, N T south, N G, N south and several Dynastic cemeteries besides the two tumuli structures) were surveyed. Interesting results were returned for: Temple Spur, including remains of the Temple of Seth (some of which are visible on the surface; South Town Spur; and Tumuli (with known cemeteries, including N T north and N T south delineated and potentially unknown cemeteries detected, including one east of the T cemeteries). In some cases the results mapped very neatly onto what is 'known' from earlier work, e.g. Petrie, particularly in the Cemetery T area, and in and around the Temple. In other cases, it may transpire after future intrusive investigations, that not all areas of the cemeteries were recorded during earlier field projects. The results of the geophysical work at Nubt will be presented in the context of earlier knowledge of the site, including from the archives/collections, to determine the extent of preservation, as well as addressing any features hitherto unknown. The results are ultimately crucial for determining what archaeological features still need protection.

In 2022, during the cultural heritage planning for Nubt, test excavations following up from the geophysical survey, provided valuable information in terms of the best locations for future demarcation walls. These test trenches were initially placed in the area between South Town and the cemeteries south of the Temple Spur to determine possible areas outside of the main concentrations of archaeological finds. The results of analyses on artefacts located within

these trenches will be presented (2022) season, as well as that from the upcoming excavations in the 2023-24 season.

S

Sonja SPECK

JOHANNES GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ, GERMANY

EXPLORING THE BLENDING OF THE HUMAN BODY WITH OBJECT FORMS: SCULPTURES OF THE PREDYNASTIC PERIOD AND THE 1ST DYNASTY

Sculptures of the human body or body parts blended with objects have already been documented in the Merimde culture. Since then such sculptures/objects have been, albeit rarely, part of the material culture of the Naqada culture, as well as the Egyptian Proto- and Early Dynastic culture. These anthropomorphic and object compound forms often incorporated various types of vessels, tags, tusks, and combs. Previous research has typically interpreted the human components of these objects as decorative elements. Many of these blended forms have been studied as grave goods in funerary archaeology, primarily concerning the gender and status of the deceased, as well as their role in a Predynastic symbolic representational system. However, the act of blending itself provides additional insights into how people conceptualized the human body and its representation, as well as the objects themselves, including their functions, contexts, and uses. This raises questions about the manner in which the human body and object were connected. Were they merged or attached? Which parts of both entities were affected, and how did they overlap? Exploring these questions can contribute to our understanding of the similarities and differences in Ancient Egyptian ideas surrounding the body and its representations, as well as the associated objects. By examining internal spatial relations (such as front-back, up-down, inside-outside), complexity, colors, texture, social aspects and categorizations, and other factors, we can gain valuable information that supports research for example on object usage and related topics. This paper aims to demonstrate the potential of studying blending in various forms, such as anthropomorphic vessels, vessels with attached anthropomorphic components, tags and tusks with human heads and faces, and other rare and unique objects — for instance, a bone tube with human eyes and eyebrows from Naqada — which can be securely dated to the Predynastic periods of Ancient Egypt up to the end of the 1st Dynasty. Furthermore, the paper will discuss changes in the combination of anthropomorphic and object components during this period, shedding light on shifts in the conceptualization of the body and specific object types.

T

Keita TAKENOUCI

WASEDA UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

***THE RITUAL USES OF THE STONE VESSELS AND CHRONOLOGICAL
TRANSITION AT HIERAKONPOLIS LOCALITY HK29A***

This paper explores the ritual use and chronological transition of the stone vessels found from Locality HK29A at Hierakonpolis during Naqada I and III. The HK29A is well known as the “Early Temple” or “Ceremonial Center”, which continued from the Predynastic to the Early Dynastic Periods. The archaeological evidences (and a few iconographies) from HK29A consist of animal and plant remains, various artifacts and architectures, that provide information about the contents of temple activities at each stage of temple construction and renovation. Moreover, the stone vessel was also found from HK29A. Therefore, we may assume that stone vessels were also used in some temple activities. Mostly, the stone vessels were typical burial equipment and have usually been regarded as a kind of valuable item symbolizing the prestige and wealth of a tomb-owner during the Pre- and Early Dynastic societies. On the one hand, cult structures or early shrines in a settlement context also yielded stone vessels in this period. Stone vessels found in such contexts are important material when considering their function and value as ritual and/or votive objects. This paper will examine the chronological development and spatial distribution of the stone vessels including unpublished materials at Locality HK29A. Although all the stone vessels consist of fragments and have no complete profile, their chronology will be estimated through a comparison (vessel shape, material, and size) with previously found stone vessels from contemporary tombs. This foundational work allows us to reconstruct the assemblage of the stone vessels and to argue the changes in the ritual use during their chronological stages in a temple context. Furthermore, a comparison with the assemblages of the stone vessels found from other temple contexts and provincial shrines (Abydos, Tell el-Farkha, etc.) will reveal the similarities and differences in the characteristics. Consequently, the stone vessels from Locality HK29A can be divided into roughly three phases. The chronological development and the spatial distribution will indicate the characteristics of the ritual activity surrounding the stone vessels and the chronological transition during the Pre- and Early Dynastic Periods.

Yann TRISTANT¹ and Chloé GIRARDI²

¹KU LEUVEN, LEUVEN, BELGIUM; ²EVEHA INTERNATIONAL, TOULOUSE, FRANCE

DENDARA DURING THE NAQADAN PERIOD. A REEVALUATION

When Petrie became interested in the cemetery of Dendara and conducted a single excavation campaign in 1898, he hoped to find Predynastic remains, as he had done at Naqada a few

years earlier. His research failed to answer the question of Dendara's origins, and he left the site to pursue his Predynastic quest in other Upper Egyptian localities. However, his first intuition was good, as demonstrated by Clarence Fisher's discovery in 1916 of two groups of Early Dynastic tombs, which unfortunately he never published, and the recent discovery by IFAO of a Predynastic settlement area located in the temenos of the temple of Hathor. Research carried out in the American archaeologist's archives at the Penn Museum in Philadelphia has yielded previously unpublished documents (photographs, notes and observations concerning the tombs and associated material, etc.) providing new information concerning the oldest tombs known to date at Dendara and an overview of Early Dynastic burial practices in this cemetery. This presentation will afford an opportunity to place these tombs in the context of the origins of Dendara, by presenting the results of the recent excavations of the cemetery and the adjacent Predynastic settlement.

U

Federica UGLIANO and Giulio LUCARINI

MUSEO EGIZIO, TURIN, ITALY; ISPC-CNR, ROME, ITALY

DIGGING UP A MUSEUM COLLECTION: PREDYNASTIC POTTERY PRODUCTION AT HELIOPOLIS

Between 1903 and 1906, Ernesto Schiaparelli, Director of the Museo Egizio (Turin, Italy) and Head of the M.A.I. (Missione Archeologica Italiana), carried out four archaeological campaigns at the site of Heliopolis (Matariya), Egypt. Following the agreement of the so-called “partage” system of the time, thousands of artefacts were granted to the Italian excavators and are now kept in the Museo Egizio. Included within the new entries recorded in the museum collection, there are numerous pottery fragments claimed to have been brought to light in an area of the site generically defined as “Prehistoric Village”, and dated to the Predynastic Period (4th millennium BC). Despite his extensive investigations, Schiaparelli never published the results of his work, and several boxes of pottery sherds have been lying in the Museo Egizio storerooms for more than 100 years. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of the PREMUC -Prehistoric Egypt in Museum Collections –project, started in 2021 and focused on the study of the collection of predynastic artefacts brought to light by the M.A.I. at the beginning of the 20th century, and currently kept at the Museo Egizio. A team of multidisciplinary pottery specialists, which involves experts in petrographic, technological and typological analyses, are working on reconstructing all phases of the *chaîne opératoire*, from the raw material procurement strategies, through the manufacture and use of the artefacts, up to their disposal. Different strategies, involving both micro-invasive procedures and not invasive imaging techniques will be employed. A focus on the “biography” of the objects will also contribute to developing new multi-directional museum narratives that can be included in future museum exhibitions. The aim of this research is not only to shed light on the production of predynastic pottery at the site of Heliopolis and to fill a gap in the knowledge of the first life phases of this important site, but also to better allot its distinctive features within a regional and broader horizon.

V

Dorian VANHULLE

F.R.S.-FNRS / UNIVERSITE LIBRE DE BRUXELLES, BELGIUM

***FROM CITIZENS OF THE WORLD TO CITIZENS OF A TERRITORIAL STATE.
ABOUT SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND IDENTITY IN THE LOWER NILE VALLEY
(4TH MILLENNIUM BCE)***

Among the numerous problematic related to the development of social complexity in Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia during the Predynastic and Early Dynastic period, and even more so in the context of the formation of the Egyptian State, there are some that still retain most of their informative potential. Among them is, on the one hand, the impact the formation of the State had on the socio-spatial and ritual landscape and how it shaped what was to become the administrative territory of Egypt (a problematic which is at the heart of the Bordscape Project led by M.C. Gatto: <https://www.borderscapeproject.org/>), and, on the other hand, the progressive elaboration of the concept of “national identity”. During the Predynastic, the fragmented nature of the human groups living in the Nile Valley and the deserts suggests a far more complex socio-ecology than what our current historical narratives are offering: what does it mean to be a member of the so-called “Naqadan culture” and how this evolved through the 4th millennium BCE? This complex research question urges for new theoretical and anthropological discussions, but also for an in-depth re-evaluation of what is often described as local/regional particularisms in terms of material and iconographic productions. This paper aims to resume the state of the art regarding these problematics and to provide food for thoughts. Because of the nature of the subject, which has numerous implications and touches almost all specialisations inside the discipline dedicated to Prehistoric Egypt, this paper hopes to raise rich discussions and, possibly, lead to future fruitful collaborations.

Bart VANTHUYNE

UNIVERSITÄT ZU KÖLN, GERMANY/KU LEUVEN, BELGIUM

***2023 EXCAVATION AND SURVEY RESULTS IN ZAWYET SULTAN AND BENI
HASAN AL-SHURUQ***

Zawyet Sultan was the 16th Upper Egyptian nome capital, containing one of seven small early Old Kingdom step pyramids. In 2022 excavations began in the local elite and non-elite early Old Kingdom cemeteries in the eastern end of the site escarpment. Work continued in the non-elite cemetery in 2023, resulting in the discovery of a densely-packed cemetery of children, adolescents and adults buried near the surface, in a contracted position, in a variety of burial containers, with a limited range of burial goods. Moreover, the potential location of the contemporary settlement was likewise identified lower downhill, closer to the pyramid. Beni Hasan al-Shuruq, c. 16km south of Zawyet Sultan, was first investigated in 1903-1904 by



Organisation of the conference has been supported by a grant from the Faculty of History under the Strategic Programme Excellence Initiative at Jagiellonian University.

John Garstang, but he hardly published any of his results. Brief surveys by the author in 2012, 2013 and 2017 identified a large early Old Kingdom rock circle cemetery on the escarpment and plateau south of the Wadi Batn al-Baqara. A more extensive survey will be undertaken in the autumn of 2023 by the Beni Hasan South preservation project/EES Beni Hasan al-Shuruq survey to identify the extent of the rock circle cemetery and that of the preceding Early Dynastic period, of which but a few tombs were found in 2017. None of these finds were reported by Garstang, so there is the potential that additional ancient remains are present at the site as well. Excavation and survey results will be presented to discuss the funerary landscape and burial customs of these two key sites in the 16th Upper Egyptian nome.

W

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²MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ANTIQUITIES, EGYPT

110 YEARS AFTER PETRIE: REEXAMINING TARKHAN

This paper introduces the Tell Tarkhan Project, which began its meticulous inaugural season in the spring of 2024. Flinders Petrie had previously excavated over 2000 tombs at the site between 1911 and 1913, spanning Naqada IIIA2 to the New Kingdom, with a focus on later tombs near Kafr Ammar.

The majority of these tombs belong to the Naqada IIIA2-IIIC2 period, reflecting various social relationships. Additionally, four significant First Dynasty mastabas, likely from the reigns of Narmer and possibly Den, were discovered. Petrie's detailed excavations uncovered remarkably well-preserved artifacts, including organic materials like textiles.

The Tell Tarkhan Project, an Egyptian-Polish collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and the University of Warsaw's Faculty of Archaeology, led by Ayman Ashmawy and Anna Wodzińska, officially commenced in 2024. This paper outlines the inaugural season's key objectives, including geo-referencing, magnetic prospection, and site surface survey, while also providing insight into the project's long-term goals.

Z

Andras ZBORAY

FLIEGEL JEZERNICZKY EXPEDITIONS, UK

ROCK ART OF THE SAHARA THROUGH EGYPTIAN EYES. SEEKING IMAGES OF POWER AND AUTHORITY AMONG THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE PREHISTORIC ROCK PAINTINGS OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN SAHARA

In the Nile valley and the nearby desert zones rock art provides a fascinating record of the emergence of the Egyptian state with its associated cultural attributes. However the farther

one reaches, the more caution is required when using our far more detailed knowledge of Dynastic iconography when trying to understand and interpret patterns in the rock art imagery of deep desert regions.

This presentation aims to provide an overview of the principal periods and schools of Central and Eastern Saharan rock art. In the past two decades the corpus was substantially enlarged, mainly with new discoveries in the Eastern Sahara, and digital image enhancement tools have permitted the better understanding and interpretation of several long and well known scenes. This necessitated the revision of a number of firmly entrenched concepts, well accepted among specialists but taking time to filter through among not directly involved audiences and literature. Special emphasis will be placed on human-human and human-animal interactions, scenes which in the Egyptian context typically convey power and authority. The associated archaeological evidence shall also be examined for any signs of emerging social stratification. Some of the broader conclusions may also be applied when studying the iconography of rock art “closer to home”, in the deserts bordering the Nile valley.

In early literature on Saharan rock art, Egyptian influences were claimed repeatedly. In more recent publications the reverse happened, some authors professing to see the origins of the Egyptian belief system in certain Saharan imagery. These claims will be examined in some detail, demonstrating the flaws in the used methodology and a hopefully convincing conclusion that at present no direct links may be established between the Nile valley and the Saharan cultural sphere.

Posters

The abstracts are arranged alphabetically according to the last name of the first author.

B

Pablo BARBA

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THE IDENTITY OF PREDYNASTIC POTTERS: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF FINGERPRINT ANALYSIS IN WAVY-HANDLED POTTERY

Despite the large interest that pottery has received in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic studies, little is known regarding the identity of the potters. Novel methodologies are providing insights into this question through the study of fingerprints. The ridge breadth and density of ridges in human fingerprints are correlated with age and sex. Hence, archaeologists can study both by recording and measuring fingerprints found in materials that can preserve them, such as the soft clay of a pot before firing. The following poster will present the possibilities and preliminary results of fingerprint analysis for studying the sex and age of Predynastic and Early Dynastic potters through the case study of wavy handle pottery. In principle, this pot type provides an excellent mean for the creation of fingerprints, as the handles are attached to the main body of the vessel by pressing them with the fingers. The project has analysed 40 artefacts belonging to the W-ware category and to the Protodynastic series 43-53 from the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Over a half of the artefacts provided clear and sufficiently large fingerprints to be analysed, with 42 prints found in 22 artefacts. The shrinkage of the ware during drying and firing is considered, using a theoretical shrinkage between 2-6% according to studies on marl clays in the Near East. Interestingly, the results showed an unanticipated number of fingerprints in cylindrical vessels typical of the Naqada III, with fewer in the wavy handles themselves: the slipped and/or polished surface of cylindrical jars might have acted as an excellent mean to preserve fingerprints left during the last stages of production (slipping, polishing, transportation...). The results of the measurements indicate 17 of the 42 fingerprints correspond to male adults ($>0.52\text{mm}$); while 22 belong to a range overlapping male and female adults, and adolescents ($0.37\text{-}0.52\text{ mm}$). The bimodal distribution of the ridge density and breadth might indicate, however, that many of these uncertain individuals were adult women. Additionally, two fingerprints whose ridge was below 0.37mm mean that at least two children participated in the production process. If we pay attention to chronology, it is interesting to note that, while prints from the IIC-IIIA1 belonged exclusively to adult males, those of the IIIA2-IIID have a much wider range, including individuals from childhood to adulthood and likely from both sexes. This might indicate changes in pottery production at the beginning of the state. Hence, the poster will summarise the possibilities for analysis behind

fingerprints, of course including age and sex identities, but also the gestures of potters. Diachronic analysis of fingerprints can provide evidence to socioeconomic changes in relation to social complexity. Additionally, not only fingerprints can be studied, but also the biometrics of finger flutings and finger/hand marks. The paper will also highlight problems and limitations, such as preservation issues, uncertainties in the formation of fingerprints and their alteration during firing, and the need to continue developing this methodology through further experimental and ethnoarchaeological research.

H

Wafaa HAMZA^{1,2} and Axelle BREMONT²

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A JOURNEY FROM WATER TO LAND. SHELLS AS WITNESSES TO PALAEOENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL PRACTICES, THROUGH THE RE-INVESTIGATION OF NAQADA'S 'GREAT CEMETERY'

Shells found in archaeological records could provide a lot of information about the environment at that time and culture practices, both as a natural material and a manufactured item. Archaeomalacology -as a science discipline- has a recent development in Egypt. Our goal is thus to identify shells species, analyze technological traces and use-wear, and, through the archaeological context, what was beyond ancient people mindset as well. As a part of the NUBTI project (Naqada Unified Base for Tomb Information), which builds on archival material to re-evaluate the content of each tomb in the "Great Cemetery" of Naqada, this poster will give some glances on the shells found in 42 tombs within the site. Both river and sea shells were found at Naqada site along with land snails. However, seashells were less common, which may be explained by the long distance from the sea. The freshwater mollusks were mainly used as in the diet system, while the seashells were brought to the site already empty for ornaments. On the other hand, we will assess the local shells to try to reconstruct the paleoenvironment there. Another interesting research question is that of the daily use of various shells as compared to possible ritual uses at Naqada site, along with the special significance of some types of shells. The archaeological context and placement of grave goods can be reconstructed for 42 of these tombs through the sketches in Petrie and Quibell's notebooks. Therefore, our methodology will involve analyzing the distribution pattern of shells in relation to the body within the burials. The study aims to identify how shells are positioned in proximity to the head, upper body and pelvis, in comparison with the example of Mathilde Minotti who has worked on Adaima adornments. The research will also include comparisons between Naqada site and other sites in Prehistoric Egypt, especially regarding the position of the shells in burials, their utilization and the species present.

Amber HOOD and Helena ALEXANDERSON

LUND UNIVERSITY, SWEDEN

HOW CAN PORTABLE LUMINESCENCE PROFILING BE USED IN EARLY DYNASTIC EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY?

This poster will explore the application of portable optically stimulated luminescence (pOSL) profiling in Egyptian archaeology, showcasing how this technique can be used to answer a range of questions. In particular it will focus on case studies where pOSL has been used on three different materials, all of which are conducive to luminescence analysis. Firstly we will consider the application of pOSL to examine phases of construction in mud brick architecture; such analysis serves the purpose of better understanding construction phases, events, and destruction. Secondly, we will demonstrate how the analysis of sediments not only informs on original depositional events at a site, but how they can also inform on site taphonomic processes, understanding even past archaeological activity and excavation processes. Sediments also lend themselves to providing improved dating of secondary and tertiary contexts and luminescence profiles can be built up to provide a comprehensive and complex overview of both horizontal and vertical stratigraphies at a site. Finally, we will examine how pOSL can be employed as a powerful tool in ceramic chronology and provenancing, examining the new information we can glean from using pOSL as a window into comparative sample mineralogy and as a proxy for raw material provenance, as well as a relative dating methodology of ceramic material. Additionally, we will also demonstrate how by using pOSL it is also possible to build up a better geological understanding of a site and thus provide a geological backdrop upon which to better situate archaeological sites. We will also examine the potential of optically stimulated luminescence dating of faience, something that has not previously been attempted.

Ilaria INCORDINO

SHELBY WHITE AND LEON LEVY PROGRAM FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PUBLICATION, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, USA

THE NECROPOLIS OF THE THIRD DYNASTY AT BEIT KHALLAF (ABYDOS): A NEW PROJECT

This project is focused on a comprehensive documentation of the archaeological material derived from the site of Bet Khallaf (Abydos), discovered in 1901 by Garstang for the EEF, and partially analysed during the author's PhD research. The site has not yet been object of a systematic analysis so far and was found to include five mudbrick mastabas dating to the beginning of the Third Dynasty (2686-2613 BC ca.). It has been generally accepted that Bet Khallaf was an 'elite' burial place: nevertheless, the possible royal character of the mastaba K1, the most prominent tomb (85x45x8 m.), may be suggested, filling the architectural gap between the Thinite royal tombs and the first building phases of the Step Pyramid at Saqqara,

as supported by several scholars. New insights into this hypothesis will be derived by the first systematic study of all the funerary equipment from the site mastabas. The majority of the material is currently kept at several museum institutions (Garstang Museum of Liverpool, Petrie Museum of London, Ashmolean Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum of Oxford, Royal Museums of Art and History of Bruxelles, Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge, Egyptian Museum of Cairo - Tahrir Square, PENN Museum of Philadelphia) for a total of about 250 archaeological documents. The planned monograph will, then, include the typology and technological aspects of the archaeological material (pottery and hard stone vessels, metal implements, clay sealings, limestone reliefs and offering tables) and the comparative analysis with similar Archaic material to be conducted, providing also the study of the related archival documentation. The final outcome will make available a detailed and complete study of a possible royal Early Dynastic funerary equipment.

J

Bieke JANSSENS

ART & HISTORY MUSEUM, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

LIFE-SIZE ANIMAL STATUES IN THE ABYDOS' TEMPLE AREA?

In spring 2023, six terracotta fragments were noticed in the reserves of the Egypt department of the Museum of Art & History in Brussels, described on the inventory file on 26/22/2001 - in French - as 'painted polychrome terracotta, representing possibly a baboon, in a bad state, mark M on the object'. We can identify a base with a baboon's life-sized right foot (a); a base with a baboon tail (b); two baboon snouts (c, d); one unidentified unmarked object (e) and the top of an animal's head with an ear (f). Four fragments show a dark red polish while two others show an orange-beige finish, but all six have a porous black core on the inside. Undocumented at the time of rediscovery in the storerooms, research showed that the fragments were found by W.M.F. Petrie during his excavation campaign of 1902-1903 near the old temple and temenos at Abydos. One fragment is marked M81, referring to a votive deposit, located according to some scholars under an enclosing wall of the 6th Dynasty temple. However, no life-size animal statues or fragments thereof are mentioned in Petrie's excavation reports on Abydos, nor in the distribution lists from the EEF to the different museums. While we know of several baboon figurines from Abydos in faience dated to the 1st Dynasty, and of some larger ones in museum collections in travertine, red granite or limestone, a few larger specimens in terracotta were discovered at Early Dynastic sites such as Hierakonpolis and Tell Ibrahim Awad. The ear fragment, however, shows some similarities to the well-known Hierakonpolis lion in Oxford, currently dated to the 6th Dyn. Small terracotta lions or fragments thereof from other sites were usually dated between the Early Dynastic and the Old Kingdom Period. Now we seem to have found at least one lion fragment from the Abydos temple area in Brussels, which might even match pieces in other museums. The function and meaning of these life-size animal statues will be discussed as well.

K

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FAVOURITES OF A 1ST DYNASTY QUEEN - A GLANCE AT THE POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE IN MERET-NEITH'S TOMB AT ABYDOS - UMM EL-QAAB

Since 2021, new excavations are taking place at the tomb complex of Meret-Neith in the royal cemetery at Umm el-Qaab/Abydos by the DAI and the University of Vienna in order to achieve a better understanding of the historical position of this important woman in an Early Dynastic elite context. The planned poster approaches this endeavour with the help of the largest object group of archaeological evidence of the time, i.e. pottery vessels. During current excavations, hundreds of thousands of vessel fragments and a considerable amount of intact and complete ceramic vessels have been found in the central tomb area and the lines of surrounding subsidiary chambers. In addition, numerous items, derived from previous excavations by Petrie in the late 19th century, and now stored in museums in Europe and the USA, are also taken into account. Based on this vast quantity of information, the poster will provide a concise overview of the essential pottery vessel types from Meret-Neith's tomb and compare them with the funerary ceramic equipment of her close royal relatives buried at the same necropolis. What is remarkable, for example, is the strong preponderance of wine jars in Meret-Neith's tomb and the observation of large globular storage jars, which are otherwise only attested in the tomb of king Semerkhet. In addition, there is also a multitude of small-sized vessels with a broad spectrum of shapes. Medium-sized ovoid jars, beer jars and bowls, on the other hand, are underrepresented. Ultimately, the collected data may add a piece of the puzzle to the questions concerning the material culture, chronologies and social identities during the phase of ancient Egyptian state formation.

Robert KUHN and Barbara TEßMANN et al.

ÄGYPTISCHES MUSEUM UND PAPYRUSSAMMLUNG BERLIN/MUSEUM FÜR VOR- UND FRÜHGESCHICHTE BERLIN, GERMANY

GEBELEIN-MUMMIES IN THE ÄGYPTISCHES MUSEUM AND MUSEUM FÜR VOR- UND FRÜHGESCHICHTE IN BERLIN

In 1899, the Egyptian collection in Berlin purchased six mummies from the Dragoman C. A. Reinhardt at the German embassy in Cairo. The human remains, some are still wrapped in animal fur and leather clothing, were accompanied by further archaeological materials which allowed to date these mummies to the Naqada II-period. However, A. Scharff, from the Berlin Museum, was dubious about the authenticity of some of the finds because of the combination. Indeed, even though the exact findspot of the purchased items is unknown, similar mummies appeared on the Luxor art market in the late 1890s that today are housed in different Museums

like the British Museum and the Pennsylvania Museum. Moreover, A. Scharff noted that also the Berlin convolute should derive from Er-Rizeiqat, near Gebelein, due to its similarities with the mummies found during the Italian excavations in Gebelein. Fortunately, the Berlin mummies have never been unwrapped or were studied in detail. A luck still today, as the mummies are still preserved in fairly good conditions as they arrived in Berlin. A second convolute could be detected in the anthropological collection of the Berlin Museum of Prehistory that housed fragments of 18 skeletons and mummies. This convolute has been purchased from C. A. Reinhardt, too, and is said to be from Gebelein as well. Since 2015, the human remains have been studied through different scientific approaches (e.g., Egyptology/Archaeology, Anthropology, Genetics, Geochemistry) which will help to extend our understanding of this category of objects.

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CARINATED BOWLS FROM THE NORTHERN NECROPOLIS OF GEBELEIN AND ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND. AN IMPLICATION FROM THE RESULTS OF RECENT SURVEYS

Carinated bowls from the early Third Millennium BCE context are often called Meidum Bowls. Although this bowl was used throughout the Old Kingdom, its origin dates back to the Early Dynastic period. Detailed studies of its morphological transformation indicate that this type of bowl could contribute to understanding the finer relative chronology of a site. This uniqueness of the carinated bowl is particularly useful to consider the chronological duration of archaeological sites in disturbed contexts because of the modern destruction or early fieldwork without adequate published information. Gebelein in Upper Egypt is one such site despite its regional importance during the Early Dynastic and Early Old Kingdom as Sumenu. The site of Gebelein has been investigated by the Gebelein Archaeological Project since 2013. The team has surveyed several localities in the site boundary, which includes the Northern Necropolis, where the Italian excavations in the early 20th Century discovered the Gebelein linen. The Gebelein Archaeological Project team has surveyed the northern part of this necropolis, whose surface is currently covered with some piles and modern depressions, to examine the archaeological landscape as well as to assess the site's condition and its feasibility. We collected the artefacts from the Naqada I period to the Early Old Kingdom, and eight sherds of carinated bowls of the early Third Millennium BCE are included. They are morphologically slightly varied. The metrical and typological studies of the preserved part indicate that the collected carinated sherds are mainly dated to the First-Third Dynasties. They are equivalent to Op de Beeck's B3c2 type, and some examples are similar to Petrie's L72a type. Contrarily, we could not find the carinated bowls after the Fourth Dynasty. This observation indicates that the Northern Necropolis was continuously used until the Early Dynastic period and even in the Third Dynasty. Such cemetery activity is coeval with the supposed Sumenu which has already been destroyed. Thus, the carinated bowls can offer the terminus of cemetery use in the Northern Necropolis of Gebelein.

M

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***CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EGYPTIAN SETTLEMENT NETWORK IN THE
PROTO- AND EARLY DYNASTIC PERIODS.***

Surveys and excavations conducted in Egypt since at least the end of the 19th century, supplemented by information on accidental finds and the results of studies on ancient toponyms and settlement geography, have resulted in the identification of a significant number of sites dating to the Proto- and Early Dynastic periods. Among them can be distinguish both typical settlement sites and definitely more numerous cemeteries. The ephemeral nature of part of the finds also makes it difficult to place some the documented sites in one of these two categories. This poster aims to present partial results of the author's dissertation by presenting the latest findings on the characteristics of the Egyptian settlement network in the period in question, including number of recognized sites, their location or relationships between individual settlements and cemeteries. Assuming that each ancient burial ground served at least one contemporary settlement, the Nile Delta and Valley at the time were dotted with at least 153 settlements of various types and importance, most of which have been accurately located in space. Ancient towns and villages were established both within the alluvial plain (on islands, levees or geziras) and the fringes of the desert (on wadi fans or desert terraces). On the basis of the distribution of the individual sites, several distinct settlement clusters can be identified, located in areas characterised by optimal environmental conditions at the time. On the basis of research to date, it can be concluded that the Proto- and Early Dynastic settlement network is the result and the same time the final stage of an evolution lasting from the beginning of the Predynastic period. In the 3rd millennium BC, as a result of changing environmental conditions and political processes taking shape in the united kingdom, a clear shift in trends took place and the settlement network embarked on a path of change.

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***A RECONSIDERATION OF SECOND DYNASTY FRAGMENTATION AND
REUNIFICATION***

An oft-discussed enigma of the 2nd Dynasty is the sudden incorporation of the Seth-animal into the serekh of Peribsen and this king's return to Abydos for his funerary monuments. These phenomena have primarily been interpreted as evidence for a fracturing of the king's authority and a possible civil war that was ended by Khasekhemwy. Khasekhemwy's utilization of both the Horus falcon and the Seth-animal in his serekh is interpreted as evidence of a reunification

occurring during the reign of this king. This study re-examines these narratives of the 2nd Dynasty by focusing primarily on dualistic and geographic royal iconography and titulary. The iconography of the 2nd and early 3rd Dynasties is catalogued, along with associated find-spots, to more broadly contextualize the deviations in decorum noted during Peribsen's reign. The utilization of iconography such as the red, white, and double crowns along with the *nswt bjtj* and *nb.tj* titles is problematized and used to extrapolate broader hypotheses about the extent of different kings' control. Notable during the 2nd Dynasty is the reorganization of existing iconography to convey new messages, and such reorganization provides an insight into the priorities and power of each king. The iconographic elements and titles are paired with discussions of corresponding royal festivals during the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties such as the appearances of the king as *nswt*, *bjtj* or *nswt bjtj*, that provided a venue for the public performance of the king's authority. Through such data, this study tracks one area of change during the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties to understand the breadth of royal control throughout the 2nd Dynasty with a particular emphasis on the end of the 2nd Dynasty. Such research provides insight into the changing perception of the king during the Early Dynastic period and how an early Egypt that was still in the process of codifying its ideology grappled with fragmentation.

O

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SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TOMB CONSTRUCTION

A careful re-evaluation of the Naqada III tombs at Abu Rawash provides new and detailed information about the construction of the tombs and, albeit limited, information about social aspects of their owners. This information proves instructive in the study of social interrelations of patronage and to explore variations in the organisation of tomb construction. The re-evaluation shows that three main types of tombs existed side by side during the Naqada III period. The distinctly different design of the substructure points to two or more different underlying ontological belief systems; suggesting the co-existence of more than one (kin-) group. The execution of the tombs displays a great variety and diversity in design, dimensions, material orchestration and in quality of construction. Well-built tombs existed side by side with irregularly designed and built structures. The variety in construction techniques and practices, deployed in the large and medium-sized tombs at the Lower Cemeteries and cemetery M, attests the existence of building operatives of different levels of professional skills. Social hierarchy was already visible in the tomb constellations of Naqada IIIB and IIIC1, but the Naqada IIIC2 status cemetery M changed the situation. It was during Naqada IIIC2 that variety in social status of the owners of tombs at Abu Rawash was at its peak. The tomb configuration of this era is used to set up a frame work of social interrelations. A reconstruction of social systems of patronage, along more than one kinship line, shows that relations between three to four discrete social levels in the local community can be argued. The owners of the large tombs complexes at cemetery M, clustered in distinct groups showing different burial programmes, probably had a pivotal role between the royal court and the Abu Rawash community. Patronage

implies asymmetrical transactions of a social and economic nature. Arguably, the economic transactions regarded primary resources like food, clothing or housing, but likely also socio-economic aspects like privileges for functions, education and training in skills or trades.

This frame work of social interrelations can then be used to study the succeeding Naqada IIID situation. Although cemetery M was no longer used, assumedly as a consequence of changes in the organisation of the administration of the state, social hierarchy in the constellations of tombs remains visible in cemeteries 000 and 800. With modifications, the earlier reconstruction of the pattern of social interrelations can be applied to this time frame; again, along lines of assumed kinship patterns. The social interrelations between the tomb owners, with a strong local component, provide grounds to explore variations in the organisation of tomb construction at the site. Based on the patterns in the irregularly built tombs, a significant influence of local organisations can be argued. The nature of the local building organisations probably followed the changing social situation during the successive Naqada III periods. Although at times a relation with the state-run building organisation can be assumed.

P

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BURIAL CONTAINERS OF THE LATE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD AND EARLY OLD KINGDOM: ADHERENCE TO TRADITIONS OR EVOLUTION?

Burial containers made of various materials are attested from ancient Egypt. In different periods, people used reed, pottery, clay, wood or stone for their production. Generally speaking, almost each material finds its representation in the transitional era of the late Early Dynastic Period and early Old Kingdom. This period features major changes in many aspects of Egyptian society, economy, religion, kingship or state policy, being manifested, for instance, in larger use of stone, especially in the royal funerary architecture where the form of a pyramid appeared. Experiments with massive use of stone were also projected in other aspects of burial sphere, namely in the case of burial containers. Examples of coffins from wood, pottery and clay also appeared. Only reed containers do not seem to be represented at that time. Although there is general awareness of this fact, the sources have not been scrutinised in more detail, which opens the field for deeper analyses. In this regard, one has to ask whether this situation is caused by the real absence of reed coffins, or if it is liable to insecure dating of many burials, insufficient publication of finds or simply the fact that many excavators did not pay attention to this material. However, if the former statement is correct, what were the reasons why Egyptians abandon the use of reed for crafting burial containers at that time?

The present paper aims to explore these considerations. It concentrates on the use of burial containers of the late Early Dynastic Period and early Old Kingdom, with the focus on their spatial and social distribution. Another research question relates to the development in the case of stone sarcophagi, wooden and pottery/clay coffins. In this field, the talk will direct

the attention to drawing possible comparison between the containers of the Early Dynastic Period and early Old Kingdom.

This particular study represents a part of a new project (launched in 2023) that focuses on the burial containers from the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period and is supported by the Czech Science Foundation (GACR No. 23-04989S; <https://cegu.ff.cuni.cz/en/research/projects/other-projects/ancient-egyptian-burial-containers/>). Even though the major interest of the project lies in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period, the precursors in the development of the burial containers represent important starting point and they have to be taken into considerations as well. The research concentrates on tracing traditions and/or potential evolution in the development of the burial containers.

S

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EGYPTIAN OR LEVANTINE? THE ORIGIN OF SEGMENTED SICKLE BLADES IN EGYPT

At the end of the Naqada IID2 period, there was a change in the type of harvesting tools used throughout Egypt. The bifacial sickles used in Upper Egypt and the blade sickles used in Lower Egypt were replaced by rectangular and, to a lesser extent, triangular sickle segment blades. The production and distribution system also changed, which was fully centralized in the Early Dynastic period. This change was almost revolutionary in nature, so it is not surprising that some researchers wondered about their origin - whether it was a local idea or perhaps an adoption of external patterns. In the second half of the last century, attention was drawn to the fact that very similar inserts were used in the Southern Levant, in the Chalcolithic period. Like the Egyptian ones, they are characterized by a rectangular shape and the presence of a steep retouch on both ends and often on one of the sides. This stylistic similarity and a certain chronological convergence led to the fact that, at the end of the last century, these inserts were considered to be of Levantine origin. Unfortunately, the workshops for the production of blades from which these inserts were produced were still unknown, and therefore, knowledge about their production technology was very limited. Moreover, inserts made of southern Levantine flints have not been identified in Egypt so far. Over twenty years of further research have provided new data, including the chronology of the 4th millennium BC in the South Levant, which now differs from last century's arrangements. Workshops for the production of these sickle segments were also discovered in Egypt and the Southern Levant. The obtained data make it possible to re-correlate these two industries chronologically and compare their production technologies. This analysis and its results are the purpose of this presentation.

T

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THE LIFE COURSE OF WOMEN IN PRE-PHARAONIC EGYPT: A BIOSOCIAL PROFILE

Despite the volume of Predynastic research, women are noticeably underrepresented in narratives on the transition to complex society in 4th –3rd millennium BC Nile Valley. This may be due to a prevailing research focus on Egypt's unification and state formation processes, traditionally considered as achievements of elite men, thus investigated from a male-centred perspective. The EU-funded project WOMen-PRO, aims to tackle this long-standing research gap on females' lives and gender dynamics in the region, by investigating how the rise of the Pharaonic state shaped the social role, identity and life course of women in this period. To do so, the project employs a multidisciplinary, biocultural approach that combines various analytical methods including palaeopathology, the measurement of enthesal changes, dental health analysis and dietary reconstruction with mortuary archaeology and archaeothanatology. WOMen-PRO draws on skeletal/dental and funerary evidence of ~1500 adult individuals of both sexes, from Egyptian sites including Naqada, Ballas, Abydos, el Amrah, Quena and Mesaeed. By discussing selected case studies from the sample, in this presentation I will outline the main results of the project regarding the health, nutrition, level of physical activity and burial rituals of women in the region compared to men. The juxtaposition of male and female data will provide insights into long-standing questions such as was health status, access to resources – including food and burial provision –, or the level of physical activity contingent upon biological sex (or gender identity)? Were gender roles clearly defined in this period? In this presentation, I will also argue that the integration of the selected bioarchaeological and archaeological methodologies is crucial for reconstructing accurate biosocial profiles of female individuals in pre-pharaonic Egypt.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN PREDYNASTIC EGYPT: INSIGHTS FROM SKELETONS

This presentation discusses changes in physical activity patterns and the rise of labour specialization in Egypt during the period of state formation. It does so, through the lens of embodiment theory and the analysis of skeletal plasticity applied to skeletal remains from sites across the Nile Valley such as el-Badari, Naqada, Diospolis Parva, el-Ballas, Tarkhan, Abydos,

Umm el Qaab, Qena, and Hierakonpolis. The aim of our work is to understand how physical activity reflects societal change. We combine the study of enthesal changes with cross-sectional geometry and the analysis of osteoarthritis and vertebral pathology to reveal skeletal modifications resulting from daily activities. Skeletal markers such as enthesal changes highlight the physical demands associated with repetitive tasks, while osteoarthritis and vertebral pathology reflect strain from labor-intensive activities such as agricultural practices. Our findings show: (1) variability in activity patterns across Egypt, during the period of state formation, suggesting the rise of labour specialization; (2) a general increase in physical activity levels across the sample, potentially linked to an intensification of agricultural practices; (3) a gendered division of labour. The results shed further light on the transformative processes occurring in Egypt during the 4th-3rd millennium BC, emphasizing the complex interplay between physical activity, and cultural and social change. Our work contributes to a better understanding of this critical period of Egyptian history through the analysis of embodied life experiences. Keywords: Predynastic Egypt, social inequalities, embodiment theory, bioarchaeology, gendered division of labor, specialization of production.

V

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FROM THE BOAT TO THE ROYAL SUITE: THE ROLE OF ENSIGNS IN THE EXPRESSION OF POWER

Between emergence, adaptation or abandonment of motifs, Pre- and Early dynastic iconography is punctuated by several phenomena that bear witness to shifts in thinking. Some of these motifs were used to express power visually, and changes in their use shed light on changes in the mental conception of power during the 4th millennium B.C.E – a period of state formation and emergence of kingship. Among these motifs, the ensigns – also named standards – which we propose to study here are a marker with some interesting characteristics. Consisting of a pole above which an emblem or symbol is placed, they have a certain longevity, from flanking the cabins of boats on the Decorated-wares of Naqada IIC-D to being part of a canonical group of four ensigns integrated into the sovereign's suite. Their link with power and the king is therefore important. During this period, they undergo several iconographic innovations and experiments, both in terms of their morphology and their iconographic role. A diachronic analysis of Pre- and Early dynastic ensigns highlights the transition from a multitude of morphologies to a concentration on a few selected types, and a shift from metaphor to a more concrete expression of power. It thus accompanies and reveals evolutions in the structuring of power in Egypt. These observations will be considered in relation to the characteristics of the different corpuses of objects on which the ensigns appear, which have different implications in terms of consumption of these images. They will also be seen in the context of other phenomena occurring in Pre- and Early dynastic iconography, such as the establishment of an anthropomorphic figure associated with the sovereign. Our aim is to

explore the way in which ensigns contribute to the definition of royal power, by associating this Egyptological approach with political anthropology prospects. This field of social anthropology is indeed required as it sheds light on some of the phenomena only partially revealed by archaeology or iconography, and nuances overly direct readings of iconography.