Research:
Settlement Archaeology in the Nile Delta:
The Tell of Buto

The Early Islamic Necropolis at Aswan

The Monastery Deir Anba Hadra:
Epigraphy, Art and Architectural Studies on Aswan’s Western Bank

Focus Topic:
Exploration and Conservation: Cultural Preservation at Dra’ Abu el-Naga

Deir el-Bakhit: The Monastery of Saint Paul in Western Thebes

Reports
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Luxor is the site of one of the most extensive necropoleis of ancient Egypt. Over a period of almost 2,500 years, this necropolis was almost continually used by a wide section of society: from individuals with simple burials and no or only few grave goods to high-ranking officials with more extensive tomb complexes such as the high priest of Amun as well as for members of the royal family. Monastic communities also settled in this area during the post-Christian era and lived as hermits or in monasteries. Their existence and integration into a transregional trade network shaped communal life during Late Antiquity.

The map shows all of the sites where the Cairo Department was active in 2014.
Dear readers,

The ancient Egyptian culture spans a time period of over five thousand years. The unique living conditions of the people in the Nile Valley led to the emergence of a culture, which, despite its distinct awareness for traditions and consistency over the millennia, evolved as diversely and changeably as the annual Nile floods. The abundance of material remains and the diversity of the various historical periods repeatedly present archaeologists working in Egypt with new challenges that are approached using advanced methods of modern research.

The editors
TOPICS

4 The Early Islamic Necropolis at Aswan
The so-called Fatimid cemetery that lies to the south of Aswan’s city centre covers an area of ca. 600 x 500 m and contains over 50 mausoleums as well as many ancient and modern tombs. After completion of the investigations and restoration, the site was opened for tourists in November 2014.

12 Research:
Settlement Archaeology in the Nile Delta - The Tell of Buto
Buto is not only one of the largest archaeological sites in the western area of the Nile Delta; contrary to numerous newly-founded Ptolemaic/Roman settlements in the region, its history also stretches back to the predynastic period. Up until recent years, information about the site was limited in archaeological terms. It has only been possible to fill this gap in information since the initiation of long-term investigations undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute. These investigations have been able to outline the settlement’s occupation from the 4th millennium BC all the way up to the Byzantine/Early Islamic period. Buto’s geographic position located within a landscape that was shaped by the annual floods enables the archaeologists working at the site to trace the inextricable relationship between the settlement and changes in the landscape over an extensive period of time.

20 The Monastery Deir Anba Hadra - Epigraphy, Art and Architectural Studies on Aswan’s Western Bank
Deir Anba Hadra is the largest and best preserved monastery in Aswan. According to current knowledge, the monastery was built in the 10th century AD and was presumably abandoned in the 13th century.
AD. Due to its remarkable state of preservation and size, the monastery can be considered as one of the most important representatives of monastic architecture. Additionally, the epigraphic sources at the site provide an insight into monastic life, bear witness to journeys undertaken by the monks, document contact between Christians and Muslims during the Medieval period and attest to the use of Coptic written language during the age of Arabization in Egypt. Thus, Deir Anba Hadra constitutes an important source for the social history of the region.

Focus Topic:
Exploration and Conservation: Cultural Preservation at Dra' Abu el-Naga

The double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 is one of the largest rock-cut tomb complexes in Western Thebes. The venture undertaken in Dra' Abu el-Naga increasingly focussed on this complex due to its location and unique architecture.

One of the key aims of the research project is to record and comprehend the site’s occupation history, which can be traced from the beginning of the New Kingdom (18th Dynasty, ca. 1550 BC) with certain gaps all the way through to the Late Antique/Coptic period, i.e. into the 9th century AD.

Deir el-Bakhît:
The Monastery of Saint Paul in Western Thebes

The Monastery Deir el-Bakhît encompasses hermitages built into older Pharaonic tombs and occupied by individual monks that constitute the origins of a monastic settlement in the 5th century AD as well as a walled monastery complex, which developed during the late 6th/early 7th century AD and was inhabited by a coenobitic community of monks. References to an Apa Paul, a monk who could be regarded as a founding father, are contained in inscriptions found in the hermitages as well as on ostraca from the area of the main monastery. The identification of Deir el-Bakhît with the Monastery of Saint Paul, a complex mentioned in other texts, enables us to study its correspondences and trade activities in relation to the other monasteries located in the region.

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1 Excavations at Buto with a Saite building in the foreground and the few remaining brick layers of preserved walls belonging to an Early Dynastic building complex in the background

2 The Deir Anba Hadra monastery situated in the desert on the west bank of the Nile at Aswan

3 A coin from the hoard find discovered in Deir el-Bakhît (Dra' Abu el-Naga/Western Thebes)
The Early Islamic Necropolis at Aswan

The site of the so-called Fatimid cemetery is home to ca. 50 historical mausoleums and several hundred historical and modern tombs. The southern necropolis was intensively used during the Fatimid period (AD 969–1171) and is therefore called the Fatimid cemetery. The overlying aim of the project initiated in 2006 is the comprehensive reconstruction of the historical continuation of the site’s usage by means of an interdisciplinary study of the site and the monuments built there.

Position and History of the Site

Aswan is situated approximately 700 km south of Cairo and remained the most important garrison town in southern Egypt over the centuries. The cemetery site is located to the east of the historical centre of Aswan, whereby the majority has been overbuilt during the last decades. Originally the site stretched over a distance of almost 2 km in length with a maximum width of ca. 500 m. According to the survey carried out by Ugo Monneret de Villard, the cemetery consisted of three smaller necropoleis. In the northern necropolis, two groups of mausoleums and tombs survived, which were restored in the 1980s by the Egyptians. In the middle necropolis, only five mausoleums could be identified amongst the modern buildings. Our investigations focused on the southern necropolis, which extends from the Nubian Museum to the unfinished obelisk (600 x 500 m). When compared with historical views and photographs, the south necropolis best reflects the historical state of the cemetery as a whole.

Project Aims

The overlying aims of the documentation included the exact recording of the terrain by means of a new topographical plan, the geomorphological
study of the terrain and the mapping of several quarries. Priority was given to the documentation of a variety of historical tombs and all remaining mausoleums by means of plans, photos and detailed architectural descriptions as well as the evaluation of stelae, finds, numerous graffiti left by visitors to the cemetery and, last but not least, the study of the pottery. At the same time, the most important historical sources on Aswan and the necropolis were reviewed, and an ethnological study was carried out that included an analysis of the funerary rituals connected with the cemetery. During a later stage of the project, measures to consolidate and secure the existing structures also became a key issue of the work.

Implementation of Measures

Topography: The first step was the preparation of a topographical map (1:1000) by G. Nogara (left), which records the characteristics of the terrain as well as the exact locations of numerous quarries, tombs and mausoleums. In addition to the 30 mausoleums known from Ugo Monneret de Villard’s publication (1930), we were able to identify a further 20 examples as well as over 300 tombs, which in certain cases constituted associated tomb complexes. However, the arrangement principle behind these complexes is still unclear. The largest complex encompasses over 20 individual burials and mausoleums of which only five were visible before clearance work began.

Historical landscape: M. de Dapper and I. Klose conducted geomorphological drilling at selected points in the terrain with the aim of reconstructing the historical landscape. The drilling cores revealed that the site was characterized by a river landscape during the Neolithic. The various Pharaonic and Antique quarries were studied and documented by A. Kelany as the necropolis site was part of Egypt’s most significant sources of rose granite during the Pharaonic (3000–300 BC) and the Graeco-Roman (300 BC–AD 450) periods, from which innumerable statues, obelisks and a whole range of different objects were made that were erected and used in Pharaonic monumental buildings.

Pottery: The pottery, which mainly consists of surface finds and sherds embedded in the architectural structures, has been studied by G. Pyke and P. Rose and presented in an extensive catalogue. The finds mainly date to the Antique and Early Islamic periods.

Tomb complexes: In terms of Islamic burial practices we can say that deceased individuals were simply wrapped in a white shroud and laid underground in an excavated grave without a coffin. Cremation burials are forbidden in the Islamic religion. Islamic tombs are always aligned with Mecca, therefore the tombs at Aswan are aligned north to south, i.e. at right angles to the direction of Mecca so that the deceased, who is laid on one side and not on his/her back, can offer prayers in the direction of Mecca on the day of resurrection.

Graves: The simple burials mainly consist of an underground burial chamber and are marked on the surface by a low encasement wall (two
Tyrology of the graves

Type I

Type II

Type III

Type IV

Type V

Type VI

Type VII

Type VIII
layers of bricks), which encloses an area of ca. 2.4 x 1.6 m. Certain exceptions have an encasement wall made of stone. The reason for this change of material could not be established. In the upper section, the burial shaft is sealed with stone slabs and a layer of mud bricks. Due to numerous traces of plaster, it is clear that the tombs and mausoleums were originally covered with a wash of calcium lime. The aboveground section of several tombs is characterized by a horizontal niche with an arch at one end. According to N. EL-SHOHOUMI, this decoration serves to mark the position of the head of the deceased individual buried below. The southern end of the tomb is marked by two features. The first is a max. 1 m-high wall with a niche for the placement of a funerary stela and the second is a mud-brick platform, the eastern end of which exhibits a miniature prayer niche (rarely intact) or a recess in the shape of a semi-circle, which points the deceased in the direction of Mecca for his prayers after resurrection.

Another and possibly more luxurious form of an individual tomb consists of a min. 1 m-high mud-brick wall that surrounds the tomb and is decorated on all sides by vertical niches but is open at the top. There are also a number of similarly constructed complexes that have a larger ground plan in order to accommodate several individual burials. These complexes probably served as family tombs. In certain cases, two or three tombs were built directly next to one another. A number of tombs do not have an underground chamber; instead the deceased was slid into the northern side of an aboveground chamber. It is possible that these so-called box graves, which are all located on the summit of a raised section of bedrock that stretches to the west of the modern road towards Philae, were developed due to the difficulty of digging a grave in the hard bedrock.

**Mausoleums and memorial buildings:** Despite the fact that Muslim burial complexes display a great deal of regional features, mausoleums remain the most common monumental form of burial. These mausoleums consist of a cube-shaped structural shell and normally have a square ground plan. In the case of the tombs at Aswan, the majority of smaller
constructions have a rectangular ground plan. The upper section of the tombs is characterized by a dome. Almost all mausoleums are built entirely out of mud brick apart from the dome. In Aswan, N. El-Shohoumi has documented a large quantity of honorary tombs with burials that later became the cenotaphs of saints. The identity of the individuals that were once buried here remains unknown but over time, the mausoleums gradually took on a role as cenotaphs and memorial sites for renowned personalities of the early Islam period such as Ali Ibn Abu Taleb, the cousin of the Prophet, his sons, Hasan and Husayn, as well as Khadiga, the wife of the Prophet, and also for prominent Egyptian saints, who were buried elsewhere such as Ahmad Al-Badawi from Tanta or Imam Ash-Shafi‘i, who is buried in Cairo. Every week, young women come to these memorial buildings mainly from the nearby area to perform family and fertility rituals shortly before their wedding day. These were also documented by N. El-Shohoumi.

The mausoleum attributed to Ash-Shafi‘i acts as a place of refuge for people, who have been wronged or have suffered an injustice. The saint, who is perceived to be a judge and an intermediary to God, also has a connection to the spirit world and has the ability to counteract magic intended to inflict harm. This is particularly evident in the mausoleum of the Imam Ash-Shafi‘i as his cult is associated with the colour blue. When the birthdays of these important personalities come around, up to 50,000 pilgrims travel every year from all corners of the country in order to participate in the festivities that take place over a period of several days.

**Construction damage and restoration:**
Restoration work concentrated on seven mausoleums, a prayer room, and a small domed building used for the storage of amphorae that were filled with water (arab. sabil).
In order to determine the cause and extent of the damage to the mausoleums, L. Chablaïs prepared a detailed report assessing the damage exhibited by these buildings. During the course of this process, he was able to ascertain that the majority of the exterior walls had been greatly affected by wind erosion and, as a result, that their load-bearing capacity had been reduced to a minimum. As a remedy to this process, he suggested the construction of an outer shell made of mud bricks. In addition, he diagnosed considerable static problems in the area of the dome that also influenced the stability of the structure’s main body. He attributed the gaps in the walls to insufficient foundations. In the case of two of the mausoleums that were to be restored, the domes were no longer intact. On the basis of their remains and comparisons with existing structures, these domes were reconstructed by J. Linde mann using fired bricks. As a final measure, the restored buildings were coated with a fresh layer of plaster on their exterior sides. The simple tombs were cleaned and stabilized, larger sections that were missing were filled and covered with clay plaster. The restoration measures were carried out by J. Lindemann, G. Nogara and B. Schäfer in cooperation with a team of masons from Aswan and Quft.

**Protection of the necropolis:** Measures to protect the necropolis are vital as the site is increasingly threatened by the rapid growth of the city of Aswan. Since the 1930s, hundreds of people have been buried, albeit in simple individual graves, in the historical necropolis.
In order to guarantee the continued existence of the southern necropolis as an archaeological site, a site-management study was prepared by Ph. Quack in 2009. On the basis of this study, a section of the necropolis was selected for the exemplary restoration of mausoleums and tombs. A path for visitors was laid out and...
supplemented by bilingual information panels. This trail is primarily directed at the local population but also at domestic and foreign tourists.

Funerary stelae and inscriptions: The official name of the necropolis, i.e. the Fatimid cemetery, is misleading: In the 1920s, U. Monneret de Villard undertook a study of 600 stelae stored in depots and was able to determine that only 38 stelae actually date to the Fatimid period (AD 969–1169) with three others originating from later centuries. In view of this result, an important question remains unanswered: where are the tombs from earlier centuries such as the Abbasid, the Tulunid and later dynasties? It is well known that Aswan lost its significance as a spiritual centre after the collapse of the Fatimid dynasty and was then eclipsed by the city of Qus located further north along the Nile Valley, but it still retained its strategic importance. An exact chronological assignment of the tombs is not possible at present as almost all of the several thousand funerary stelae were removed due to safety reasons during a devastating storm in 1887 however without recording their original position. Since then, the stelae have been kept in storage mainly in Aswan and Cairo. In March 2010, an international workshop took place in Aswan with the aim of editing and publishing all the funerary inscriptions. In January 2011, the first campaign to review the material was undertaken under the direction of R. Bodenstein. During clearance work, over twenty intact stelae and fragments were discovered in the rubble, which were studied by MuH. Ragaeh and IS. Sayed. All of these stelae were inscribed with dates from the Fatimid period; therefore it can be assumed that the southern necropolis was at its height during this period. In addition, F. Keshk together with three Egyptian scholars began with the documentation and study of visitors’ graffiti in two mausoleums in March 2014. The numerous Pharaonic rock inscriptions have already been recorded in the frame of a comprehensive documentation project under the direction of St. SeidlMayer. On the 3rd of December 2014, the restored sector of the necropolis was inaugurated in the presence of the Minister of Antiquities, Mamdouh el-Damaty, the Governor, Mustafa Youssri, the Ambassador, Hansjörg Haber, as well as a large number of guests.

Finally it can be said, that the investigation of the necropolis conveys a picture of 500 years (7th – 12th c. AD) of living history at Aswan, about which knowledge has been extremely limited so far.

AUTHORS

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Settlement Archaeology in the Nile Delta

The Tell of Buto

The ca. 1 km$^2$ large settlement mound of Buto (modern name Tell el-Faraʿin) is located in the flood plain in the north-western region of the Nile Delta, ca. 40 km from the present-day coastline of the Mediterranean and 10 km from the Rosetta Nile branch. As a result of the repeatedly renewed mud-brick structures and thick layers of rubble, this artificial mound grew over the centuries and, with a height of up to 20 m, towers over the surrounding fields.
right: several walls of the Early Dynastic palace complex

background: the ruins of mud-brick buildings on the settlement mound of Buto
The visible ruins of the mound (»tell« or »kôm« in Arabic) that characterize the site of Buto mainly originate from the Ptolemaic/Roman period with some dating perhaps to the Saite period (26th Dynasty), but these ruins only constitute the remains of the youngest phase of Buto’s history, which stretches as far back as the first half of the 4th millennium BC. The older settlement remains are not visible on the modern-day surface as they are entirely covered over by younger structures. Investigations undertaken by the DAI Cairo began in the early 1980s with the aim of exploring the older settlement history of Buto. Questions on the relationship between the settlement and the development of the surrounding landscape that was dictated by the annual Nile flooding also constituted one of the key issues of the investigations. Waterways (Nile branches or artificially created canals) acted at all times as major thoroughfares to the main Nile Valley (and perhaps also to the Mediterranean) and can thus be perceived the settlement’s lifeline. Therefore, any changes in the landscape, for example the gradual shifting of river branches or the silting up of canals, must have had severe consequences for Buto.

During the course of archaeological work on the settlement mound, the problems and limits of excavation in the western Delta became clear. The predynastic settlement layers of Buto lie beneath the modern-day ground water level and can only be reached by using pumps. This technique also means that only small areas of the layers can be investigated at one time. But even extensive excavations would only be able to shed limited light on the past due to the sheer size of the site. In order to gain a comprehensive picture of the chronological and topographical development of this expansive settlement, a wider survey and a combination of diverse prospection methods were required.

Prospection

A combination of surface and magnetometer surveys together with systematic drilling has proved successful over the years: By means of magnetometer surveys, mud-brick structures that are not visible on the surface can be detected up to a depth of ca. 1.5 m. The result is a veritable “city map” of the architectural structures that lie beneath the ground and can be expected during archaeological excavation (see the map on the right). An approximate chronological assignment of these building remains can be obtained by analysing the pottery that is found and collected at the corresponding areas on the surface. This two-dimensional picture can then be supplemented by using simple augers to bore down into the ground as the material that is attached to the drill’s head not only provides information on the type of layer that has been bored through (e.g. mud-brick walls, ash deposits, conglomerations of potsherds, Nile sediments etc.) but also contains sufficient pottery fragments to enable a dating of the corresponding layer. By comparing the results of the individual auger drillings, sections through the settlement...
Magnetometric map of the former investigations in Buto:

The dark points surrounded by a light ring on the northern slope of the settlement mound mark pottery kilns from the Roman period.

The densely built structures of the Saite period (26th Dynasty) are visible along one of the streets running north to south in the western part of the town.

The over 400 m-long enclosure wall surrounds a Ptolemaic temple district in the south-western part of Buto.
The mound could be plotted according to the various stretches of drill-holes which show the thickness and expanse of the settlement layers during different time periods (see fig. left). Due to the evidence of alluvium deposits on the same levels, it is also possible to gain information on Nile flooding and to relate this phenomenon to the settlement layers. Using these techniques, the outlines of the settlement’s development during older phases become more tangible and the combination with the magnetometric measurements in the study of the younger periods provides an insight into the structure of the settlement and the actual appearance of the buildings.

Excavation in Selected Areas

The results of the survey create a basis for selecting individual areas that are archaeologically relevant to specific questions. Therefore excavation remains a vital method.
for the investigation of the site as the information obtained during the course of excavation enhances the picture of settlement development indicated by prospection methods with details to the activities and living conditions of the inhabitants of different time periods. By combining the results of the above-mentioned methods, we thus gain a multi-faceted image of the settlement at Buto that spans from the predynastic to the Byzantine/Early Islamic periods:

**Predynastic Period (4th millennium BC)**

In the early 4th millennium BC, the first settlers used a 200 to 300 m-wide stretch of land that was probably located along the bank of a water course at the western edge of a large sand dune. This sand dune rose above the level of the annual flooding and therefore provided sufficient protection for permanent habitation. The early settlement seems to have been comprised of simple huts with walls made with the wattle and daub technique; its economy was based on agriculture. The material culture identifies Buto as a settlement of the Lower Egyptian Maadi culture (named after a settlement near to Cairo that was first excavated in the 1930s). During the course of the 4th millennium, an increasing influence of the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture can be observed particularly on the basis of pottery until the late 4th millennium at which point the material culture can no longer be distinguished from contemporary sites in the Nile Valley.

The unification of the state which is attested in written sources i.e. the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt into a nation state can therefore be understood as a gradual process of cultural convergence and did not result from a singular event. During this period, the settlement expanded considerably to the north and south and stretched over a length of almost 1 km at the turn of the millennium.

**Early Dynastic Period**

*(1st/2nd Dynasty: ca. 3000–2800 BC)*

During the Early Dynastic period, a large-scale building complex existed at the site and its development can be traced from an administrative complex to a palace-like building with a surrounding enclosure wall, a central reception room, storerooms, workshops as well as individual rooms that were used for private and ritual purposes. The size and character of the complex as well as the careful planning and execution of construction work do not leave any doubts that the building in question represents a royal palace and economic complex, which functioned as a centre for the organisation and control of regional agricultural production and also for the manufacture of diverse luxury goods e.g. stone vessels and large flint knives. The complex may also have served as a temporary residency for the ruler.

When the various building phases are analysed, the architecture during the 1st Dynasty displays an increasing amount of organization, and the material culture, particularly the pottery and the flint industry, is characterized to a greater extent by standardization. Impressed seal fragments indicate the development of administrative structures and Buto’s incorporation in transregional economic networks. The relationship between these features and the formation and consolidation of Early Dynastic hegemonic structures is obvious. Towards the middle of the 2nd Dynasty,
sections of this complex were destroyed by a large-scale fire and the building was ultimately abandoned during the late 2nd Dynasty.

**Old Kingdom (ca. 2800–2200 BC)**

Only a limited amount of building remains can be dated to the Old Kingdom however in light of pottery finds there is no doubt that a settlement existed into the late Old Kingdom. During the following era, the site was abandoned for more than a 1000 years: neither auger drilling nor excavation yielded evidence of settlement remains from the Middle or New Kingdom. The settlement was probably abandoned due to the shifting of nearby Nile branches and the consequent silting up of smaller waterways that formed the main access routes to Buto.

**Third Intermediate Period (late 8th century BC)**

Extensive re-occupation of the site only took place again in the late 8th century BC: perhaps a branch of the Nile had re-cut its way through to the area. The centre of the newly-founded town lay to the east of the ruins of earlier settlements that were still partially visible on

*Impressed door seal with the name of the responsible official Nebka (above left) and the plan of the Early Dynastic palace complex with the find spot (red circle) of the seal*
the surface and were now used as a source of material for manufacturing bricks and as a rubbish dump. In the north-west area of Buto, elite tombs were discovered dating to this period such as the burial of a high official or local prince in a granite sarcophagus with a lid usurped from a Ramesside tomb. The tomb equipment also included bracelets that bear the name Iupet II. (ruled ca. 754–720 BC), who was only previously known in the central and eastern Delta. It remains unknown how these bracelets came to be in the possession of the deceased.

**Saite Period**

(26th Dynasty, 7th/6th century BC)

During the Saite period (26th Dynasty), the surface area of the settlement greatly increased: the temple of Wadjet (cobra goddess of the Delta region and protective deity of Lower Egypt) was built and, regarding profane structures, Buto seems to have experienced a veritable building boom in the first half of the 6th century. The magnetometric map gives an impression of how densely built the settlement was at this time, e.g. along a north-to-south running street in the western part of the town. Several buildings with chambered foundations typical of the Saite period were selected for excavation. The largest building (approx. 22.5 x 22.5 m) had been constructed with foundations that were over 5 m in depth indicating that the building was originally multi-storeyed. However, Buto’s prosperity was only short-lived as the settlement’s expanse considerably reduced during the second half of the 6th century to smaller sections of higher ground in the northern area of the town. Many of the houses visible on the magnetometric map seem to have already been abandoned at this time and the foundation chambers of the tower houses were secondarily used as burial pits. The ceramic inventory of the Late period includes numerous vessels that are of particular interest as they had been imported from the Levant, Cyprus, Asia Minor and Greece. These imports are testimony to Buto’s connections to the eastern Mediterranean world and, due to a gradual shift in their region of origin, also reflect foreign policy of the Saite rulers.

**Ptolemaic to Byzantine/Early Islamic Period**

(ca. 300 BC–7th century AD)

During the Ptolemaic/Roman period, not only was the entire area of the present-day settlement mound used but presumably also a much larger area that has since been affected by erosion. The townscape was changed significantly during this period by the addition of a temple complex with a substantial enclosure wall visible on the magnetometric map in the south-western area of Buto. The entire western part of the settlement mound was now used as a burial ground. Although Buto experienced another period of prosperity during the Ptolemaic period, the surface area of the site markedly decreased during the Roman period.
and the site was abandoned for the very last time during the 7th century AD. The urban development of Buto and the varying functional areas of the town during the youngest phase of occupation constitute the focus of a project undertaken by the University of Poitiers under the direction of P. Ballet and in cooperation with the DAI Cairo and the IFAO. This project also benefitted greatly from the magnetometric survey: the resulting map showed groups of kilns located in numerous parts of Buto that were used for the industrial production of pottery during the Roman period. After the discovery of these kilns via the magnetometric survey, they could then be pinpointed in the field for archaeological excavation. Although the evaluation of the wide range of the material remains to be completed, the examples mentioned above illustrate the great variety of information gained over the last decades at Buto. This information not only sheds light on the local situation at the site itself but is also crucial to our understanding of Egyptian history in general.

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The Monastery
Deir Anba Hadra
Epigraphy, Art and Architectural Studies on Aswan’s Western Bank

At the beginning of the 13th century, the Coptic writer Abū l-Makārīm mentions »a church named after Abū Hadrī, whose body lies within its walls…on the Island of Aswan«, i.e. Elephantine in his »History of Churches and Monasteries«. According to this account, the once large and beautiful church now lay in ruins and an adjacent monastery was also completely destroyed. Abū l-Makārīm also writes of a monastery dedicated to the saint Abu Hadrī and inhabited by monks on the gebel on the western bank.

Abū Hadrī or Anbā Hadrā (the Egyptian name Hatre means »twin«) is a local saint. The epithet normally used in connection with his name refers to him as al-sa’iḥ al-’aswānī »the hermit of Aswan«. The Synaxar preserved in Arabic script contains the following account of the saint: On the day of his wedding, a funeral procession crossing the path of the wedding party made him realize the vanity of all worldly goods. He then withdrew into a cave and led the life of a saint and miracle worker. He was consecrated as the bishop of Aswan by the
Alexandrian patriarch Theophilos (AD 384–412). He died on the 12th of the month of Choiak (8th of December) during the reign of Emperor Theodosius, i.e. before AD 395.

The Monastery

The monastery on the western bank of Aswan, which, according to Abū l-Makārīm’s writings, was still active at the beginning of the 13th century, is still one of the largest and best-preserved medieval monastery complexes throughout Egypt. It lies at a distance of 1 km inland and was built on two sandstone terraces above a desert valley and surrounded by a high wall of up to 2 m in thickness. The entrance through the eastern gate leads to the lower terrace where the church stands. The church belongs to the Upper Egyptian central-plan building type with a dome supported on eight pillars, a type of longitudinal church with domed naos: the long-since collapsed roof of the three-aisled church was formed by constructing two brick domes that were each supported by eight pillars. In the haikal, the sanctuary located in the east of the building, the remains of several phases of decoration in the form of wall paintings are still preserved. The west wall of the church that stands on the rocky cliff between the lower and upper terraces cuts and, at the same time, incorporates a grotto in the bedrock. The walls of the grotto are entirely covered with figurative and ornamental wall paintings and this decoration, which dates approximately between the 7th and 8th centuries AD, seems to predate the founding of the monastery. The grotto was probably considered as the dwelling place of Anba Hadra himself and honoured accordingly. A single flight of steps connects the lower
Research History

Accounts of the monastery complex are known as early as the 18th century from European travellers, the first being Richard Pococke, who refers to the complex as the Monastery of Saint Simon – a name that can still be found in modern travel guides.

terrace with the upper level of the monastery, which is dominated in its northern part by a monumental residential tower (qasr) equipped with its own refectory and kitchen. The southern section of the upper terrace is distinguished by the massive relics of complex production areas with kilns, mills and other production and storage facilities. A cemetery lies to the south-east of the monastery complex and is perhaps the place of origin of over one hundred Coptic funerary stelae dating to the period between the 7th and 10th centuries that were made for the inhabitants of the monastery and were found in part in the rubble of the church’s collapsed roof.

Studies of the monumental ruins first began in the late 19th century and were conducted by French scholars such as Gaston Maspero, Jacques de Morgan, Urbain Bouriant and Jean Clédat. Between 1924 and 1926, the monastery was archeologically investigated and described by Ugo Monneret de Villard. Even though Monneret de Villard’s excavations were methodically at the height of contemporary research, certain find groups, which could have been analysed using more suitable methods or can only now be fully evaluated for example the ceramological and archaeobotanical inventory, are now lost. Also the whereabouts of many finds – objects of varying materials as well as texts written on different materials are mentioned – remain unknown.
Current Work

The work undertaken in Deir Anba Hadra by the DAI Cairo with the support of the Berlin Excellence Cluster TOPOI and the European Foundation of the Rahn Dittrich Group for Education and Culture focuses on the secondary visitors’ inscriptions that can be found in considerable numbers particularly in the area of the church as well as in other rooms of the monastery.

The Inscriptions and Graffiti

The Egyptologist Lena Krastel M.A. is responsible for the Coptic inscriptions. She studied the funerary stelae of the monastery’s cemetery in the frame of her master’s thesis and has been granted a PhD scholarship by the Berlin Graduate School BerGSAS in order to analyse the sociocultural significance of the monastery. The Arabic inscriptions are being studied by the German scholars Dr. Ralph Bodenstein and Christopher Braun M.A. together with Sara Masoud, an Egyptian colleague. During the course of three campaigns, more than 200 Coptic and approximately the same amount of Arabic inscriptions have been registered so far. These private memorial texts not only constitute an important source for the building and occupation history of the monastery but provide valuable evidence for the local and transregional significance of the complex, the inter-religious contact between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages, and the use of Coptic written language during the process of linguistic Arabization in Egypt. Almost 30 Coptic inscriptions can be dated in absolute terms after the Egyptian-Christian Era of Emperor Diocletian or to the Islamic Era. The two oldest inscriptions date to the second half of the 10th century. In addition, one of them is dated to the first year of King Zacharias’ reign, which reflects the short-term military accomplishments of Christian-Nubian rulers in their fight against the Ikhshidid governors residing in Fustat. The youngest inscription dates to the year 1404 and is one of the latest testimonies to the Coptic language in the whole of Upper Egypt.
On the upper storey of the monumental residential apartments of Deir Anba Hadra, a room located there (OT_120) has captured the attention of the epigraphists more than others. The sheer number of inscriptions in this room is without comparison in the entire complex but also their typology and content is particularly interesting. Over 30 Coptic and even more Christian-Arabic inscriptions have been registered in this room. The youngest Coptic inscription, a red dipinto dating to the year 1321 is located in the normal inscription register, i.e. at approximately chest height. A man named Sanjachia asks Saint Hadra for his blessing.

However, the majority of the Coptic inscriptions here were written at a height of 40 to 70 cm above the floor level, i.e. at knee height. Many of them are dated. The earliest date is the year 900 of Diocletian (AD 1183/4). Two inscriptions were written in the year 920 of Diocletian (AD 1203/4). One of these inscriptions can be dated precisely to the 12th of Choiak in the year 920 of Diocletian (8th of December 1203 AD). A priest, with the Coptic-Arabic name Prachman, visited the monastery on the remembrance day of the saint’s death accompanied by George of Hermonthis.

A limited series of black ink inscriptions date to the years 1303/4 and 1305/6. The oldest Christian-Arabic inscriptions in the room date to the same years. These inscriptions, therefore, allow us to watch the gradual transition of the Egyptian Christians from the Coptic to the Arabic script. An undated inscription refers to «the holy Abba Hatre, the bishop». Room OT_120 contains the highest number of references to Hadra than any other room in the entire monastery complex.

The significance of this room is still unclear. Did it serve as a chapel of the residential apartments? Are the inscriptions written just above the floor level perhaps directed at the monk’s cell located immediately below, a room which stands out due to its elaborate decoration? Regardless of these questions, the medieval inscriptions attracted further graffiti during later periods: since the middle of the 19th century, the upper register of the walls of OT_120 have...
been repeatedly covered with inscriptions left by pilgrims.

The Decoration of the Monastery Complex

In the autumn of 2014, the art historian Dr. Gertrud van Loon (Catholic University Leuven) was able to document the entire pictorial decoration of the grotto, the monastery church and several rooms of the Qasr by means of photos and descriptions. The relatively well-preserved and surprisingly high-quality wall and ceiling paintings of the grotto were intensively studied in the frame of a TOPOI-scholarship. The identity of the 37 saints who decorate the walls of the grotto will be determined in future studies. During the course of the 2015 spring campaign, Dr. Kathryn Piquette (University of Cologne) will employ photographic enhancement techniques such as reflectance transformation imaging (RTI) in order to make the traces of inscriptions that accompany individual images more legible. The iconographic programme of the church, which is mainly preserved in the form of wall paintings in the eastern and western conch of the sanctuary, and was evidently altered over time in view of the many layers of paint, needs to be studied in more detail. The inscriptions and wall paintings were made on an extremely delicate base coat, which is composed of a compound of several layers of plaster and whitewash and has been exposed to damage by environmental factors and human activity over hundreds of years and is still under threat. The conservator Alexandra Winkels from Freiburg specializes in the analysis and preservation of mortar and plaster. She has developed a concept for the conservation of the wall paintings and will take steps to implement this concept in the coming campaigns. The sequence of plaster layers, which in certain cases bear inscriptions and are therefore datable, represents one of the parameters for the reconstruction of the monastery’s chronology.

Future Work

The architectural history of the Hadra monastery on the western bank of Aswan constitutes one of the questions which still remain unanswered. According to Abū l-Makārīm’s report mentioned at the start of this overview, the church built on the burial site of the saint and an adjacent monastery were originally located on Elephantine. It is possible that the monastery of the saint was transferred from the island to the western bank during the 9th or 10th century for reasons that are still unknown. The decorated grotto, which was integrated into the north-west corner of the newly built church, is evidence of an early Hadra tradition that localized the hermitage of the saint in this cave. We hope to clarify questions on the architectural history and chronology of the monastery during the course of future work, which, alongside epigraphic documentation, the analysis of the plaster and the study of the figurative decoration will also include the architectural documentation of the church by Dr. Eng. Heike Lehmann as well as the architectural documentation of the administrative buildings by Sebastian Olschok M.A.

Tony Sebastian Richter studied evangelical theology and Egyptology in Naumberg and Leipzig. He held several positions at the Universities of Leipzig and Berlin. He also directs the work carried out in Deir Anba Hadra.
In cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry for Antiquities and international partners, the members of staff at the DAI Cairo study all periods of Egyptian culture from predynastic times to the modern era, Egypt’s settlement and landscape history, the form and function of ritual spaces and its living environment. The study of how ancient Egypt is perceived and its significance for the formation of identity in Egypt and Europe also plays an important role in the institute’s activities. The numerous projects of the DAI Cairo range from archaeological fieldwork at approximately 20 sites to extensive conservation work and site management conception. In addition, several scholars employed by the Cairo Department are currently working on web-based databases and online resources, which will greatly facilitate and enrich scientific work and research possibilities in the future.

Head of a statue from the Middle Kingdom (12th Dynasty) discovered during excavations carried out by Ahmed Fakhry and kept today in the store-room at Giza
Lower Egypt

Abu Mena

The 2014 spring campaign at the early Christian pilgrimage site Abu Mena took place between the 6th and the 23rd of April. The participants of the campaign were Peter Grossmann as the site director, Jacek Kosciuk (Wrocław) as the site’s architect and Cornelia Römer as the project’s epigraphist.

The work carried out during this relatively short campaign focussed on several supplementary investigations of press unit I that is part of the large inner-city wine press located to the east of the city’s double bath complex (and to the south of the so-called ostraca house). The work was considerably hindered by the high and extraordinarily thick bushes that have spread over the entire excavation site since the ground water level has been artificially raised. Despite this hindrance, we were able to fully excavate the press unit’s treading floor, the large, adjacent fermentation basin, the anterior workroom as well as several side rooms. The fermentation basin had at some stage been reduced in size on its western side by a screen wall supported by two arches in order to improve the flow of the pomace from the treading floor. In addition, the function of the small inlets at the eastern edge of the fermentation basin could be clarified. Contrary to our original interpretation of these features as inlets for the gradual addition of ingredients such as honey or the juice of various fruits, they were in fact used as racks for larger vessels with so-called rocking bases. The remains of a vertical sack press and its associated drainage channels were also uncovered.

Jacek Kosciuk investigated the funerary rooms and the neighbouring buildings of a funerary chapel. Parts of this chapel had been previously excavated by C. M. Kaufmann, who interpreted the building’s function differently. This chapel stands out due to the extraordinary quality of the painted imitation of architectural décor.

Finally, Cornelia Römer also took part in the excavations for a few days and carried out investigations on several graffiti that were discovered in a house situated in the urban area (near to the eastern gate) of Abu Mena that is equipped with its own funerary chapel and baptistery.

Peter Grossmann

Giza

Since 2013, relief fragments from the excavations undertaken by Ahmed Fakhry have been documented in the Giza storerooms. These fragments once decorated the Valley Temple of the Bent Pyramid (ca. 2600 BC) that stands in Dahshur (see the extensive report in Issue 2).

In 2014, all of the finds – almost 2000 objects – were inventoried and photographed. These objects include statues, stelae, altars, beads, amulets, seal impressions, metal objects, stone vessels and stone tools. The finds mainly date to the Old and Middle Kingdoms (ca. 2600–1750 BC) but objects of a later date were also discovered. The numerous finds are particularly significant for the study of the site’s cultural history as they document which objects were sacrificed at a given time and which ritual activities were performed in the ca. 2000 year-long history of the Valley Temple. Large amounts of pottery, several stone knives as well as a number of Old Kingdom statues of members of the king’s family show that a regular, state-organized sacrificial cult for the provision of the king was carried out during this period. By contrast, ritual activities during the Middle Kingdom are characterized by the erection of statues, altars and stelae in the temple whereas hardly any pottery was offered. This observation indicates that a state-organized cult for the provision of the king no longer existed during the Middle Kingdom. The offerings were instead donated by priests and inhabitants of the pyramid town who wished to partake in the veneration of the deified king.
The high quality of the statues dating to the Middle Kingdom will be illustrated for the first time as they will be published in the form of colour photographs. The various groups of finds will be studied individually and, for the most part, will be published for the first time. The project will be continued in other storerooms that contain other objects discovered during Fakhry’s excavations in Dahshur.

Dahshur

During the re-documentation of the Bent Pyramid’s Valley Temple (4th Dyn., ca. 2600 BC), it was ascertained two years ago that a brick building to the north of the temple, which had been partially excavated by Ahmed Fakhry but assigned to the Middle Kingdom, actually pre-dated the well-known stone temple. A magnetometric prospection established that this brick building had originally stood in a massive enclosure wall. The aim of work carried out this year was to establish the function and significance of this building during the course of extensive archaeological investigations.

An utterly unexpected feature was uncovered within this precinct, namely the remains of a large-scale garden. The remains of regularly spaced rows of tree pits are still preserved sometimes with an open ring around the trunk for the irrigation and overflow canals from one ring to the next. A study of the botanical remains revealed that palms, cypresses and also imported cypress trees were planted here.

The precinct can be described as an 81 x 56 m-large complex that is surrounded by a 5 m-thick enclosure wall. Rows of tree pits run parallel to the interior walls on at least three sides, with four rows on the western side and three rows that stand slightly closer together on the northern and eastern sides. The central part of the complex was free from trees and therefore constituted an open space.

The southern half of the area was once dominated by a monumental brick building. The main entrance to the building is located at the southern end of its eastern side. This entrance area changes direction several times before leading to a pillared hall which has another entrance in the south. To the west, there is an adjacent room with a basin, which could have been used for purification purposes. A large court is situated in the north and at least one of its sides was delimited by a row of pillars. The precinct possibly dates to the same period as the foundation of the Bent Pyramid under King Snefru. During the following period, parts of the precinct particularly the brick building was repeatedly renovated, redesigned and then extended to the west. However, as early as the year of the 15th census during Snefru’s rule, many parts of the complex were pulled down and built over during the construction of the stone temple. The area was, however, incorporated into the new temple precinct; the garden complex was maintained and even extended to the north.

The meaning and function of this unique complex cannot be determined with any certainty but it can be stated without any doubt that the garden in question is not purely profane in nature: the enclosure wall is too monumental and its position in the middle of the desert is too unsuited. The precinct could possibly be understood as a fore-runner to the Valley Temple but with a slightly different form and function. The complex was not used during the burial of the king but was in use during his lifetime and not just for one festival alone. On the contrary, the complex was used on a regular basis for the performance of ritual activities. A comparison with the ancient Near Eastern “New Year festival tent”, to which the Mesopotamian kings withdrew annually in order to complete a ritual of regeneration, could contribute to our understanding of the complex. It is without a doubt, that this building in Dahshur constitutes an entirely new and unexpected element of the pyramid complex and raises completely new questions on the formation and development of these complexes in general.

Felix Arnold

The Early Dynastic Royal Tombs of Umm el-Qaab

Following the many years of intensive excavations in the predynastic Cemetery U and the Early Dynastic royal cemetery, the project has now entered the “critical phase” of reviewing and cataloguing material, data analysis and publication, which is funded by the German Re-
search Foundation (DFG). A gigantic amount of archaeological primary data consisting of architectural features, pottery and small finds from pre- and proto-dynastic burials and from the large tomb complexes of the kings Djer, Den, Semerkhet of the 1st Dynasty (ca. 3100–2900 BC) and Khasekhemwy of the late 2nd Dynasty (ca. 2700 BC) was systematically reviewed and analysed during the work in 2014 and final publication is progressing swiftly. Unfortunately, the tomb of Den has suffered structural damage as a result of the widespread illegal excavation activities during recent years. This damage has been stemmed by partially filling the burial pit, a measure which was undertaken in close collaboration with local colleagues of the Ministry for Antiquities. The project team was delighted to receive a visit in November from the Minister of Antiquities, Dr. MAMdouH ELdamatY, who proposed a new strategy for the protection and conservation of Egypt’s oldest royal necropolis, whilst at the same time opening the site for tourists. Since 2014, the project has been carried out in the frame of a cooperation between the German Archaeological Institute and the University of Vienna.

CH. KöHLER

The Cult of Osiris in Umm el-Qaab

The 2014 campaign concentrated on the documentation of the pottery found in the context of a large in-situ deposit from an area to the north-north-east of the tomb of Osiris, and on the documentation of the small finds.

The pottery deposit, which was discovered in the previous year, comprised of almost 2700 vessels from the Late Period. The pottery vessels primarily served to delimit a procession and cult axis. The initial, tentative assignment of these vessels to the 25th Dynasty could be confirmed and defined more precisely throughout the course of our work. During the documentation of the small finds, over 60 seal impressions were recorded: they can be dated to a time span ranging between the First Intermediate Period and the 4th century BC with a focus on the 26th–30th Dynasties. Approximately 90% of the impressions from this period bear the title heseku-priest. One example that bears the titles of an individual, who was a heseku- and imi-is-priest as well as a scribe in the house of life (4th century), together with several examples from the Middle Kingdom deserve special consideration. Until recently, Umm el-Qaab was generally considered to be lacking in finds that could be assigned to the Middle Kingdom. However, over the last few years, a number of pottery vessels from the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period have been identified, and the number of objects that can be dated in absolute terms on the basis of their inscriptions, has increased. Objects discovered in Umm el-Qaab and on the Heqareshu hill, e.g. stelae fragments, offering tables and seal impressions, bear the names of several rulers of the 11th and 12th Dynasties including Mentuhotep III, Senusret I, Amenemhat II, Senusret III and Amenemhat III.

Gamal Abdel Nasser (General Director of Sohag), Mahmoud Osman Atik (Governor of Sohag), Dr. Mamduh Eldamaty (Minister of Antiquities), Dr. E. Christiana Köhler (site director) during a visit to Umm el-Qaab (front row from left)

The head of an Osiris figure made of unfired Nile clay (photo Irene Pamer)
before they were transported to the relevant storage facilities.

Throughout the course of further research work undertaken prior to the publication of the long ritual text on the so-called New Kingdom heart vessels, additional fragments were identified that had been found during previous excavations. A fragment housed in the Spurlock Museum, the collection of the University of Illinois, could be virtually fitted onto three other fragments found during the DAI-excavations.

UTE & ANDREAS EFFE LAND

Living Environments: Middle Kingdom Residential Buildings on Elephantine

As a border town, a trade and religious centre and a military station, the town of Elephantine, which is located on the eponymous island (Aswan gezirat) has been inhabited since predynastic times. The study and excavation of the site undertaken in cooperation with the Swiss Institute for Egyptian Architectural History and Archaeology in Cairo is currently focused on residential buildings that date to the Middle Kingdom as well as on the Khnum temple and houses from the New Kingdom.

As a result of the long-term investigations of the DAI Cairo on Elephantine, the chronological and chorological classification of the buildings is well-established. In the frame of the project «Realities of Life», the living conditions of the local population, the evidence of which has been scarce until present, are central to excavation work: how did it feel to live in these houses? Where did the occupants get washed and where did they go about their daily needs? How were the occupants involved in regional and transregional life? In the past, the answer to these questions were often made on the basis of textual and pictorial sources, however techniques from the natural sciences offer new possibilities: the investigation of the residue attached to the inside walls of pottery vessels sheds light on their original content. When thin sections of floor samples are observed under the microscope, they reveal whether animals or people walked over a specific floor. Sieving excavated sediment reveals insects of all kinds, e.g. pests or parasites that have found their way into food storages or clothing.

In 2014, these refined methods were employed from the outset of the excavation of two Middle Kingdom residential buildings. The discovery of chips of cornelian and worked amethyst fragments along with other small finds made our efforts worthwhile: these objects prove that minute beads were manufactured at this spot that were perhaps traded or made for personal use. Several of the archaeometric methods that we aspire to, however, require a well-equipped laboratory. Also, the appropriate excavation techniques and subsequent storage of the finds must be considered before they are removed, stored and transported, and such measures must be incorporated into the initial planning of an excavation.

JOHANNA SIGL

The Khnum Temple of Elephantine

Recycling was an everyday activity of the ancient Egyptian community. For example blocks of older temple buildings were used to construct new sacred structures. In the autumn of 2014, our team was able to document the stone blocks of a New Kingdom building that were integrated into the foundations of the Khnum temple built by Nectanebo II on Elephantine without moving them from their current position, which could have caused the terrace of the temple to collapse. Additional blocks that were found during previous excavations were

Block with the effaced cartouche of Hatshepsut (photo Tyler Perkins, DAI Cairo)  Chips of cornelian from a Middle Kingdom house (photo Peter Kopp, DAI Cairo)
identified as parts of this New Kingdom building. The reconstruction revealed that these decorated and often still painted stones belonged to a previously unknown way station, i.e. a small structure in which a divine bark could be placed temporarily during ritual processions, and to a shrine for the god Khnum that both date to the reign of Queen Hatshepsut. The deciphered texts show that the structures must have been built during the early years of the queen’s rule. The inscriptions and decoration were then altered by order of her successor and nephew, Thutmose III. These blocks show interesting details such as the gradual change in appearance of the divine bark of Khnum particularly during the reign of the various kings of the 18th Dynasty.

This work would not be possible without the necessary infrastructure, namely the storage facilities of the Ministry for Antiquities on Elephantine. The reorganization of these storerooms by the DAI Cairo in the last two campaigns included the re-sorting and re-packing of the stored finds. Some objects were transferred to new storerooms on the mainland at Aswan, which not only helps in making more space but also contributes greatly to the inventory and preservation of the objects. Additional measures and improvements will help the work of archaeologists in future and will also include the reorganization of the entire visitor’s trail including the island’s museum. The establishment of a small field laboratory is also planned.

FELIX ARNOLD

The Rock Inscriptions at Tabyat al-Sheikh North

The area of Gebel Tabyat al-Sheikh is located to the south of the modern city of Aswan. Surrounded by towering granite formations, a flat valley runs to the shore of the Shellal bay situated opposite the old island of Philae. During Antiquity, the valley was used as an approach to the harbour located at the upper end of the First Cataract and connected it to the overland route leading to Aswan. Steep rock faces to the west served as a naturally formed protective wall that is covered with a large number of rock inscriptions and drawings dating to the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2100–1800 BC).

Since 2010, the area of Tabyat al-Sheikh has been the focus of work carried out in the frame of the project »Survey and Salvage Epigraphy of Rock Cut Graffiti and Inscriptions in the Area of Aswan«. Following completion of the documentation of the epigraphic remains that are located in the southern area in the 2012 spring campaign, our team began recording the inscriptions in the northern area in March 2014.

To the north of the so-called silent dam, a flood protection wall built in the 1930s that blocks the valley at its narrowest point, there is another important source for the use of this local transport route in ancient times. A huge block of granite bedrock lies on the ground only a few metres away from the modern wall and was presumably extracted during the construction of the silent dam and brought to its current position. The original surface of the block bears seven, for the most part, elaborately designed inscription tableaux dating to the 12th Dynasty (ca. 175–1800 BC), which were cut into the stone directly next to one another. Similar to the rock inscriptions in the southern part of Tabyat al-Sheikh, they commemorate high officials of the state administrative elite as well as members of the local police, who were presumably responsible for safeguarding the transport of goods and people on the ancient road between Shellal and Aswan. These inscriptions, which originally stood high above the western flank of the valley’s entrance and were widely visible, greeted all passers-by when they entered the corridor protected by the rocky outcrop in order to reach the harbour at the First Cataract.

In order to further advance our understanding of how the local landscape was used during the Pharaonic age, additional epigraphic surveys were conducted in the adjacent areas along the northern extension of the ancient road as well as along the northern shore of the Shellal bay. These surveys resulted in the localization of a further 45 inscriptions and drawings, of which only 22 had already been identified in the past. The project’s team will focus on these sources during the coming field campaigns.

LINDA BORRMANN

The Library Abounds with Books

December 2014 marked the end of the three-year project of the German Research Foundation (DFG) »Funding for Outstanding Research Libraries«, among which the Cairo library can also be counted. The transdisciplinary profile of the library’s holdings that was defined from the outset by the previous owner, the scholar LUDWIG KEIMER (1892–1957), has been continually broadened but revealed major gaps from the 1980s onwards due to financial restrictions. However, with the funds provided by the DFG amounting to 60,000 Euros, these gaps could be filled in several areas. A total of 740 monographs (in 792 volumes) were acquired, the journals and series were supplemented by seven new titles and 14 journals and series, which the library only held in part, were completed. Thematically, the publications cover the Byzantine-Coptic, Graeco-Roman, Islamic and early modern eras, the archaeology of the Sudan and Africa as well as papyrology. They include comprehensive volumes such as The New Cambridge History of Islam as well as individual studies that span a wide spectrum of subjects related to the East and West. The perspectives are just as varied as the content of the books indicated by their titles: Initial orientations, between Islamism and eurocentrism
that goes Beyond the Exotic or Writing Signs where the Female Perspective of the Orient is a must. Crossing boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean searches for the Missing Link, which is only possible through the Light from the East, whilst Europe’s encounter with Egypt leads to Egyptian and orientalism giving rise to new images of Islam (IslamBilder) and the Orient (Displaying the Orient) that should be questioned.

The topical spectrum ranges from Maquettes architecturales de l’antiquité to La casa araba d’Egitto in terms of architectural studies, begins archaeologically with The First Africans, includes art historical studies on Islamic art in Berlin collections and elsewhere, and encompasses works on the history of religion such as Chrétien, juifs et musulmans dans la Méditerranée médiévale. The textual sources incorporate Arabic letters from the 10th–16th centuries, Islamic Inscriptions and Varia papyrologica as well as the Arabic series Dākirat Miṣr with a focus on the history of Egypt. All in all, an extremely broad scope that has something to offer for every research question.

In order to store this flood of books, shelf extensions were constructed and several rearrangements were made. Library guests – the number of guests once again exceeded 1000 this year – can expect brand new storage cabinets. May they come in their hundreds!

Isolde Lehnert

**Topographical-Geographical Subject Indexing of the Library Holdings**

The library of the DAI’s department in Cairo is consulted by around 1000 international scholars from different fields every year. Since the autumn of 2014, literature research is now aided by a new work tool, which was developed over the last three years in the frame of the DFG-programme »Funding for Outstanding Research Libraries«. A geographical index of the library’s holdings based on a toponym-database and an integrated geographic information system (GIS) offers the interested visitor the possibility of accessing relevant literature via two different channels. In terms of content, the catalogue can be searched using topographical keywords, i.e. a place name (toponym). In addition, the search results can be filtered geographically by selecting a »region of interest«/ROI on an interactive map. The system then automatically displays all publications, which contain a reference to specific geographical coordinates in the database. This second, spatial search function is particularly helpful when the user would like to find the literature on all aspects of a specific region without limiting themselves to a certain time period or disciplinary field.

Even though not all catalogue entries of the Cairo library are linked with geographic information, a basis of 473 toponyms and 1360 links to data entries in the online catalogue of the DAI’s libraries (ZENON) allows the user to utilize the new search function in an efficient and productive way.

Systematic extension of the geographical index is planned for the coming years with the aim of indexing the entire holdings of the Cairo library topographically and geographically. The Topographical Library Catalogue of the DAI Cairo department can be found together with further information about the project at the following website: http://cairo.dainst.org/zenon.html.

Linda Borrmann

A selection of accessions that were made possible by DFG-funding
The Ramesside Period in Egypt
International Symposium in Heidelberg 5th–7th June 2015

In the frame of a cooperation between the DAI Cairo and the Institute of Egyptology at the Heidelberg University, the international symposium »The Ramesside Period in Egypt: Studies into Cultural and Historical Processes of the 19th and 20th Dynasties« took place between the 5th and the 7th of June. With a focus on the Ramesside period, the symposium addressed an outstanding cultural epoch of ancient Egypt, which is characterized by a very specific intellectual and cultural productivity. During the course of 20 presentations and extremely lively debate, diverse aspects of this period were explored paying particular attention to the transformation processes, which generated profound political, religious and social developments.

The conference was generously funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the Athenaeum Foundation for Culture and Science as well as the Gisela and Reinhold Häcker Foundation.

Special thanks are due to the International Academic Forum Heidelberg (IWH) for providing the necessary facilities and for including the symposium into the renowned series of IWH-Symposia.

Further information including the symposium’s programme can be found at www.iwh.uni-hd.de/Ramessiden2015.html

Project Days 2014

As every year, the regularly held meeting on the DAI Cairo’s projects took place in May 2014. In this frame, the directors of the department’s projects come together in Egypt’s capital for an internal meeting in order to discuss future plans, results and potential problems, and to work together on related solutions.

Gerda-Henkel Prize Award

On the 13th of October 2014, the First Director of the DAI Cairo, Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer, was awarded the renowned Gerda-Henkel prize.

The decision of the foundation’s advisory board was unanimous after a recommendation of the jury that comprises notable figures from the fields of science and the public sphere. According to the jury, Stephan Seidlmayer combines scientific expertise at the highest level with effective, scientific and cultural-political practice.

Germany’s Diversity

As was the case in 2012, the German Embassy in Cairo called upon all German political, economical, cultural and research institutions represented in Egypt to attend a joint event, which took place on the 1st of November 2014 in the Al-Azhar park.

The DAI Cairo also participated in this event and provided the guests with numerous entertaining ways to explore Egypt’s history and archaeology and with information on the various projects undertaken by the department.

Inauguration of a Visitor’s Trail through the Fatimid Cemetery

On the 3rd of December 2014, the restored section of the Fatimid cemetery in Aswan was inaugurated. The official opening ceremony was attended by the German Ambassador, Hansjörg Haber, and the Egyptian Minister of Antiquities, Mamdouh El-Damaty.

Lepsius Day 2014

The day held in honour of the German Egyptologist Carl Richard Lepsius (1819–1884) took place this year on the 9th of December. In the frame of this event, the well-attended ceremonial address was held this year by Dr. Josef Wegner with the title »From Senwosret III to Senebkay – Archaeological Investigations at the Royal Necropolis of Anubis-Mountain, Abydos«. In addition, two new correspondent members of the German Archaeological Institute were announced: Prof. Dr. Hossam Refai and Dr. Mouhamed Ismail Khaled.

Workshops and Conferences

„Early Medieval Pottery in Egypt (7th–10th century AD)“

On the 24th and 25th of September 2014, a jointly organized, international workshop took place at the premises of the DAI Cairo and the IFAO on the subject of early medie-
and restoration. The lectures took place on the premises of the DAI on Zamalek and in the storerooms located in Dahshur. A small survey was also conducted in Dahshur and an excursion was undertaken to the stone museum. In order to guarantee optimum learning progress for the practical training in weeks 2 to 4, three small groups each with five participants were formed. The activities of these groups changed on a rotational basis: Whilst one group learnt how to draw small finds, how to do ink drawings and to draw using Adobe Illustrator, the second group was trained in the frame of a pottery workshop. This involved drawing the pottery, compiling context descriptions, classifying the type of clay, recognizing surface treatment and production features, gluing pottery sherds as well as training with a microscope and the Munsell colour system. At the same time, the third group was inducted into excavation procedures via active participation in the excavations that are currently being carried out at the foot of the pyramid built by Amenemhat II in the wadi leading to the Red Pyramid. The focus lay on descriptive, photographic and graphic documentation. Priority was also given to learning how to use the tachymeter and dealing with finds. The afternoons were used to introduce the trainees to processing the measurement data and to the programmes Auto-CAD, Photoshop and Google Earth for remote sensing. The evenings were dedicated to group discussion.

All participants passed the final written examination with flying colours. The training course was also a topic of the German-Arabic TV-series »SciTech«, which was filmed in cooperation with ON-TV and Oman TV specifically for an Arabian-speaking public.

»Practical Epigraphy: the Aswan Rock Inscriptions«

The area of the First Cataract is one of the most important sites when it comes to Pharaonic rock inscriptions and drawings. Due to the rapid expansion of the modern city of Aswan as well as the exploitation of its landscape for the production of raw materials, these sources of Egyptian history are under threat. Therefore the project »Survey and Salvage Epigraphy of Rock Cut Graffiti and Inscriptions in the Area of Aswan« aims to establish a centre of competence for the epigraphic documentation of the endangered monuments at the local inspectorate of the Ministry for Antiquities. For this purpose, an interactive workshop was organized in Aswan in the autumn of 2014 on the subject of epigraphy and the rock inscriptions of the region.
The course programme, which took place on the site of the unfinished obelisk and in its conference room, was attended by 15 staff members of the Ministry for Antiquities from the Aswan, Kom Ombo and Edfu governorates. They were introduced to theoretical and practical teaching units in history, methods and practices of ancient Egyptian epigraphy, and epigraphic fieldwork. The exercises focused on the recording and analysis of epigraphic remains in the field. Varying, complementary documentation techniques were tested on the original objects and the assembled data was then digitally processed. An introduction into the most important research literature and into current questions of modern epigraphy concluded the course and gave the course participants an insight into the perspectives and also the problems of epigraphic work.

»Reality of Life. A Synthesis of Archaeology and Natural Sciences«

At the end of November, a series of lectures given by international specialists on various archaeometric methods took place at the DAI Cairo and in Aswan (30.11.–04.12.2014). The contacts made during this workshop, which was inaugurated by the Egyptian Minister of Antiquities, Prof. Dr. Mamdouh El-Damaty, between the scientists involved in the project, the directors of the relevant laboratories in Cairo and the Egyptian colleagues of the Ministry for Antiquities, will be essential for the excavations of the DAI Cairo on Elephantine.

Graduate Annual Research Discussion on Egypt and Nubia (GARDEN II)

On the 13th of December, the continued event of the GARDEN workshop, initiated in 2012 as a forum for up-and-coming young scholars, took place on the premises of the DAI Cairo. In the frame of the workshop organized in association with the American University Cairo (AUC), the participants were given the opportunity to present their experiences in scientific research as well as initial results of their studies, and to discuss these with students and PhD-students of the same age. The participants of this year’s event were scholars from Germany, the Netherlands, the USA and Egypt.

Further Workshops

12.–23.10. Practical Philology: Philology course with Huber Kockelmann in Aswan
23.–30.11. Field course in Aswan on archaeological survey methods with Joshua Pinker
15./16.12. Workshop on the digital epigraphy of the DAI central office in Berlin

Further Lectures

04.04. Felix Arnold: Excavation of an Islamic Garden Palace in Spain
15.04. Renée Friedman: Spaces and Places at Hierakonpolis HK6 (in the frame of the international congress »Egypt at its Origins V«)
22.09. Günther Dreyer: Dating by Events – The Use of Year-Names during the Early Dynastic Period
23.09. Roland-Pierre Gayraud: Excavations of the IFAO at Istabl Antar (Fustat), lecture in memory of George Scanlon (1925–2014)
08.10. Holger Kockelmann: To Whom Do the Gods Belong? The Roots of Egyptian Cults between Local and Supra-Regional Tradition
19.02. Ayman Mohammed Damany (MSA Abydos): Coptic Discoveries South of the Temple of Seti I in Abydos – The Monastery of Bishop Mousse
08.05. Rebecca E. Bradshaw (SOAS, University of London): Archaeological Discourse in Sudan, Post-Fieldwork Report
11.06. Heba El Mostaen-Bellah (Egyptian Museum Cairo): The Gazelle in Ancient Egypt till the End of the Greco-Roman Period and Maha A. Ali (Cairo University): Saving Pictures for Everyone: A Call to Save Egypt’s Photographic Heritage
17.09. Ibrahim Fawzi Gabriel: Popular Votive Offerings to Ptah

Participants and organizers of the GARDEN II workshop

TELL!-Lecture Series

The TELL!-lecture series is mainly aimed towards young graduates (Magister/M. A.), PhD-students or colleagues who have recently completed their PhD projects. Informal applications including the title of the lecture and a short (½ A4-page) abstract can be submitted at any time at the following address: tell.cairo@dainst.de.
During the course of extensive archival research on the over 100-year-long history of the DAI Cairo, the travelogue belonging to the German Egyptologist Heinrich Schäfer (1868–1957) dated to the year 1900 was rediscovered. In this book, he gives a detailed account of a particularly adventurous journey even by modern standards which he undertook together with his colleagues Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938), Curt von Gruenau (1871–1939), Hermann Thiersch (1874–1939) and Georg Steindorff (1861–1951) through the Sudan and into Lower Nubia to the area of the Second Nile Cataract, an area, which had been shaken only a few years beforehand by the Mahdi-uprising. Schäfer’s notes not only give a wonderful impression of the remains of ancient Egyptian monuments and their state of preservation around the year 1900 but also provide a lively description of the culture and way of life of modern Nubians.

In addition to sketches made by Schäfer in pencil, the volume contains numerous contemporary images from different archives as well as extremely colourful illustrated postcards, a medium which had just been introduced into Germany. An introductory overview of the archaeology and cultural history of the region that stretches between the First and Second Nile Cataract (between Aswan and Wadi Halfa) and now lies beneath the waters of the Nasser reservoir rounds off this richly illustrated volume that focuses on the history of research of the fields of Egyptology and the archaeology of the Sudan as well as the cultural history of Nubia and the scholars dedicated to these fields at the turn of the century.


Nubian Bischarîn beduins from Aswan on their camels (photo: DAI Cairo archive)
The island of Elephantine is one of the most important archaeological sites in Egypt. As the border post situated at the northern end of the First Nile Cataract, the traffic of all travellers and goods transported into Egypt was controlled at this point. Excavations have been carried out here by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo since 1969 in close collaboration with the Swiss Institute for Egyptian Architectural History and Archaeology.

In his publication on the lithic industry of Elephantine, Thomas Hikade analyses more than 10,000 artefacts from the third millennium BC and incorporates the material discovered during the course of over twenty excavation campaigns (1984–2004). He discusses the primary and secondary branches of economic activity of the site and presents the stone tools that were found in various areas of the settlement in detailed tables, diagrams and drawings. In several cases, the analysis is so detailed that the archaeological context from the single room of one house can be explained in depth.

In addition, the author also discusses the various raw materials used for the production of Egyptian stone tools and sets the lithic industries of the third millennium BC from Elephantine in the broader context of the Egyptian economic system.

The study ends with a catalogue of 465 selected objects from the whole corpus accompanied by drawings.


The annually published »Mitteilungen« of the Cairo department has provided an international platform for contributions on archaeological investigations as well as on the cultural and social history of Egypt for over 80 years. The top-
ics span a time frame ranging from the predynastic and Pharaonic ages to the Christian and Islamic eras.

In addition to a focus on archaeological topics and the publication of the latest excavation results of international ventures, topics related to cultural and art history are also discussed as well as current questions in Egyptological research.

Furthermore, extensive and richly-illustrated reports on the current excavations and projects of the Cairo department are regularly published in two- to three-year intervals.


E. Christiana Köhler et al., Helwan III. Excavations in Operation 4, Tombs 1–50, SAGA 26

The publication presents tombs 1–50 of the 218 burials from Helwan-Operation 4 that count among the more than 10,000 tombs of the necropolis located to the south of Cairo, which were investigated by Australian scholars between 1997 and 2004.

The volume solely presents the material in catalogue form; therefore the information given on the date of the tombs is preliminary.

Offering place in Dahshur with intentionally broken beer pots arranged in a circle and charcoal (from MDAIK 68, photo D. Hätrich)
An introduction to the site, the excavation methods, the state of preservation and evaluation is followed by descriptions of the tombs and other features, contributions on human remains, pottery, other artefacts, faunal remains and initial conclusions.

The larger and richer the tombs were, the more disturbed they were. The tombs range in date between ca. 2900–2600 BC and they were often reused secondarily. They were dug into the hard ground in the form of open pits [Type I] or underground chambers [Type II], and were fitted out with mud bricks and stones with or without mortar and plaster, wood and mats.

Over 1,200 artefacts were found including pottery and stone vessels, seals, lids, tools, jewellery and other objects. The more than 200 deceased individuals were of all ages, both sexes and different classes with a focus however on the poorer population. They were placed unembalmed in foetal position and wrapped in cloth or mats, or laid in mud or wooden coffins.

"In situ" crouched inhumation of a young adult from tomb 34 in Helwan Operation 4 (from SAGA 26, plate 60 B)
The double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 is one of the largest rock-cut tomb complexes in western Thebes and has been investigated in the frame of the DAI’s cluster research programme. The investigations yielded new insights into the significance of these tombs in terms of their architectural and religious history particularly in view of their alteration in the 20th Dynasty (ca. 1150–1070 BC) by two high priests of the Amun-temple in Karnak to one of the largest known tomb temple complexes from the New Kingdom. The preserved structural remains of the monuments that were destroyed during the Pharaonic era have been conserved and restored with funds from the Cultural Preservation Programme of the Federal Foreign Office.
Necropolis Studies in Dra’ Abu el-Naga

Since 1991, the venture of the DAI Cairo in Dra’ Abu el-Naga has focused on the exploration of this part of the Theban necropolis with the aim of recording and understanding the religious, social and chronological relationships. While a single tomb contains an abundance of archaeological and cultural-historical information in itself, the project also documents and evaluates the interrelationships between tombs, groups of tombs, local sanctuaries and features in the landscape.

In chronological terms, the project covers archaeological features and finds that range from the 3rd millennium BC to the 9th century AD (see pages 45 to 48); the social spectrum varies between humble mat burials to the tombs of members of the royal family. The acquired data sheds light on changes in tomb architecture and ritual practice, and reveals the development of a burial site and its funerary rites.
Plan of the double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 in Dra’ Abu el-Naga/Western Thebes
(according to the current state in April 2014)
K93.11/K93.12: Focusing on an Extraordinary Tomb Complex

From the very outset of the DAI’s venture in Dra’ Abu el-Naga, the double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12 stood at the centre of investigations as its remarkable size (the surface area of the courtyard terrace alone measures over 1600 m²) as well as observations on its position and architectural design raised questions regarding the date and identity of its original owners. Since 2006, the two tombs have been the subject of an independent research project. The investigations have yielded fundamental insights into the significance of this funerary complex in terms of its religious and architectural history, and the complex has consequently proved to be a key monument in the historical landscape of Dra’ Abu el-Naga. One of the main research focuses lies on the extensive occupation history of the site, which can be traced, albeit with certain gaps, between the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1550 BC) and the Late Antique/Coptic period, i.e. until the 9th century AD. In the archaeological record, the most prominent phase of K93.11/K93.12 is the one that corresponds to the tomb temple of the high priests of Amun, Ramessesnakht and Amenhotep of the 20th Dynasty, of which the destroyed remains were excavated in both courtyard areas: the remains of monumental mud-brick architecture on the one hand and, on the other, approximately 8,000 decorated sand stone fragments that belonged to parts of the wall cladding as well as specific architectural features e.g. columns, capitals and architraves. Despite the major scale of destruction, a peripheral arrangement of columns (peri-style) could be established and reconstructed in all four courtyards on the basis of the finds and archaeological observations. An additional, unusual feature is the two-axis-design of the double tomb complex: the east-to-west running, main axis of both tombs is intersected by a north-south axis. This north-south axis results from the extension of the ca. 60 m-long
causeway that ascends to the courtyard terrace and was used during religious processions. The destination of the annual divine procession was presumably the inner forecourt of the northernmost complex (K93.11): a wall cult image for the deified Amenhotep I can be reconstructed here on the basis of a corresponding relief fragment. Particular attention has also been paid to the complex’s integration into the historical and religious landscape of Dra’ Abu el-Naga and to its relationship with other local monuments and sanctuaries. On the basis of the archaeological results gained in K93.11/K93.12, the development of funerary architecture and semantics, the religious function of tombs e.g. in relation to local religious processions, as well as the ritual infrastructure during the late New Kingdom on the Theban west bank are explored.

**Cultural Preservation: Current Research Issues and Traditional Craftsmanship**

Parallel to excavation work, our team is also in the process of consolidating and preserving the uncovered, documented structures made of unburnt mud brick. The protection and preservation of the ancient building substance stands at the centre of these activities. Another key aim of these measures is to reconstruct certain parts of the architectural structures particularly the six gateways (pylons) in order to recreate the unique architecture of this monument so that visitors can recognize and understand the structures more easily, e.g. the two-axis-system. Bricks made of Nile clay have been used as a building material in the Nile Valley since predynastic times. In present-day Egypt, unburnt mud bricks are still a traditional building material, but are gradually being replaced by the use of mainly cement. The bricks used for restoration were produced by a regional firm and the bricklaying work was carried out by local craftsmen. In this way, the restoration concept developed on the basis of our current research issues greatly benefits from the practical experience of a local workforce and from traditional craftsmanship. In addition to the mud-brick structures that are extremely susceptible to erosion, the originally ca. 50 m-long and ca. 7 m-high terrace wall made of limestone boulders was also consolidated as its stability was at risk due to material damage during both ancient and modern times.

**Prospects**

Long-term plans include the structural restoration of all areas in Dra’ Abu el-Naga that have been investigated by the DAI over the years especially with the aim of opening them to the public. The double tomb complex situated just below the hilltop therefore represents a stage of the planned archaeological trail that will constitute an interesting destination for colleagues and tourists alike.

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Deir el-Bakhît: The Monastery of Saint Paul in Western Thebes

The monastery Deir el-Bakhît lies high above the Nile Valley on the hilltop of Dra’ Abu el-Naga in Western Thebes. The complex encompasses hermitages installed in ancient Pharaonic tombs that were inhabited by individual monks, a way of life that can be considered as the origin of the monastic settlement, as well as a walled monastery, which developed during the late 6th/early 7th century AD and was inhabited by a coenobitic community of monks.

Foot of an altar from Unit XXVI, which contained a hoard find that was discovered in 2014
The excavation and study of Deir el-Bakhît, the largest known Late Antique/Coptic monastery in Western Thebes from the period of the 5th to 8th centuries and possibly even into the 9th century AD, has been carried out since February 2004 in the frame of a DFG-funded project as a cooperation between the DAI Cairo, the Roman-Germanic Central Museum, Mainz and the Institute for Egyptology of the LMU Munich. The monastery complex, which is situated high above the Nile Valley on the hilltop of Dra’ Abu el-Naga, lies within the concession area of the DAI Cairo.

Since 2010, the archaeological work undertaken in Deir el-Bakhít has also concentrated on complexes that can be found distributed over the Dra’ Abu el-Naga hilltop outside the main monastery complex. These were recorded by H. Winlock as Units XXVI and XXVII. Based on the pottery spectrum found at the two Units, it could be shown that they were mainly in use between the 7th and 9th centuries AD. Several sherds, however, predate this period and can be assigned to the 5th century AD. These sherds were found in a re-used Pharaonic tomb in Unit XXVI, which constitutes the oldest part of the complex in structural terms. The entrance area of this tomb exhibits numerous visitors’ inscriptions that date to the period between the 10th and 12th centuries AD.

The tomb’s interior is characterized by a small spatial unit.
Therefore, a section was made in order to clarify the function of this space. Shortly afterwards, the section was divided into two halves.

The Burials

The features in both halves proved to be remarkable: in the north-eastern part, the remains of at least three burials were unearthed. Consequently, it is now clear that the monastic burials are not only limited to the extensive necropolis on the hilltop. The burial pits were aligned in a west-to-east direction and their sides were secured with undressed limestone boulders that had been set in a hardened layer of limestone chips. This layer was also used to fill the pits once the deceased had been placed inside. This method of burial corresponds to the earliest examples in the monastery’s cemetery on the hilltop. Another similarity of the burials in Unit XXVI with burials in the monastery’s cemetery is evidence of mummification². However, the mummies discovered in Unit XXVI were also equipped with elaborately worked leather belts and aprons, a feature, which is unique throughout Deir el-Bakhît³.

A relative chronology of the burials in Unit XXVI results from the fact that they were laid along the eastern wall of the above-mentioned spatial unit in the south-western part of the section. In this spatial unit, the remains of an altar were uncovered. Thus, the function of this room can be identified as a chapel or church.

Occupation Phases of the Room

Several phases can be determined for this room: the oldest phase of the room, before it was used as a church/chapel, is attested by the northern wall of the spatial unit and parts of a floor made of fired bricks that are evident in certain areas. Arranged in this way, the tomb was presumably used as an anchorite’s cell. In a second phase, the room was sectioned off to the north by means of a dividing wall. The fired brick floor was intentionally destroyed and the brick rubble was used as fill material to level off a new layer that was finally covered by a red-coloured floor made of lime mortar. As the edges and impressions of altar columns are preserved in this floor, it is clear that the room was planned as an altar room in phase 2.

A chance find has enabled us to attribute the modification of the tomb to a chapel/church to a very specific period. The only preserved column of the altar discovered so far contained a hoard of 29 gold coins. They were wrapped in a piece of cloth and placed in a hole made in the altar’s shaft.

The coins in question include 18 solidi (4.5 gr.) and 11 tremisses (1.5 gr.). They can be assigned to the Emperors Valens, Valentinian I, Justin I and Justinian I. The find presumably dates to the mid 6th century AD as the youngest coins show hardly any traces of usage. Therefore, the modification of the tomb as a chapel dates, at the earliest, to this period. The coins equate to a considerable financial value and

² See S. Lösch/E. Hower-Tilmann/A. Zink, Mummies and Skeletons from the Coptic Monastery Complex Deir el-Bakhît in Thebes-West, Egypt, in: Anthropologischer Anzeiger 70/1, p. 27–41.
³ See H. E. Winlock/W. E. Crum, op. cit., pl. 11–12.
give an insight into the economical situation of the monastery. During the course of the third phase, the chapel was destroyed by a fire in the south-western part of the room. Even though there are indications for small-scale repairs, the room does not seem to have been used as a chapel after this phase. The aforementioned visitors’ inscriptions belong to a fourth phase. However, further studies are necessary in order to determine the temporal relationship between the third and fourth phases.

Deir el-Bakhît constitutes an exemplary case for tracing the development of a monastic movement in the region from an anchoritic form to a coenobitic organization, and its reactions to political or social changes. Current finds not only give an insight into the economical situation of a monastery during Late Antiquity but also into the circulation of e.g. coinage in the Mediterranean region. Thus, a unique picture emerges of a monastery and its development over the centuries, especially during the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, periods which are generally poorly documented.

Thomas Beckh studied Egyptology, Coptology and Near Eastern Studies at the LMU Munich. During the course of his PhD-thesis he specialized in Late Antique pottery in Egypt and Coptic archaeology. Since 2012, he is the co-director of the archaeological work undertaken in the monastery Deir el-Bakhît together with Dr. Ina Eichner.
The ancient ruins of Buto rising out of the morning mist
(photo Rita Hartmann)