EDITORIAL

Anniversaries are a matter of opinion. In the period in which the idea for this issue matured, the Cairo Department of the DAI can celebrate at least five dates: 190 years since the foundation of the DAI (21.04.1829), 175 years since the beginning of German archaeology in Egypt, the landing of the Royal Prussian Expedition (18.09.1842), 110 years since the foundation of the first German Institute (01.04.1907), 90 years since its integration into the DAI (spring 1929), and, finally, 60 years since its reopening after long years of closure following the Second World War (16.11.1957).

However the age of the Institute is measured, its value is measured by its performance. Accordingly, this special issue of the magazine “Archaeology in Egypt” gives an overview of current research projects, grouped around an article by Susanne Voss on the reopening of the DAI Cairo after the Second World War as a pièce de résistance.

In compiling the articles – and here we would like to thank all the authors, but especially the editors Elisabeth Koch and Elisabeth Wegner – it was a painful task to shorten captivating texts to the length available. Longer project reports can be found regularly on the Institute’s website, www.dainst.org.

The synopsis shows the richness and breadth of the research work, broken down by geographical and chronological distribution, by method and object. It also shows, however, how projects are grouped together to focus on key research areas and core issues. This dialectic between the fascination of the individual project and overarching questions remains an ongoing challenge in the development of the Institute’s research profile.

This issue is dedicated to research. On this occasion other central fields of activity – infrastructure, preservation of historical monuments, training, and the promotion of young talent – are relegated to the background. Future issues of the magazine will follow the precedent of previous issues and return these aspects to their rightful place.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stephan J. Seidlmayer
Director of the Cairo Department

Dear readers,

The participants of the 2019 Project Days and the Scientific Advisory Board of the DAI Cairo (photo B. Ezzat).
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Focal Points and Perspectives of Archaeological Work

It is a structural privilege of the DAI that it is able to investigate complex sites for long continuous periods. Since its foundation, its mission has been to work on all phases of Egyptian history and in the various regions of Egypt. This potential becomes particularly fruitful when the individual projects, without dogmatic constraints, focus on overarching issues and jointly advance central research questions. Thus the work in Egypt, in cooperation with the other departments of the DAI, also taps into the research priorities of archaeology in general.

The concept of settlement archaeology must also be redefined on a small scale. The reality of human life in the settlement context is the primary focus here. What actually took place from day to day, what experiences (physical, social, cognitive) shaped people’s reality, and on the basis of what competences (technical, political, ritual) could they structure their lives? Here, too, methodological progress is necessary, especially in scientific archaeology – something long neglected in Egypt. The current excavation work of the DAI at Elephantine Island, and also in Dahshur and Buto, is devoted to this goal.

The ritual facilities of pharaonic culture, temples and tombs, are a classic field of Egyptian archaeology. Here, too, the task is to further develop a typological approach to the analysis of actual events. The ritual space thus becomes visible as a sphere of cultural communication. Complex rituals and festivals are already coded in the architecture – buildings like the funerary temple of Amenhotep III were elaborate stages of public processions. Ritual deposits and votive offerings, e.g. within the context of the Osiris cult in Abydos or from the veneration of king Sneferu in Dahshur, reflect the individual’s participation in such events.

The epigraphic sources are in the privileged position of making a special contribution to these questions. Texts and images – rock inscriptions and graffiti – show how individuals move into the ritual space and join the community that meets there. From the beginning of prehistory to the threshold of the present, under widely divergent socio-political, religious, and cultural conditions, the forms of communication in the epigraphic medium can be investigated comparatively and contrastively, e.g. in the Aswan region.

Egypt often gives the appearance of being a monolithic culture and society. In truth, population groups of diverse ways of life and cultures have always worked together. The interaction and symbiosis of ethnically varied groups, adapted to different ecological areas, are the main focus for the study of pastoral and mobile groups in the Nubian Nile Valley and the adjacent desert areas. The Institute’s work in the Aswan region has always been concerned with this. However, the connection between living space, social organisation, and interaction is a question that can serve as a paradigm to better understand Egypt’s role in the African continent. Egyptian archaeology can make a significant contribution here within the context of the DAI’s “Trans Area Network Africa” (TANA) research network.

Over the course of its long history, Egypt has experienced a succession of conquests, forms of rule, and religions, and yet it has always remained Egypt. Multiculturalism is the characteristic feature of the post-pharaonic epochs in particular. Understanding the unity of Egypt under these conditions is a research challenge. What are the framing parameters that assimilate new elements into long lines of tradition; what are the “degrees of freedom” of Egyptian cultural history? The Institute’s projects on Hellenistic-Roman Egypt in the Fayum and on papyrology, the work on Christian-Muslim coexistence, e.g. in Deir Anba Hadra, Deir el-Bakhit, and the early Islamic necropolis of Aswan, all work together to clarify these questions.

Each project has individual tasks and contributes to the clarification of many questions. However, it is only in the joint concentration on core problems of overarching importance that the full value of each individual piece of work becomes apparent.
The Region of the First Cataract

At the point where the Nile breaks through the granite threshold of Aswan, a very particular landscape unfolds. The flow of water is enlivened by a rapid current, whirlpools, and rocky islands; tropical vegetation and desert slopes approaching the river in a narrow valley incision define a geographical configuration in sharp contrast to the Egyptian floodplain, which dominates the country’s appearance to the north.

This natural situation had and still has cultural-historical implications. The region of the First Cataract was always the southern border of the Egyptian heartland, the “narrow southern gateway” of Egypt into the African continent – a characterisation of the area, which remains valid even today: this is a place of “longue durée,” in which historical and structural transformations become visible.

The ethnic-cultural intermingling of Egyptian and Nubian populations; the ecology of a region that is precarious from an agrarian perspective; the state organisation of military and economic demarcation, contact and wide-ranging influence; and the observation, cult and control of the Nile flood form leitmotifs of cultural-historical research that persisted from prehistory to the present day.

With an unprecedentedly rich and multifaceted tradition, the First Cataract is also a special region from an archaeological perspective. The DAI Cairo is working here on a wealth of projects. In the broad range of methodological approaches – excavation, geoarchaeology, building research, and epigraphy – the works on Elephantine Island and in the surroundings of the old city, on the sites of the rock art and inscriptions, in the Coptic monastery Deir Anba Hadra, in the early Islamic necropolis, and in the subrecent Nubian villages on Biga Island all seek to comprehend the historical complexity of the area in its dynamic unity.

Stephan J. Seidlmayer

Geoarchaeological Survey North of Aswan

The interaction between landscape and man, the correlation between geological and historical data, and the question of their causal connections are approached through soil studies in the border region between Egypt and Nubia for different historical epochs.

New information is provided by the study of the alluvial land north of the First Cataract of the Nile, a stretch which borders directly on the ancient centres Elephantine and Syene/Aswan. This area has received insufficient attention in research to date. The aim of the project is to open up these geo-archives and to reconstruct the historical landscape change and its dynamics.

The survey was conducted by means of archaeological and geomorphological surface observations in combination with drillings to explore the soil aggregates. Soil samples and artefacts were extracted from depths of up to 10 m. The aggregates are Holocene sediments of the Nile floodplains as well as late Pleistocene Nile deposits, which now sit at a higher level.

The constant accumulation and erosion of river sediments and an increasing anthropogenic reshaping of the river landscape over time make interpreting the data a complex task. One aspect of the analysis is the distribution and duration of settlement sites in terms of economic strategy and land use. The rock art of Nag el-Hamdulub (Dynasty 0), which probably is the earliest representation of political power and economic control by the king in Egypt to date, could be connected to a settlement site on the old river terraces of the Nile. A hiatus in the ceramic findings of the following 3rd millennium BC indicates that the expansion of the pharaonic town complex of Elephantine Island and the exploitation of the granite quarries of the First Cataract by the Egyptian central state had a profound impact on the settlement of the region. The few pottery finds from the Middle Kingdom, which originate from up to 6 m depth of the alluvial soil near the river, attest not only to a strikingly different landscape, but also to expanding land use. Traces of the Nubian Pan-Grave culture can also be found in the immediate vicinity. In the Roman Period, the location of the town of Contra Syene, the station of the Cohors Quinta Suensium, previously known only from documentary sources, could be archaeologically confirmed. Gaps in the ceramic material noticeable in the Islamic Period point to an absence of settlement that can be linked to the depopulation of the area by plague epidemics.

Ilka Klose

Geoarchaeological Survey North of Aswan

View downstream from the hill of tombs, Qubbet el-Hawar, down over the settlements Gharb Aswan and Abu el-Rish on the opposite bank (photo I. Klose); below: Drilling with casing tubes. Island, the Nile sediments are covered by layers of sand which in some areas are massive (photo A. Paasch).
Nubian Villages on Biga Island

At the turn of the 20th century, historic Nubian civilisation became a subject of increased interest to scholars because of the construction of the Old Aswan Dam. Another surge of attention followed the construction of the High Dam in the early 1960s.

By fortunate coincidence, on Biga Island south of Aswan, two Nubian villages, abandoned between 1974 and 1990, remained preserved in an highly authentic state to our times. The fabric of the villages originates from 1912–1930, and since 2015, has been investigated by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo and Technische Universität Berlin, supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in a unique combination of building history and ethnoarchaeology.

The objective is to document and analyse the principles of spatial organisation and constructive characteristics of Nubian vernacular architecture as the frame of life in a rural community. The expected outcome of the project will be the comparison of the to-date quasi mythologised living environment of Nubia before submersion to the evidence-based presentation of the past reality of life on the island. The analysis of archival plans, maps, and images will enrich the understanding not only in regard to the architecture of the island, but also enable the presentation of the entire vernacular architectural landscape of “Old Nubia” in its singularity and diversity.

BERNADETA SCHÄFER

Documentation and Restoration of the Fatimid Cemetery in Aswan

Aswan, the southern border town of historic Egypt, was conquered by the Arab invaders at the end of the 7th century AD. It quickly became one of the most important military bases of the Nile Valley. The old quarrying activities for the extraction of granite and sandstone were largely stopped in late antiquity. From the 7th century AD, the first Islamic burials took place on the quarry grounds.

The entire necropolis stretches from northern Aswan, also known as the el-Anani district, over a length of c. 2 km to the south and reaches a width of c. 500 m. According to the research carried out by Ugo Monneret de Villard in the 1920s, it consisted of three smaller necropolises: the so-called northern necropolis, the central necropolis at the foot of the historic fortress el-Tayba, and the southern necropolis, which directly adjoins the historic city wall. The burials spanned a period of 500 years (7th to 12th century AD) with a clear emphasis on the Fatimid era (969–1171 AD).

From 2006 to 2017, a team of researchers worked together with experts from the Department of Construction and Urban Planning History at the Technische Universität Berlin and specialists from the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the scientific documentation of the early Islamic necropolis. The aim of this project was to establish as complete a picture as possible of the historical site, its various uses, and its evolution over the centuries. The idea was to carry out interdisciplinary research into terrain and monuments with the aid of topography, geomorphology, quarry analyses, ethnology, archaeology, building research, and the evaluation of historical sources, ceramic analyses, and the epigraphy of graffiti. Another important aspect is the investigation of the rituals that still take place at the mausoleums.

After detailed mapping of the area, in addition to 30 known mausoleums, another 20 mausoleums, and over 300 simpler graves were identified, some of which form entire burial complexes, probably family tombs. Safeguarding the endangered sites played an important role. Seven mausoleums, a prayer room, and a small domed building in which water-filled amphorae were found have been restored in the course of the project. In cooperation with the Inspectorate for Coptic and Islamic Sites, a detailed site management concept with visitor paths, viewpoints, and bilingual information boards has been developed for a particularly at-risk cemetery sector and was inaugurated on December 3rd 2014.

PHILIPP SPEISER

Overview of the village of Biga (© DAI Cairo/TU Berlin, photo M. Kacicnik).

top left: One of the houses in the village of Biga. top right: in the middle of the village of Biga. bottom: Equipment from Biga giving impressions of the everyday life before being abandoned (© DAI Cairo/TU Berlin, photos M. Kacicnik).
Architectural Survey in Village Balle on Biga Island

Marked by the changes in the natural habitat due to the construction of the High Dam and the increasing work migration of the men, living conditions, and social structures – and with them the architecture on Biga Island – started to transform away from its traditional patterns. This process was interrupted by the abandonment of the island. Buildings and equipment left over prove how traditional constructive methods can be adopted to modern conditions without losing the original character of the architectural expression.

Initially there were four villages on Biga Island. After the raising of the water level caused by the construction and subsequent elevations of the Old Dam between 1902 and 1935, these villages were destroyed, and only two of them have been rebuilt on the rocky slopes. The larger village, called Balle, consists of eight residential buildings and several adjacent outbuildings. Compared to Biga, the houses in Balle are much smaller and built much closer together.

The use of the outer and inner space could be reconstructed depending on the objects and architectural details found inside and outside the rooms. Interviews with still-living, former inhabitants revealed the structure of the population of the villages before 1985 and helped to understand the daily life within the village.

In 1965, the young ethnologist Armgard Grauer stayed for some weeks on the island to document the wall paintings of the houses. The pictures she took at this time are an important source to compare the arrangement and use of open spaces while the village was still inhabited.

After the construction of the High Dam, the Nile mud was stowed behind the dam. The date palm trees were not accessible any more; the people were forced to use alternative materials. Instead of traditional and natural materials, they started to use and recycle objects such as railway trucks, metal tubes, wood, and bricks. Although the used materials changed, the buildings still show typological similarities to the traditional houses of the old villages south of the High Dam, which were flooded after 1965.

Olga Zenker

Research on Open Spaces in the Houses of Biga Village

Houses on Biga Island mainly consist of open spaces, defined as totally or partially unroofed spaces with fewer than four walls. Spaces in the immediate vicinity of (two or three) individual houses were shared by families in the surrounding houses. The research on open spaces in Biga is part of a DFG-funded project “The Nubian Villages of Biga” that has been ongoing since 2015.

The aim of studying open spaces of the houses is to provide a clearer understanding of essential sections of the Nubian houses, such as the open spaces heavily used by the inhabitants due to diverse environmental and social factors. Over three seasons of work, I had the chance to study and document the layout and functions of open spaces in the houses of Biga. The entrance hall is the first space one can access in the house leading to the male guest room and other inner spaces of the house. Entrance hall and guest room act as a buffer zone between the outside and inside of the house. Some of the entrance halls are partially vaulted to allow access of air and light. All of the entrance halls have an area for keeping drinking water.

The main courtyards are located in the northern part of the living spaces. These courts are largest in size and their space is often divided by terraces or thresholds. At least a small area of the main courtyard was covered by a light, loose roof of palm leaves and branches. The main courtyard was “the heart” of the house, where many of the domestic activities took place like preparing food, grinding grains. It served as a connecting space giving access to all the rooms. The private courts, considerably smaller than the main court, are located in front of the inner roofed rooms.

Fatma Keshk

DAI Cairo 2019

Main court of house BG30B, a view to the southwest (© DAI Cairo/TU Berlin, photo F. Keshk).

above: Private court from house BG09, a view to the southwest; below: Entrance court of house BG04 (© DAI Cairo/TU Berlin, photos F. Keshk).

Elephantine Island

50 years of Excavations at the First Cataract of the Nile

Today most of the settlements of ancient Egypt are buried under the alluvial layers of the Nile or modern buildings. On Elephantine Island, however, the ruins of the ancient town have persisted on the surface. The southern end of the island is dominated by building structures from over 4,000 years of Egyptian history. This town was the metropolis of the region at the First Cataract of the Nile, an interface for trade and politics between Egypt and the rest of Africa. It was from here that the quarrying of stone material for the large building projects of the ancient Egyptian rulers was organised. Cults and temples on Elephantine Island were closely linked to the observation of the annual Nile flood, on which life in Egypt depended. For these reasons, the German Archaeological Institute, in cooperation with the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research on Ancient Egypt in Cairo, began a long-term excavation project on the island in January 1969.

The work on Elephantine Island represented the DAI Cairo’s entry into the investigation of complex forms of settlement. Here it is possible to trace the building history, as well as the realities of life in the past. Findings shed light on the social and cultural interaction between Egypt and Nubia and how they changed over the millennia. As the cult centre of the First Cataract, Elephantine Island is also central to the sacred landscape of the area. In particular, the votive offerings found during the various phases of use of the Satet temple as well as numerous epigraphic testimonies on and around the island highlight the importance of the region’s cults on a local and supra-regional scale. In the course of its work on Elephantine Island, the DAI Cairo is keen to apply a comprehensive range of methods, from fine-meshed excavations to philological, art-historical, and archaeometric studies of the finds. In addition, it supports its local colleagues in the preparation and management of the site for visitors, the storage of find materials, and with advanced training in archaeological techniques.

Johanna Sigl

Realities of Life on Elephantine Island in the Middle Kingdom

The aim of the DAI’s work on Elephantine Island since 1969 has been to investigate the development of a pharaonic town through four millennia. In autumn 2013, the "Realities of Life" project was launched in order to deepen knowledge about the daily life of the inhabitants of the island city. A new methodological approach made it possible to glean objective data on nutrition, daily work, and quality of life.

The excavations and studies of finds currently focus on a section of one of the largest residential buildings, House 169, in the north-western part of the town. The undisturbed layers reflect the history of its use over approximately 100 years around 1800 BC. Its central oven chamber and filling layers between floors were used for the disposal of household waste and thus provide an insight into the nutritional habits of the residents.

Locally cultivated barley was the primary grain used and – in contrast to the rest of Egypt – was also used here as the basis for bread production. The baguette-shaped bread moulds found show, in thin section, on the inside multilayer, fine-grained coatings that had to be freshly applied during each baking process directly before the liquid bread dough was poured into them so that the bread did not adhere to the walls of the mould. Various fruits and beans provided supplementary vegetable nutrition. In addition, both the Nile with its abundance of fish and various edible shells as well as the use of domestic mammals – mainly goats and pigs – enriched the menu and also provided raw materials for jewellery and tools.

Production waste, beads, and other small decorative objects in all stages of fabrication as well as tools made of stone, bone, and metal are evidence of the activities of the inhabitants of House 169 apart from food production. Amethyst was one of the most intensely used raw materials. The analysis of micro-inclusions in this gemstone will make it possible to more precisely define the origin of this raw material, which is found in several quarries around Aswan.

How the work processes described here influenced the living environment of the occupants of House 169 is still under investigation. The excavations seem to indicate, however, that even then there was a deliberate subdivision of the residential area into sections which were more or less affected by, for example, noise, dust, and dirt from these processes.

Johanna Sigl / Peter Kopp / Hassan Khozeym / Claire J. Malleson / Mary F. Ownby / Leslie A. Warden
A Cult Building of the Early New Kingdom on Elephantine Island

In the New Kingdom, the island of Elephantine was gradually transformed into a ritual landscape, with temples, courtyards, and processional streets. This scenery served as a stage for feasts for the gods, including the feast for the beginning of the Nile flood. More than a thousand years after their construction, the buildings were demolished and their individual parts reused as building material for new buildings.

In the foundation of the Khnum temple of Nectanebo II (359–341 BC) more than 30 relief blocks of the New Kingdom were preserved in this way. They originate from a building begun by Thutmose I (1504–1492 BC) and completed by his son Thutmose II (1482–1479 BC). It could have been a kind of sanctuary for the source of the Nile, which was originally located behind the actual Khnum temple. Queen Hatshepsut had a station chapel for the barque of Khnum attached to this building. Since the queen was originally represented as a woman throughout, the chapel seems to date from the first years of her reign (around 1475 BC). Later, all female depictions of Hatshepsut were replaced by male ones and the names erased. During excavations north of the Khnum temple, carried out by the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research on Ancient Egypt, around 400 further fragments of this structure were recovered from the demolition debris of Nectanebo II from 2015 onwards. They significantly expand our knowledge of the decoration programme at that time. On the right outer wall of the barque station there was an incense offering, a ceremonial course of the king as well as the reception of millions of years; on the left outer wall there was the introduction of the king into the temple, a ceremonial course of the king holding an oar, a bread offering before Khnum as well as an offering before the enthroned Amun. On the inner walls there were depictions of offerings before the divine barque of Khnum, on the right by Hatshepsut, on the left by her stepson Thutmose III. On a fragment of the inner wall the holy staff of Khnum can be seen on the right, which is the oldest known representation of this cult object. Additionally, fragments of the entrance door of the barque station with the names of Thutmose III and another door with the names of Thutmose I were discovered. Graffiti of the late New Kingdom and the Late Period are preserved on several fragments, testifying to the long history of use of the building.

FELIX ARNOLD

top: Fragment of the station chapel on Elephantine Island with a scene showing a goddess and the king embracing. The subsequently changed position of the hand indicates that queen Hatshepsut was originally depicted here as a female figure (photo F. Arnold); left: Pillar of the station chapel on Elephantine Island with a representation of Thutmose III before the god Khnum (drawing F. Arnold/E. Majerus).

Research on Nubian Cultures in the South and Beyond

Borders are not only transitions into other, alien spaces. At the same time and perhaps even primarily, they are areas of closest contact and exchange between neighbouring cultures. Since the language, an essential characteristic of the Nubian cultures in the 4th to 2nd millennia BC, is lost, the material culture, in particular ceramics, is of key importance.

The Department’s research has multiple perspectives. One line of investigation is the reality of migration flows. The Nile Valley as well as numerous east-west connections between the Eastern Sahara and the Red Sea have always been routes of population movements, trade, and military expansion. For this reason, Elephantine Island, as the main site at the First Cataract with more than 3,000 years of settlement occupation, is ideally suited for an examination of Egypt’s relationship to Nubian cultures on Egypt’s political southern border. The island in the Nile, on which a German-Swiss joint venture has been researching since 1969 the entire occupation period of the 18 m high settlement hill mound, is perfect for observing the long strands of cultural development. In addition, Elephantine Island is one of the last remaining settlement sites with Nubian finds after the gradual flooding of Lower Nubia. It is of particular interest that periods in which mobile ways of life predominated in the Nubian Nile Valley, and which are therefore only scarcely represented in the archaeological finds from Nubia itself, can be traced on Elephantine Island. Against this new background, the various archaeological cultures and phases defined in earlier decades of Nubian archaeology tend to merge into a continuum in which ethnic realities are reflected in the material culture in a wide variety of ways. It is interesting, for example, that there is a high proportion of Nubian household ceramics with secondary fire marks from use in hearth fires. The proportion of fine ware is relatively low. Only in the late 2nd millennium BC did ceramics lose significance as an omnipresent indicator of proximity and contact to Nubian cultures.

On the other hand, the large-scale perspective shows which geostategic, trade-political, and ethnic constants as well as breaks affected the north-east African region during the 4th to 2nd millennia BC. For this purpose, key non-Egyptian sites such as Kerma, south of the Third Cataract, must be placed within the context of the material culture of the greater area. The resulting findings shed light not only on the mechanisms by which cultural traditions originate, but also on large-scale and small-scale development processes.

DIETRICH RAUE / MARIE-KRISTIN SCHRÖDER
The Arabic Ostraca of the 1st Millennium AD on Elephantine Island

The pottery sherds (os­tracon) inscribed in Arabic, which came to light during the German-Swiss excavations on the island of Elephantine, shed light on the everyday life of the island’s population at the end of the 1st millennium AD. The presentation of the texts within the context of a special exhibition in the Annex Museum made them accessible to the public for the first time in 2018.

Scholarly work on the ostraca was able to establish that, contrary to previous assumptions, the settlement on the island was not abandoned at the end of the 1st millennium in favour of the town on the eastern shore. In fact, the research results shed light on the thriving daily life on Elephantine Island at this time, e.g. indicating that it was still a trade hub for exotic goods, such as monkeys and coffee, which changed hands alongside everyday items such as fish. Given the preservation of Koranic verses in unskilled versions, it seems probable that lessons in writing and religion were taught in Elephantine. In addition, marriage contracts as well as court records and private letters were found among the preserved documents. Parts of medical prescriptions (some of which do in fact work) and amulet texts, with which people hoped to secure their physical well-being, have been found. The ostraca presented in the special exhibition thus thematise a cross-section of the issues that the island population dealt with on a daily basis and provide information about social life on Elephantine Island in the 1st millennium AD.

MOHAMED A. ABD EL-LATIF

O4234a-b: Recto (left) and verso (right) of this ostracon report the debts of some people. Debts were considered an important economic agreement. In order to guarantee the rights of the creditor, they were always recorded in writing.

O4222a-b: This sherd from the bottom of a vessel was reused as an ostracon. On the recto (left) is probably the letter of a pilgrim who crossed Egypt on his journey to the Arabian Peninsula. The verso (right), on the other hand, describes a local medical prescription.

O4234: Due to the frequent use of the word “dinar”, a currency unit, these fragmentarily preserved four lines probably dealt with trade agreements.

The Aswan Museum on Elephantine Island

Restoration of the Historic Building

The Aswan Museum is located on the Nile island of Elephantine and houses objects from the excavations at this site. The museum is to be reopened with a new exhibition after a general overhaul. The historical part of this unique building is being restored by the German Archaeological Institute Cairo in cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities.

Built in 1906 by the English architect William Willoccks on behalf of the Ministry of Irrigation, the building was originally used to manage the first Aswan Dam of 1902. The former free-standing building with a central entrance portal and roof pavilion has a single-storey wing with saddle roofs on each side. It is built of quarry stone masonry, which is panelled with local granite on the elevation sides. The elevation facing the Nile is preceded by a veranda supported by ornate wooden columns. The building is designed with its tiled saddle roofs and timber framework according to European models. The shady veranda and the roof pavilion are typical elements of colonial architecture. Many building materials were transported from Cairo and some from overseas – the roof tiles, for example, come from a brick factory in Marseille.

The floor plan comprises only five interior rooms: in addition to a hallway behind the entrance portal, the wings each contain two office rooms of approximately the same size. Each room can be reached both from the adjacent room and directly from the veranda. This layout can also be found in buildings with a similar function, such as the administrative building of the Suez Canal Authority in Ismailia from the 1910s. As early as 1914 the building was converted into a museum, and in 1956 it was extended to the rear in order to provide more exhibition space.

The ongoing work of the DAI, made possible by special funds from the German Foreign Office, relates to the restoration of the outer shell of the historic building in accordance with current heritage conservation standards. Time has left its mark particularly on the wooden building components and the natural stone. Therefore, the damaged or missing wooden components are being supplemented, repaired or exchanged and the natural stone masonry is being restored. The objective of these measures is to recover the original appearance of the historic building, while preserving as many of its historical components as possible.

MARTIN SÄHLOF

Floor plan of the Elephantine Museum with the historic building from 1906, its eastern veranda and the extension from the 1950s in the west (grey background; plan C. Straße).

East view of the historic building after restoration of the wooden parts. The new painting corresponds to the colours of its initial design on the basis of restoration analyses (photo M. Sählof).
Communication and Epigraphy

Historical spaces are also spaces of social communication. These communication processes left material traces which allow a study of the contents, situations, and social forms of past public discourse. The geographical peculiarity of the region of the First Cataract also plays a role here: everywhere, boulders and rock surfaces allowed pictures and inscriptions to be placed in the complex and increasingly urbanised space of activity and settlement.

Pharaonic rock inscriptions form a focus of the project work. From the Old Kingdom (from about 2600 BC onwards and numbering in the thousands, they initially marked paths and junctions – just like the rock inscriptions in expedition areas. With the New Kingdom (from about 1500 BC) they were concentrated at sanctuaries. In the framework of ritual acts – prayer and adoration – the inscriptions reflect a culture of social representation, primarily for the benefit of officials travelling through the Aswan area.

Traditionally, these inscriptions are understood as prosopographic testimonies and sources for reconstructing the structures of pharaonic administration. Nowadays, landscape archaeology offers a new paradigm of analysis. Studying the places where the inscriptions were made in the terrain allows for a better understanding of the functions of these places as quarries, sanctuaries, and transport routes; above all, this research allows for an appreciation of the role of landscape itself as a space of social perception and communication.

The epigraphy of the cataract region is extremely rich, and it reaches far beyond the Pharaonic Period. Demotic, Greek, Latin, and Meroitic inscriptions from Antiquity, Coptic, and Arabic texts from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and the graffiti of the present time give epigraphic research a diachronic profile crossing five millennia. Continuity and change of the "epigraphic culture" (Werner Eck) are visible in key themes of the texts, in the picture-text relationship, and in the ways texts are embedded within the landscape and built environments.

Stephan J. Seidlmaier

Rock Art in Wadi Berber

Within the context of the project "Rock Inscriptions and Rock Art in the Area of Aswan", a total of 68 rock art stations and more than 350 figures were documented and analysed between 2010 and 2017 in the Wadi Berber region of Aswan. The intention of this subproject was to understand rock art in combination with its spatial background.

The rock art of Wadi Berber, situated on the west side of the Nile, extends over three topographical areas: the entrance and slopes of Wadi Berber, the Gebel Tingar quarries, and, finally, the foothills of the Gallaba plateau in the west.

Since spatial embedding has a semantic link to rock art, this was taken into account during the documentation process. In addition to the images, the surrounding landscape and the rock art stations were also photographed. This was done using a laser scanner and digital photogrammetry (Structure from Motion).

The images found here range from prehistory to the Ptolemaic-Roman Period and illustrate the range of functions, styles, techniques, and contents that these signs can assume.

In the Ptolemaic-Roman Period there was a connection between rock art and the use of the quarry at Gebel Tingar. Almost all signs and inscriptions were found at points that represent resting places. The dynastic rock art, by contrast, was concentrated on the slopes and in the entrance of Wadi Berber and seems to be connected with the crossing of this area in order to reach the quarries or the roads to the southwest (Sikket el-Agamiya) or south or north (el-Deir road).

Some of this dynastic rock art was used for ritual-religious purposes in connection with the ritual landscape of the Middle and New Kingdom on the island of Elephantine and in its temples.

However, the most intensive use of rock art can be described as prehistoric. This rock art concentrates on two areas: the figurative art, animals and people, partly hunting scenes, at the mouth of the wadi can be seen as an expression of group-specific communication in connection with a more regular use of the rock art stations as camp sites. The geometric rock art on horizontal panels, on the other hand, is distributed over the plateau and belongs to a larger complex of similar sites covering the hinterland of Gharb Aswan.

Stephan J. Seidlmaier

Documentation and Analysis of Prehistoric to Ptolemaic-Roman Signs

Rebecca E. Döhl
Dynastic Rock Art on the Island of Sehel
A New Feature

The island of Sehel is one of the best documented sites of pharaonic rock inscriptions in the Aswan region. The fact that its exploration is far from complete is shown by new finds that came to light during surveys of the terrain in 2015: 65 hitherto unknown rock carvings provide new insights into the use of the ancient landscape and its historical development.

The rock art can be found mainly in the southeast of the island of Sehel. By far the majority depicts one or more male figures in a striding position, clad in a short apron. As attributes, they usually carry a staff or stick. It is noticeable that the images are often small in size (on average, c. 20 to 30 cm) and have no textual component.

These new finds prove that rock art – besides the dynastic rock inscriptions – forms the second largest corpus of ancient evidence on Sehel. The first question that arose was when and over what period of time these images were carved into the rock. The main goal of the study was to understand why the images were left and to examine if there is a link between the location of rock art sites and certain topographical and natural features of the surrounding landscape.

Since in the case of rock art no textual information is available, only the images themselves and their spatial distribution could be used to address the research questions. After the images had been fully documented, they were described in their formal and spatial aspects. In a third step, they were compared with the rock inscriptions of the island as well as with rock art in other places within the First Cataract region. Finally, a phenomenological approach has been adopted in order to better understand why rock art is concentrated in particular areas.

The investigation revealed that the majority of Sehel’s rock images was created in the Middle Kingdom. Apparently, they were not made by professional sculptors but by the depicted subjects themselves, whose attributes identify them as people entrusted with the task of controlling and monitoring. Further information is provided by the spatial distribution of rock art: it occurs frequently in areas which offer a wide view over the landscape. Thus it can be assumed that guards stationed on Sehel once used the local rock formations to immortalise themselves at their places of work.

Linda Borrmann-Dücker

In addition, it should be clarified who made the images and who is represented in them. The investigation revealed that the majority of Sehel’s rock images was created in the Middle Kingdom. Apparently, they were not made by professional sculptors but by the depicted subjects themselves, whose attributes identify them as people entrusted with the task of controlling and monitoring. Further information is provided by the spatial distribution of rock art: it occurs frequently in areas which offer a wide view over the landscape. Thus it can be assumed that guards stationed on Sehel once used the local rock formations to immortalise themselves at their places of work.

Linda Borrmann-Dücker

Deir Anba Hadra: a Medieval Monastery on the West Bank of Aswan

The monastery Deir Anba Hadra is located on the west bank of Aswan about 1 km inland in the desert mountains. The history of its use, documented by buildings, paintings, and inscriptions, dates from the 7th to the 15th century. The chronology of the ceramic finds goes even back as far as the 5th to 6th century, not distant from the life of the late 4th-century hermit and bishop of Aswan Hadra whose name the monastery bears and whose hermitage was located and venerated in a cave at the north-west corner of the subsequent church. The name "Monastery of Saint Simeon", which has become traditional in modern travel guides, first appears in European sources from the 19th century and has no historical basis.

Since 2014, the DAI has conducted a research project at Deir Anba Hadra in cooperation with the TOPOI Excellence Cluster at Freie Universität Berlin. One focus of the work concerns the documentation of inscriptions and graffiti. A corpus of over 100 funerary inscriptions testifies to the life and death of the inhabitants of the monastery, while several hundred visitor inscriptions in Coptic and Arabic in the area of the church, but also in other rooms of the monastery, illustrate its use by pilgrims and travellers. Before the surfaces of the walls of the church were reused by visitors for their inscriptions, they served as a painting support for murals and were thus integrated into a spatially oriented iconographic programme.

The documentation and interpretation of the painted decoration of Deir Anba Hadra, partly iconographically significant, partly of outstanding quality, form an important section of the research programme. There are still some open questions about the building and usage history of the Anba Hadra Monastery. Answers to such issues can be approached through building research. The architectural documentation provides a new basis for the chronology not only of the monastic church but also of the typology of sacred buildings in Upper Egypt.

Tonio Sebastian Richter

View of the monastery complex from the southwest.
View into the monastic church from the west. (© DAI Project, photos T. S. Richter).

DAI Cairo
Funerary inscriptions provide information about the deceased, mentioning names, titles, and dates. However, funerary stelae are more than just text. They are monuments for the living to commemorate the dead, but they are also testaments of traditional stonemasonry.

Fragments of 144 Coptic sandstone stelae have been found in the debris of the monastic church where they had been reused as building material. Originally, the stelae dating from the 7th to 9th century AD probably belonged to the cemetery outside of the monastery enclosure. Now most of these stelae are kept in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. Although the stelae were published by Henri Munier between 1930 and 1931 with published by Henri Munier, daily life settings.

The documentation of more than 20 stelae in June 2017 made it possible to draw preliminary conclusions about the production of these funerary stelae. Before the inscription was applied, the front face was smoothed, the other sides show rough chisel marks. The use of auxiliary lines and preliminary drawings made it easier for the stonemason to chisel the inscription, which could then be highlighted with red paint. Some stelae also suggest a partial prefabrication in which the beginning of the homogenous formulary was already engraved and only individual elements such as the name, title and date of death were added after the owner’s death. The funerary inscription of the blessed Anba Hadra (KM 7780) suggests such a production method due to the non-uniform way its characters were carved.

LENA S. KRASTEL

Visitors and occasionally inhabitants of the monastery left inscriptions carved into or painted in black or red ink on plaster layers of the monastery walls. These inscriptions represent valuable testimonies to the history of the monastery’s construction and use, its local and supra-regional significance, religious ties of the local population to their holy place and the way of communicating this appropriately, as well as to inter-religious contacts between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages. Their choice of language – Coptic or Arabic – also reflects the process of Arabisation in Egypt.

About 300 Coptic inscriptions from the 10th to early 15th centuries bear witness to Christian visitors and inhabitants of the monastery. In addition to the name, occasionally the descent and/or origin of the inscription owners, they often contain prayers to God for the forgiveness of sins or requests addressed to future visitors to pray for the salvation of the benefactors. In the sanctuary of the monastic church, Shenute, son of Sa’ad, a monk in the monastery of St. Matthew (Deir el-Fahri) near Esna, also left such an inscription. It is written in Coptic, but the patronymic is written in a code mixed of Coptic and Arabic letters. As to the Arabic inscriptions in the monastery, about 550 of them have been documented so far. Among these, three groups stand out: the oldest texts, about 30 inscriptions from the 10th century in Kufic style, testify to the presence of Muslim visitors especially in the entrance areas and aisles of the church, but occasionally also to other parts of the monastery. A second, very large group of inscriptions dates back to the 13th and 14th centuries and was left by Muslim Ḥaqq pilgrims on their journey to or from Mecca. They are located in the qaṣr, the monumental residential building of the monastery, which apparently served as a pilgrims’ accommodation. A third group of inscriptions dates from the first half of the 14th century and was written by Christian visitors who did not (any longer) leave their invocations in Coptic but in Arabic. One of them states “Our father Hadra, the virtuous saint” – one of the few visitor inscriptions with explicit reference to the patron saint of the monastery.

RALPH BODENSTEIN / LEONA S. KRASTEL / TONIO SEBASTIAN RICHTER

Wall painting in Deir Anba Hadra

The eastern semi-dome shows the remains of a large composition of Christ enthroned, flanked by angels, saints, and a donor (Phase I). The wall painting is painted with a row of 37 standing saints and the ceiling is decorated with a colourful geometrical pattern enclosing squares and octagons with busts of Christ and saints. The series of saints, monks, bishops or patriarchs, and angels belongs to the second decorative scheme of the quarry interior and the murals probably date to the late 7th century. The saints fit the iconographical programme of the western part or nave of a chapel or church that was partly destroyed by the creation of the monumental church in the first half of the 10th century.

Three phases of decoration are visible in this church. While some of the saints depicted in the "cave" and the style of these paintings both reveal a strong connection with Middle Egypt, the murals in the large church tell a different story. Christ enthroned with angels is a familiar theme in altar rooms of Egyptian and Nubian churches. However, the donor under the wing of an angel reflects the Nubian tradition of depicting donors, dignitaries, and royals under protection of archangels, Christ or the Virgin. The technique of Phase III, applying paintings directly onto a plaster layer without an intervention of layer of white-wash in between, has so far not been attested in either Egypt or Nubia. These characteristics bear witness to the lasting-standing multicultural traditions, influences, and resourcefulness in Christian art in the First Cataract area.

Gertrud J. M. van Loon

Building Research at the Monastic Church

From 2015 to 2017, building research was conducted on the monastic churches in connection with decoration phases and wall inscriptions, extension and conversion phases were classified chronologically. Dated Coptic and Arabic wall inscriptions facilitate dating the monumental alteration of the church to an oblong domed church, in which the middle part of the naos was vaulted by two giant squinch domes, to the period before the middle of the 10th century. This marks a turning point in the development of the monastery, which seems to be related to the abandonment of the Elephantine settlement in the 9th century.

The redating of the church alteration also prompts further reflections on the social and cultural contexts of the region at the First Cataract. On the one hand, the two large domes of the monastery church and the domes of the mausoleums of the Fatimid cemetery in Aswan are among the earliest evidence of large squinch domes in Egypt. On the other hand, research to date has assumed that this type of oblong domed church, represented only in Upper Egypt, developed from the Greek-Byzantine building tradition of octagon domed churches, where the central dome is supported on eight pillars. These, however, only appeared in Greece from the 11th century onwards.

Thus the Hadra church is older than the models assumed so far, and much evidence points to an independent regional development from Upper Egyptian-Nubian precursors. In Upper Egypt and Nubia there are older buildings in which a maximum diameter of 5 m are supported on four L-shaped pillars. In causal connection with the monumentalisation of the rooms with up to 8 m wide domes, the L-shaped pillars are dissolved into separate square pillars, which can be particularly well seen at the dome church of Kulb in Nubia. The penetration of the L-shaped pillars with passageways, doors, or windows enables a great variety in the interconnection of the large dome rooms with adjoining room groups, ambulatories, or side aisles, as in the Hadra church.

Structural features and inscriptions in the church also point to the regional and cultural networking of the cataract zone with Christian Nubia at a time when Aswan, under Muslim rule, functioned as the provincial capital of Upper Egypt.

Heike Lehmann

Comparative buildings: a. Elephantine, 6th/7th century, dome Ø 4 m; b. Nuri, dating uncertain, dome Ø 5.2 m (a–b from P. Grossmann, Kirche und spätantike Hausanlagen im Chnumtempelhof, Mainz 1980, p. 195, fig. 27.1., 27.3.); c. Deir el-Suhadā, dating uncertain, dome Ø 4.4 m (from P. Grossmann, Christliche Architektur in Ägypten, HDÖ, Sect. 1, vol. 62, Leiden/Boston/Cologne 2002, fig. 169); d. Kulb, dating uncertain, dome Ø 7–7.5 m (from P. Grossmann, Mittelalterliche Langhaus-Kuppelkirchen und verwandte Typen in Oberägypten, ADIK Coptic Series 3, Glückstadt 1982, p. 61, fig. 20).
Projects in Luxor

The west bank of Luxor, the ancient city of Thebes, is one of the richest archaeological sites in the world with its extensive temples and countless monumental tombs. It has traditionally been a focal point of research in the work of the DAI, which has a permanent place of work there with the Deutsches Haus, founded in 1904.

Work in the old necropolis of the kings of the 11th Dynasty in El-Tarf, in the funerary temples of Mentuhotep II in Deir el-Bahari and Sety I in Qurna, in tombs of the New Kingdom and of the Late Period in Qurna and in El-Asasif has yielded significant insights into all components of the Theban monumental record since the end of the 3rd millennium BC.

The work is currently concentrating on two projects. The necropolis of Dra’ Abu el-Naga, located directly opposite the state temple of Karnak, shows not only dense occupation from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period; with the monastery Deir el-Bakhît, a significant testimony of the Late Antique to Early Medieval Coptic occupation horizon of the west side of Thebes, which was once important, but was mostly destroyed in favour of the pharaonic monuments, is also in focus. The analysis of the social diversity, the diachronic transformations of the occupancy of the site and the relationship between landscape and monuments open up new research perspectives.

The large project in the temple complex of Amenhotep III near the Memnon Colossi continues the research focus of the Institute on the royal temples on the west side of Thebes. Conservation and restoration works reveal the former splendour of this largest and most complex building of its kind and reveal its position within the context of the Theban ritual and festive landscape, which Amenhotep III shaped like hardly any other king with his buildings in the temple of Karnak and the erection of the temple in Luxor.

Stephan J. Seidlmaier

Topography and Transformation: the Necropolis of Dra’ Abu el-Naga

Since 1991, the DAI Cairo has been archaeologically investigating the northern part of the necropolis of Dra’ Abu el-Naga. The aim is to record the use and change of the necropolis as well as the development of funerary architecture with a focus on the funerary religious practices reflected by it. The results obtained contribute to an understanding of complex cultural landscapes and their gradual transformation.

The long-term project of the DAI investigates the formation and development of one of the most important Egyptian necropoleis and thereby considers the sociological, functional, economic, religious-ideational, and topographical factors that gave rise to these changes. Chronologically, the period spans the time from the 2nd millennium BC to the 9th century AD; the social spectrum ranges from simple mat burials to royal and elite tombs. In combination with archaeological, cultural-geographical, and architectural-historical methods and research approaches, the development of funerary architecture and semantics, aspects of site selection and the interrelations between the individual monuments and the landscape are explored.

The special significance of the necropolis of Dra’ Abu el-Naga is mainly determined by two factors of ritual topography: on the one hand by its location opposite the temple of Karnak, the main sanctuary of the god Amun on the eastern bank of the Nile, and on the other by the presence of the royal tombs of the 17th and early 18th Dynasties. The emergence and development of a necropolis can be traced here in an exemplary manner, and reveals an intensive interrelation between the physical landscape, local theology, and ideationally defined places (tombs, sanctuaries). A further focus of the work is the transformation of the funerary landscape. The focus lies on the triggers of change, the materialisation of these changes in architecture, inventories, and religious practices and how they are reflected in the strategies of use and in the social and professional spectrum of the necropoleis’ occupation.

Daniel Polz / Ute Rummel

Interior view of the coffin of the dignitary Imeni (around 1800 BC), which was found in 2004 in shaft tomb K03.4 in area H (photo P. Windszus).

3D model of area H (created with Structure from Motion) with the shaft tomb of Min-Mon, the pyramid of Nubkhperre Intef, and the surrounding shafts (model C. Ruppert).

Courtyards of the double tomb complex K93.11/K93.12. Created as royal tomb of the 18th Dynasty, the site was transformed into a tomb temple complex in the 20th Dynasty by the high priests Ramsesnakht and Amenhotep (photo U. Rummel).


The Paulos Monastery (Deir el-Bakhit) in Western Thebes

High above the Nile Valley on the ridge of Dra’ Abu el-Naga rises the Paulos Monastery (Deir el-Bakhit), the largest known monastery to date on the west side of Thebes. The small-scale and intricate interior furnishings as well as texts and everyday objects give an excellent insight into the living conditions of the monks.

The nucleus of the monastery’s development is constituted by several hermitages at the edge of the mountain, which were built into older pharaonic tombs in the late 5th and 6th centuries AD. In one of these hermitages, there was a small Christian chapel. During the excavations in the sanctuary, hidden in a small cavity in a column of the altar table, a hoard of 29 gold coins from the time of the emperors Valentinian I and Justin II, dating back to the late second half of the 6th century AD, was discovered. In the late 6th/early 7th century AD, about 200 m away from these hermitages, a compact monastery was erected, which was inhabited until the end of the 9th or beginning of the 10th century AD. From its centre rose a tower which had a view of the Nile Valley in the south and the major caravan supply route (Farshút road) in the north. Since 2003, the excavations have provided fascinating insights into the living and working conditions of the monks. The small-scale interior furnishings made of clay have been preserved in most buildings and show, for example, an unusual variety of the number of beds per room in the area of the monks’ sleeping quarters: from two-bed to eight-bed rooms. These also provide information on the hierarchical order of the monks.

In the refectory, six seating groups have been preserved, consisting of a ring-shaped bench and a round table in the middle. As each of these ring-shaped benches could accommodate between 11 and 12 people, we can reconstruct a total number of 66 to 72 monks who lived simultaneously in the monastery. Deir el-Bakhit was known for its textile production. So far, five weaving pits have been excavated, but also the Coptic ostraca provide information about the sale of textiles. Fragments of Coptic papyrus also show what books were available in the monastery.

Since 2017, research into the monastery has been carried out in cooperation with the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna and financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

INA EICHNER

”The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project” in Luxor West Bank

Two colossal statues of Amenhotep III, two others of the king standing, six smaller colossi, and a monumental stela, re-erected in their original places are among the most important achievements of “The Colossi of Memnon and Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project” in the temple of Amenhotep III at Kom el Hettan, Luxor West Bank.

The team works in the temple of Amenhotep III since 1998, under the auspices of the Ministry of Antiquities and the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Its foremost aim is to conserve the last remains of this once-prestigious temple, which was toppled by an earthquake in 1200 BC, then used as a quarry for surrounding temples and finally abandoned.

A second major task is social, recruiting young assistants from surrounding villages, training them in documentation and restoration, which also helps them to support their families. An average of 30 specialists and about 300 skilled workmen form the team dedicated to this great work.

At the Memnon Colossi, annual monitoring, study, surface cleaning, and attempts to repel birds continue. Newly recovered pieces are documented, 3D scanned, and assembled to be put back into place.

Work continues on the recently raised quartzite colossi at the Second Pylon and with the reassembly of the extraordinary pair of alabaster colossi at the Third Pylon. The portrait of the king on one of these colossi is a masterpiece of monumental sculpture, and the queen standing at his side shows one of the most striking portraits of a queen in this material. Large pieces of badly damaged sphinxes in limestone were also uncovered here and carefully treated.

In the Peristyle Court, standing statues of Amenhotep III in quartzite and red granite are progressively mounted in their places. Here the team has also discovered two seated royal statues and 260 statues of the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet in granodiorite, which will be displayed around this great court, within a vast site management project. Thus conservation of sandstone architectural remains continues with defoliation, de-salination, and consolidation of badly preserved column bases and pavement slabs along with careful treatment of decorated blocks.

In April 2019, an exhibition in Luxor celebrating 20 years of works of the Memnon/ Amenhotep III Project was dedicated to the memory of Rainer Stadelmann.

HOURIG SOUROUZIAN

left: Hoard of 29 gold coins from the time of the emperors Valentinian I, Valens, Justinian I, and Justin II (photo P. Windszus). right: Dormitory with three beds made of clay (© DAI Cairo/LMU Munich, photo I. Eichner).

left: The portrait of queen Tiye standing to the right of the southern colossus at the Third Pylon. right: The re-erected quartzite colossi of Amenhotep III at the Second Pylon (© Colossi of Memnon Project, photos H. Sourouzian).
A new beginning

The Cairo Department of the German Archaeological Institute after World War II

In memoriam Rainer Stadelmann (1933–2019)

On November 16th 2017, the Cairo Department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) celebrated its 60th anniversary after the Second World War. The anniversary gave rise to a retrospective look at the beginnings of the DAI post-war Institute in Egypt and its director Hanns Stock (1908–1966). On November 16th 1957 Stock had reopened the gates of the institution with a festive act. Twelve years earlier, at the end of the war in 1945, it was shut down and its then director Hermann Junker (1877–1962) was suspended from his post because of his political involvement with the Nazi regime.

The reopening in 1957 was a red letter day for Stock – five years of strenuous efforts preceded it. Another nine years of his life devoted to rebuilding the Institute lay ahead of him – nearly a decade for laying the foundation for German scientific work in Egypt. He did not experience the ultimate success of his efforts, for at the age of only 57 an automobile accident ended his life while he was spending the summer of 1966 at his German home on Lake Starnberg.

Who was Hanns Stock? He was born on October 7th 1908 in Pfaffenhofen, a town in a strictly Catholic region of Germany about 40 km south of Munich, where his parents had a large grocery store. At first Stock intended to enter the priesthood; however, his interests were not oriented towards a priest's traditional duties – spiritual welfare and missionary work. Rather, from the very first, the career of a church scholar beckoned.

Thus he chose to study to become a Jesuit; in the “Society of Jesus” education and scholarship played pivotal roles. In 1928 he began to study philosophy in Turin with a Jesuit scholarship. In 1931 the career of a church scholar beckoned. Rather, from the very first, the career of a church scholar beckoned.

In 1928 he chose to study to become a Jesuit; in 1931 the career of a church scholar beckoned. Rather, from the very first, the career of a church scholar beckoned.

Instead he resumed the study of Egyptology at the university in Munich where in 1940 he earned the doctorate with a dissertation about the Hyksos, written under the supervision of Alexander Scharff (1892–1950). It was published in 1942.

World War II interrupted Stock’s career. After a brief stint as an assistant in Berlin’s Egyptian Museum, he was called up in 1941. Thanks to his facility with languages – he spoke fluent French, Italian, and Greek – he was not sent to the front and survived the war unscathed as an interpreter. Beginning in 1946 he taught at the university in Munich where in 1949 he completed his Habilitation – a second dissertation required of those aspiring to a professorship in Germany. (The subject was the First Intermediate Period.) Shortly thereafter, following Scharff’s unexpected death, he held the chair in Egyptology in Munich.

Until then, Stock, who spoke Arabic well, had never been to Egypt. The choice of Stock to coordinate efforts to re-establish a department of the DAI in Cairo was not based on his knowledge of the country but on two other factors. On the one hand, as Scharff’s successor in Munich, Stock occupied Scharff’s place in the central administration of the DAI, which had been re-established in 1947. On the other hand, he was not compromised politically – a criterion that set him apart from other candidates who were equally qualified when it came to competence in Egyptology.

Until 1955 Stock faced competition with the other candidates for the post of Cairo director who, however, lost out due to their compromised earlier careers during the Third Reich.

In mid-November 1952, Stock visited Egypt for the first time. During his five-month stay, the central administration of the DAI assigned him the task of investigating the possibility of re-establishing a department in Egypt.

Egypt had declared war on Germany on February 26th 1945 in order to improve the country’s status in the United Nations, which had been founded that same year. Regardless, after the war ended, mutual economic interests led to renewed contacts between Egypt and Germany. In June 1950 prince Abbas Halim (1897–1978), a relative of king Faruq (1920–1965), had founded an association in Hamburg to promote German-Egyptian contact. And on December 19th the following year, a German-Egyptian Chamber of Commerce was established in Cairo. Also in 1951 a trade agreement between Egypt and the young German Federal Republic was signed, and on May 14th 1951 the diplomatic situation was resolved when the state of war between Germany and Egypt officially ended.

But the prospects for Stock’s exploratory trip were not ideal, thanks to other political developments. On July 23rd 1952 a military revolt led by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970) of the nationalist Free Officers group, resulted in lasting political changes in Egypt. On July 26th king Faruq was sent into exile. From that moment onwards an anti-colonial, essentially anti-British and anti-French policy dominated Egyptian internal affairs. Nasser’s pan-Arab idea was not just a political trend; it was becoming a mark of national identity. In that connection the Egyptian attitude towards Israel had sharpened.

Since September 1952 Muhammad Naguib (1901–1984), Major General during the Palestinian War, governed the country.

There was enormous political tension between Egypt and the young Federal Republic of Germany after these political upheavals in Cairo, especially when in September 1952 the Federal Republic under Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) came to an agreement with Israel about restitution for German crimes against the Jews. The Arab states considered the so-called Luxembourg Agreement indicative of the Federal Republic taking sides with Israel and feared that the billions in payment to Israel would alter the balance of power in the Middle East to their disadvantage.

On the other hand, on October 14th 1952, Egypt became the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic. On October 8th Günther Pawelke (1900–1976) had been appointed the first ambassador of the Federal Republic to Egypt. In February 1953, during Stock’s sojourn in Egypt, president Naguib proposed that companies from the Federal Republic should be entrusted with the prestigious Aswan Dam project.

Behind the scenes, however, there was no lack of practical impediments. In the first year of the German ambassador’s appointment to Cairo he did not have an office to call his own but carried out his responsibilities instead from a suite in the Semiramis Hotel. And Stock, too, had to begin at zero.

The building which had formerly housed the DAI at no. 5 in Sharia el-Kamel Mohammed on Zamalek was occupied. The Institute had only rented the villa and the building was now in private hands again.

In September 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, the Institute’s large library, the collection of photographs, and documents, scholarly as well as administrative, had been seized at the order of the British. In the 1940s, the University of Alexandria had purchased the library; the disposition of the remainder was unknown at that time.

The same fate befell the German House at Thebes, a refuge for scholars built by Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938) on a piece of land opposite Luxor which the German authorities had purchased during World War II. The house built on the property was destroyed. In 1939, its replacement, erected under Borchardt in 1927, was sequestered, together with the library and complete inventory.

In 1952, at the headquarters of the DAI in Berlin, only vague information about the situation in Egypt was known. Contact with Egypt had been interrupted during the war. Moreover, a fire had destroyed the Berlin headquarters with its contents. The previous president of the Institute Martin Schede (1883–1947) had been well informed about the situation in the Cairo Department, but he had died in Soviet custody, and Hermann Junker, the former director of the Cairo Department who might also have provided information had retired to Vienna and devoted himself to his own work with the Vienna academy. Junker’s former countryman had died in the war, among those missing, or were unacceptable for political reasons to participate in re-establishing the Institute in Cairo. Stock and Carl Weihekt (1885–1975), Schede’s successor as president...
of the DAI, had heard only rumors about the status of the Cairo Institute. What was needed was a first-hand evaluation of the prospects for rebuilding the Institute in Egypt.

Stock’s first calls in Egypt were at Cairo’s Egyptian Museum and at the administrative headquarters of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, as well as to the cultural section of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the rectors of the el-Azhar Mosque. Then he travelled throughout Egypt, visiting the inspectorates in Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt.

Stock’s positive experiences on his journeys exceeded all his expectations, and he reported to Weickert that Egyptian colleagues met him with unusual friendship and were eager to accommodate him. It was regrettable that the current uncertainty in the political arena provided no opportunity for making any binding agreements. Throughout the country he had experienced “a very special liking of Germany, indeed an enthusiasm for Germany.” Travelling and working in Egypt was in every way facilitated for a German.

The successor of the Frenchman Étienne Drioton (1888–1961) as the new head of the Egyptian Antiquities Service was Mustafa Amer (1896–1973). During the 1930s he had conducted excavations at Maadi with Junker’s close friend the Austrian prehistorian Oswald Menghin (1888–1973). Moreover, Mustafa Amer was well disposed towards German scholarship.

After assumption of power by the Free Officers Movement the budget of the Antiquities Service had been seriously reduced – the goals of Naguib’s government and of Nasser subsequently, were primarily economic upturn and improvement of the living standards of the Egyptian people. Against this background Mustafa Amer had allowed French and British archaeologists to work again in Egypt. Stock reported approvingly to Berlin that Mustafa Amer was “a moderate, educated figure.”

Furthermore, Stock added that the most recent limitations on possibilities for work had awakened the wish of Egyptian colleagues “for German cooperation and the re-establishment of the German Institute.” There was an expressed willingness for young German Egyptologists to participate in excavations; they would have the same status as their Egyptian counterparts – and they would receive remuneration, so long as the German side assumed their travel expenses. Stock himself had been asked several times to take part in the Egyptian excavations at Giza. And it was also desired that young Egyptians might once again be sent to Germany – a wish which was based on the experiences of Egyptian colleagues themselves, for a number of Egyptians now filling posts in the Antiquities Service and teaching at universities in Egypt had studied in Germany before the war. They spoke German and were eager for a resumption of cooperation.

The German Institute. Against this background, the question of personnel became ever more crucial for the future of the Institute in Cairo. Not only was there a battle among Germans for postings; the Egyptian colleagues also demanded a consulting role in choosing the future representative of the DAI in their country. In the Egyptians’ opinion there was only one person deserving of consideration whose scholarly and personal qualities they respected. Like Junker earlier, the person chosen should give advice to Egyptian colleagues when they asked for it, and function as a resumption of cooperation.

Among them were Abdel Moneim Abu Bakr (1907–1976), who had studied in Berlin and Munich; now he was a full professor at the University of Alexandria and director of the Giza excavations; Ahmad Badawi (1905–1980), who had attended universities in Berlin and Göttingen, was now professor at the Ibrahim Pasha University (Ain Shams) in Cairo; Anwar Shoukry (1905–1987), who had been at the University in Göttingen, had become professor at Fuad I University in Cairo; Ahmad Fakhry (1905–1973), also a former student in Berlin, now undertook excavations for Fuad I University; Pahor Claudius Labib (1905–1994), who had studied in Berlin, was now director of the Coptic Museum in Cairo; Moharram Kamal (1908–1966), whom Stock knew had studied at several places in Germany, was a curator at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo; and, last but not least, was Mustafa Amer himself, whose career had culminated in the rectorship of the University of Alexandria and the post of Director-General of the Antiquities Service.

Stock told all of these men about the plans to seek a new home for the DAI on the Nile island of Zamalek. The reason he cited was the location on the island of the Institute founded by Ludwig Borchardt, which in 1949 had been reconstituted as the Swiss Institute for Architectural and Archaeological Research on Ancient Egypt. Herbert Ricke (1901–1976), then director of the Swiss Institute, had assured Stock that the German scholars would be welcome to stay at his institute and use the library, solving the problem of access to Egyptological literature for the time being.

Prior to Stock’s visit to Egypt he had not met Ricke. In Cairo, Ricke became his most important advisor. Stock’s rivals, including Walter Wolf (1900–1973) and Junker’s former assistant Willy Diemke (*1911; date of death unknown), were actively working in Cairo to establish a new German Institute. Against this background, the question of personnel became ever more crucial for the future of the Institute in Cairo. Not only was there a battle among Germans in Germany for postings; the Egyptian colleagues also demanded a consulting role in choosing the future representative of the DAI in their country. In the Egyptians’ opinion there was only one person deserving of consideration whose scholarly and personal qualities they respected. Like Junker earlier, the person chosen should give advice to Egyptian colleagues when they asked for it, and function as a resumption of cooperation.
as a teacher. For the Egyptian colleagues, the ideal scenario placed Junker himself in the post of director. This proposal, which was energetically supported by Selim Hassan (1886–1961), Junker’s friend and former colleague at Giza, gave the Germans a headache.

Junker and the other German Egyptologists, who on account of age and scholarly achievements possessed the desired authority, were either politically unacceptable or retired – or both! They represented an idea of scholarship, which DAI president Weickert did not want to perpetuate. Weickert’s most important objective was to separate German scholarship from politics. Both he and Stock rejected a model like Junker’s friend and former colleague at Giza, Junker, and they came to an agreement in Cairo about the new DAI Department. In a letter to Mustafa Amer, and they came to an agreement in Cairo about the new DAI Department. In a letter to Mustafa Amer, he informed Mustafa Amer of his confidence in Junker’s protégé Selim Hassan, but for Stock and Junker the reason behind Mustafa Amer’s change of attitude were immaterial.

W hat was to be done? Stock, together with Ricke, hit upon a solution in early summer 1953. Ricke proposed training younger German Egyptologists on the excavation he planned in the Sun Temple of Userkaf at Abusir; this would be a way to promote the career of an individual, who would enjoy the respect of Egyptian colleagues.

Stock praised this suggestion as an “unusually fortuitous opportunity to satisfy soon the Egyptian request for a German archaeologist.” In the meantime, on the occasion of the centennial commemoration of William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) in London where Stock was the only German Egyptologist invited – he learned that there, too, the absence of German archaeologists in Egypt was considered regrettable.

Thus Stock felt strengthened and that Abusir was a concrete plan. At the same time Stock learned that Mustafa Amer now did not want to hear any further mention of Hermann Junker. Until then Junker had enjoyed a high standing in Egypt – by contrast to his reputation in Germany where he had been suspended from his post by the allied powers in 1945.

The reason for Mustafa Amer’s altered attitude was probably a personal feud with Junker’s protégé Selim Hassan, but for Stock and Weickert the reason behind Mustafa Amer’s change of attitude were immaterial.

Along with Ricke’s offer of German participation in the Abusir excavations, Mustafa Amer’s turning away from Junker provided for the first time a real opportunity for a new beginning for German research in Egypt. With alacrity, Weickert organised the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) which was prepared to fund for Germany’s share of the expenses of the Swiss excavation.

And just in case, Weickert included an allotment for a department in Cairo in the 1954 budget of the DAI. For the first time since the closure in 1945 it seemed as if a reopening in Cairo might be possible.

The problem of a suitable candidate for the directorship remained, however – Stock viewed his role simply as that of a facilitator. He did not want to give up his post as professor and museum director in Munich.

Nevertheless, Stock took a leave of absence from Munich to participate in Ricke’s excavation while simultaneously involved in discussions in Cairo about the new DAI Department. In a letter of thanks to Stock, Weickert wrote: “I can tell you that I am very glad that the resumption of German work in Egypt now is again within reach.”

On December 22nd 1953 the Berlin newspaper Neue Zeitung reported that, according to Weickert, the director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service Mustafa Amer had invited Germany to resume archaeological field work in Egypt.

Citing this newspaper article, Weickert advised the cultural section of the German Federal Foreign Office on December 23rd of his confidence that after the successes in Athens and Istanbul, the DAI would soon again have a department in Cairo.

B ecause the first Abusir campaign took place in the winter of 1954/55, the establishment of the new department in Cairo could not be credited to Weickert’s tenure as president. Actually, his retirement had been anticipated as early as 1952; in 1954 he was succeeded by Erich Boehringer (1897–1971).

Shortly after Boehringer’s term began, he thought about making the German House at Western Thebes the initial center for German Egyptologists, for the time being. On December 11th 1954 he informed Mustafa Amer of the Institute’s intention to support German Egyptologists’ work and preparation of their publications at Western Thebes; he requested permission to use the German House there for this purpose and for storing books and equipment. But, on February 7th 1955, Mustafa Amer explained that the German House was in the possession of the Egyptian government and was being used by the Antiquities Service.
Institute in the Egyptian capital. Immediately after Boehringer returned from Cairo he announced to the German press at the end of March 1955 the new establishment of the DAI in Egypt.

On June 11th 1955 Stock was named interim director of the new department in Cairo, and he immediately began working towards realizing the plans that had been made. The villa at no. 22, Sharia Gezira el-Wusta was chosen for the home of the Institute on account of its proximity to the Swiss Institute. In November 1955 all the formalities had been taken care of; the Institute could move into its new quarters on November 24th where it has remained – only the address has changed to 31, Sharia Abu el-Feda.

Initially there were four bedrooms, an office, a workroom, and a dining room, subsequently renovated and expanded. Wolfgang Helck (1914–1993), an up-and-coming young Egyptologist who had become known and appreciated in Egypt thanks to his publications, was enlisted to manage the Institute while Stock participated in the Userkaf campaign of 1955/56. For the German team in the Userkaf campaign Stock had won Werner Kaiser (1926–2013), who had studied with Scharff, and his own student Rainer Stadelmann. Both would later fulfill the expectations associated with the establishment in Egypt of a respected new generation of German scholars – in 1969 Werner Kaiser would succeed Stock in the Userkaf campaign of 1955/56. For the German team in the Userkaf campaign Stock had won Werner Kaiser (1926–2013), who had studied with Scharff, and his own student Rainer Stadelmann. Both would later fulfill the expectations associated with the establishment in Egypt of a respected new generation of German scholars – in 1969 Werner Kaiser would succeed Stock in the Userkaf campaign of 1955/56.

In January 1956, the death of Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing (1873–1956) resulted in there being a comprehensive collection of books available from his estate. In February, Boehringer contacted von Bissing’s heirs, but he and Stock had underestimated their business sense. Even if Boehringer, as a descendant of a family of industrialists, was considered a hard bargainer, he found his match in von Bissing’s widow and daughter. Instead of the expected accommodation, von Bissing’s daughter Myrrha von Aretn (1908–2002) opened negotiations with the words “To your consternation let me advise you that various other interested parties have turned up. Only lots of money will be of use.” Boehringer answered self-assuredly: “I am not so easily disconcerted; the maxim of the House of Boehringer – ‘it can be expressed in numbers’ – is a very sound principle. Accordingly we shall either come to an agreement or not.”

Stock and Boehringer had set their hopes on acquiring von Bissing’s library but these hopes were dashed in July 1956 when word reached them that von Bissing’s daughter had decided to sell her father’s library at auction. The negotiations with the German Institute in Cairo had served only the purpose of increasing the value of the books.

There was no alternative for Stock than to bid at the auction which developed into an expensive competition among Egyptologists – the rivals for von Bissing’s books included professors of Egyptology Elmar Edel (1914–1997) in Bonn, Ursula Schweitzer (1916–1960) in Basel, Hellmut Brunner (1913–1997) in Tübingen, and Erich Lüdeckens (1913–2004) in Mainz. In the end, Stock could acquire only a fraction of von Bissing’s library for the Cairo Department.

But Stock’s efforts in general were successful. Four years after his first trip to Egypt Stock had nearly 500 volumes and 1,000 offprints – and the outlook for the future included the resumption of scientific work.

By the end of 1956 Stock had rebuilt a German Institute, open for business. Helck took care of the day-to-day transactions with the help of a secretary. Gerhard Fecht (1922–2006) arrived in July 1956 as the first Egyptological research assistant for the new department.

But hardly had the Institute been consolidated when political conflict threatened its young existence. On July 26th 1956 Gamal Abdel Nasser, who had taken over the office of president in 1954 after a power struggle with Naguib, nationalised the Suez Canal, setting off what became known as the Suez Crisis. This led in October 1956 to the tripartite aggression on the Sinai Peninsula; the port city of Port Said was destroyed by a joint attack of the British and French air force at the beginning of November.

When the bombing reached even the city limits of Cairo, the German Institute staff fled the capital. The Institute found itself in the midst of a diplomatic crisis precisely at the same moment when the young Federal Republic was about to be reconciled with the French. On November 6th 1956 German chancellor Adenauer embarked upon his long planned inaugural visit to Paris; the conflict on the Sinai Peninsula led to a German diplomatic balancing act between reconciliation with the French and German-Egyptian economic interests.

Stock prepared for the worst – but once again fate smiled on him. The General Assembly of the United Nations successfully demanded the withdrawal of the French and British from Sinai.

To Stock’s great relief, the situation eased. At the beginning of 1957 a new Egyptian ambassador officially assumed his post in Bonn. Shortly thereafter the Institute in Cairo again experienced good fortune. In the spring of 1957 Ludwig Keimer (1892–1957) offered to sell to the Institute his comprehensive library. On May 29th 1957 he signed over his estate to the Institute for 6,000 Egyptian pounds – at the time, 72,000 marks – and a monthly annuity of 2,400 Swiss francs. Keimer was suffering from a life-threatening illness. On August 16th – barely 2½ months after he signed the contract – he died, and his library and collection including photographs became the property of the Institute.

With Keimer’s estate, the Institute acquired about 7,000 books, around 6,550 offprints, a comprehensive collection of his own works, and an impressive photo collection. This not only compensated for the loss of the pre-World War II Institute library; the size of the new library exceeded it.

The “Keimer-Library” around 1957.
The neutral stance of the young Federal Republic during the Suez Crisis and the Keimer legacy resulted in a turning point. Stock agreed to stay in Egypt and was named the first director of the Cairo Department on November 6th 1957, effective retrospectively as of September 1st. The Institute was officially reopened in the presence of minister Kamal el-Din Hussein (1921–1999) on November 16th. For the event, Georg Anders (1895–1972), state secretary of the German Foreign Office, came to Cairo. Also present were the Federal Republic’s ambassador to Egypt Walter Becker (1894–1973), institute president Boehringer along with heads of other institute departments, and many professors from Cairo University and members of the Antiquities Service.

During this period, but certainly before May 1958, the files of the Institute’s business transactions which had been sequestered in 1939 were returned, thanks to the efforts of Abdel Moniem Abu Bakr. On the basis of this material, two volumes of Institute history, beginning with Borchardt’s Kaiserlich Deutsches Institut in Cairo and continuing down through the Weimar Republic, could be published in 2013; in September 2017 the second volume covering the eras of Junker and Stock appeared.

In 1959, following on the agreement between the Egyptian government and the Federal Republic about the return of German property, a settlement was reached whereby compensation in the amount of the original value minus 10% for administrative costs was paid for the old Ebers-Library of the German Institute. The old photo archive which originated in the era of Borchardt remained in the hands of the Antiquities Service down to the present under the name German Archive.

Stock was satisfied with the results. Since Syria and Egypt joined forces to become the United Arab Republic on February 21st 1958 he hoped for a calm future of the new German Institute in Cairo “in the midst of the aspiring Arab states.”

And he considered the Institute’s most pressing task was to foster cooperation with the Egyptian Antiquities Service. Through participating in the study and documentation of the monuments he wanted the Institute to acquire a new reputation. But Stock knew that in the long run, the Institute would need more personnel in order to develop its own professional profile in Egyptology.

In the beginning, German scholars were working on their own in Egypt, with support only from the Institute. Since 1955 Joachim Spiegel (1911–1988), Eberhard Otto (1913–1974), and Wolfgang Helck were recording tombs at Western Thebes. Under the auspices of the university at Bonn Elmar Edel and Uvo Hölscher (1878–1963) were similarly involved with tombs at Aswan. Günther Roeder (1881–1966) started a project to publish the Amarna blocks excavated by him in Hermopolis, for which he expected the support of the Institute. In 1957 with funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft Werner Kaiser undertook a 60-day journey by car to prehistoric sites throughout Egypt.

As for the Institute itself, there was only the participation in a small project at el-Salamuni/Akhmim in a rock temple of King Ay; Stock had sent some institute staff to record its decoration. None of these projects – whether in Thebes, in Aswan, along the Nile or at Akhmim – involved excavating.

The first opportunity for the Institute to conduct a German excavation in Egypt came with the UNESCO project to rescue Nubian monuments put at risk by the erection at Aswan of the High Dam el-Sadd el-Ali. By the spring of 1957 the Swiss-German Userkaf excavations had been concluded; on July 26th that year UNESCO issued a worldwide appeal to participate in the salvage operation of the Nubian monuments. On July 1st 1958 Stock applied for the concession at Amada; in the autumn a permit was granted for the area around the 18th Dynasty temple.

The initial campaign took place following the spring. The interdisciplinary team for Amada, in conformity with institute policy, included the prehistorian Fernand Debono (1914–1997) appointed by the Egyptian Antiquities Service. The practical work of excavating lay in the hands of experienced workmen from Quft under the direction of reis Kamal Sadig. It was the first excavation of the German Institute in Egypt since the Second World War – and technically speaking, it was the first ever conducted by the German Archaeological Institute, because Borchardt worked not in the name of the Institute but under the auspices of the museum in Berlin, and Junker’s excavations were made with an Austrian remit.

To reach the remote site Stock used private donations to buy a motorboat; it arrived in Egypt from Germany in January 1959. He named the boat “Amada”, after the site where it was first used. It proved to be a link between the Germans and other teams who participated in the international UNESCO operation. Stock put it at the disposal of Italian and American colleagues – among the latter, William Kelly Simpson (1928–2017) of Yale University.

After conclusion of the Amada excavation, in 1961, Stock turned to a Coptic project. Permission was granted to conduct research in Gebel Adda, between Qasr Ibrim and Faras, Alexandria University, which had worked at the site, had given up the concession. Stock hoped that valuable information could be gained for
Dating Coptic textiles from the cemetery. A joint German-Egyptian project was set up, thanks to the help of Abdel Moneim Abu Bakr and Anwar Shoukry who had in the interim become the director-general of the Antiquities Service.

In May 1964 Stock came to an agreement with Anwar Shoukry for the recording of rock inscriptions and drawings in the area behind the dam, which would soon be flooded by Lake Nasser. Since Stock had no personnel to assign to the project, the work of recording was to be assumed by Egyptian Egyptologists. There were two campaigns, July to September 1964 and from July to August the following year.

Simultaneous with the Institute’s work in Nubia, from July to August the following year. Two campaigns, July to September 1964 and to the project, the work of recording was to be continued. In Simultaneous with the Institute’s work in Nubia, from July to August the following year.

"Most days, two pontoons to aid in dismantling the temple and two ships for transporting the blocks lay alongside the complex", according to Stock’s description of the dramatic salvage operation, with ships departing and arriving from the end of May until the beginning of July, travelling back and forth between the temple’s old and new sites, in an operation that had to be precisely coordinated.

Stock described the accomplishment of the men charged with unloading the boats, who saw the temple only as individual blocks of stone, as "a tour de force under circumstances of privation and according to a strict schedule, sweating day in, day out, between the cliffs and sand dunes.” Furthermore, the danger of the work had increased.

Regardless, by the beginning of October 1962, 13,110 blocks had been moved. In the course of disassembling the temple for transport, the surprising discovery was made that painted blocks from an earlier Ptolemaic structure had been used to build it. They were found in the summer of 1963 when they emerged “for the last time from the water.” January 11th 1964 was set as the date for turning over the temple to the Egyptian government after its transfer and rebuilding had been completed in November 1963. Preparations for the ceremony were well underway through the German embassy.

But these plans came to naught. New political crises, the Six-Day War, and the tensions of the Cold War brought the preparations to a halt. The handover would eventually take place in March 1975, a dozen years after the temple was re-erected.

The Six-Day War marked a new phase in the history of the Institute, which Stock no longer experienced. According to a list that he made in 1959 he planned to investigate Lisht and Tuna el-Gebel as well as Abu Mena, Dahshur, and Buto. But his early death prevented him from realising these ambitious plans himself. In the interim, his co-workers and successors have been able to carry out – among many new projects, including the Islamic Period – a good number of them.

Foreign work in Egypt has never been and it is not self-evident. It is a product of Egyptian approval and support. Political changes have not damaged the support. A constant bond of commonality between Egypt and Germany has transcended the upheavals, even wars. Culture is a part of these similarities that can hardly be overestimated.

1 The article refers to the results of the history of science research project on the history of the DAI Cairo, here the most recently published volume on the Weimar Republic, the Nazi and post-war period: S. Voss, Die Geschichte der Abteilung Kairo des DAI im Spannungsfeld deutscher politischer Interessen I: 1929–1945, MKT 8, 2, Rahden/Westfalen 2017. For detailed source references see there. To the forerunner of the DAI department, the Kaiserlich Deutsches Institut für ägyptische Altertumskunde in Kairo, see: ib., Die Geschichte der Abteilung Kairo des DAI im Spannungsfeld deutscher politischer Interessen I: 1881–1929, MKT 8, 1, Rahden/Westfalen 2013. See also: G. Dewen/D. Polz (eds.), Begegnung mit der Vergangenheit – 100 Jahre in Ägypten. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo 1907–2007, Mainz 2007; W. KAISER, 75 Jahre Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo 1907–1982, SDAIK 12, Mainz 1982.

The Institute’s boat "Amada" in Nubia.

The salvage and relocation of the temple of Kalabsha in 1963 (D-DAI-KAI-F-52714).
Abydos – Umm el-Qaab

Abydos is probably one of the oldest and most enduring places in ancient Egypt. This is where nothing less than Egyptian kingship and the associated cult for the divine ruler of the realm of the dead (Osiris) began. In addition to numerous and impressive sites such as settlement remains and temples, it is specifically the necropolises of Abydos that have yielded essential insights into the emergence of the pharaonic state. Since 1978, the DAI has been working intensively in the cemetery called Umm el-Qaab and has made significant discoveries.

At Umm el-Qaab and the directly adjoining Cemetery U, located at the foot of the desert plateau and far away from the settlements, the first burials were founded as early as the early 2nd millennium BC. From then on, and continuously over the next 1,200 years, people were buried there. In the course of this long period, the tombs and their different furnishings allow for observing the emergence of complex social organisation and social elites. These early elites eventually came to be the first rulers of the Abydos Dynasty, who were also the first to develop hieroglyphic writing in Egypt. This dynasty of rulers managed to assert itself among the various other small Protodynastic kingdoms of the country and to politically unite Egypt under its leadership around 3000 BC. Although the first pharaohs later moved their capital and royal residence to the north in Memphis, all kings and a queen of the 1st Dynasty as well as two kings of the late 2nd Dynasty were buried in the ancestral cemetery. This dynastic tradition around the deceased kings was so important that a belief rapidly developed around the god Osiris having been buried here as one of the royal ancestors. Abydos thus became a central place of worship, which lasted until well after the end of the Pharaonic Period.

E. Christiana Köhler

Abydos and the First Kings of Egypt

There is hardly any other place in Egypt where the development of pharaonic kingship can be better documented than Abydos – Umm el-Qaab. To precisely trace this evolution, the DAI has conducted extensive research in the royal necropolis over the past 40 years, making amazing discoveries that radically changed our image of early kingship and its origins.

After archaeologists of the late 19th century had discovered monumental tombs of the 1st and 2nd Dynasties (c. 3050–2700 BC) in Abydos, there was a debate in the early 20th century as to where exactly the first pharaohs were buried; both Abydos and Saqqara were considered as possible sites. Only in the late 20th century, and especially through the work of the DAI which was initiated by W. Kaiser and later continued by G. Dreyer and E. C. Köhler, could the answer to this question clearly be decided in favour of Abydos. The modern archaeological excavations in the adjacent Cemetery U also provided additional insights into the early origins of kingship at Abydos. Among the nearly 600 Predynastic burials there was also the important tomb U-j, which was assigned to a Protodynastic ruler solely because of its size and lavish furnishings. It dates back to Naqada IIIA (around 3250 BC) and contained not only large quantities of grave goods, but also numerous objects which bear some of the earliest hieroglyphic inscriptions known. The development of this great necropolis can thus be traced almost seamlessly over 1,000 years from the late Neolithic era (around 3900 BC) to the abandonment of the necropolis after the 2nd Dynasty.

The huge tombs of the eight kings and a queen of the 1st Dynasty are especially exciting. These structures consist of a substructure of mud-brick walls in which the main burial chamber and hundreds of secondary burials were located. Despite heavy plundering and earlier excavations, the DAI was still able to secure impressive quantities of grave goods, which allowed for a reconstruction of the original furnishings. In particular, very early written evidence, such as the earliest king lists in Egypt, provided valuable information about the historical sequence and other details. The monumental tomb of the 1st Dynasty queen Meretneith is still a mystery: did she achieve such high status through her role of a king’s mother, or was she perhaps even a pharaoh herself?

E. Christiana Köhler
Ritual and Cult Figures of the God Osiris in Umm el-Qaab

Since the discovery of the great cult statue during the excavations of the "Mission Amélineau" in 1898, the tomb of the Early Dynastic king Djer in Umm el-Qaab has been regarded as a special place of worship for the god Osiris. The statue, made in the late Middle Kingdom, shows Osiris stretched out on a lion bier with his sister, the falcon-shaped Isis, at the moment of the procreation of their son Harendotes.

In addition to this famous Osiris bed, however, other cult and ritual figures were discovered. They include a series of polychrome statuettes made of unfired Nile mud. Already during the earlier French and British excavations between 1895 and 1911, several of these figures were found. With the Osiris statues recently discovered by the DAI in several in-situ depositions, the known number of these special objects adds up to about 20 specimens. They were probably produced over a longer period of time and deposited at the sanctuary of Osiris, the tomb of the Early Dynastic king Djer. Due to the fragile material, however, only a few figures seem to have survived. The size of the statuettes varies from 39.5 cm to 57 cm. They are designed according to a rather uniform pattern, standing on a pedestal and having a back pillar. The head is crowned with the Atef crown.

Unlike the so-called corn Osiris figures, these statuettes do not contain any grains mixed in the Nile mud. Various texts describe the manufacturing process with locally different recipes and the ritual use of these cult figures. The texts include, in particular, inscriptions in the roof chapels of the temple of Dendera, the Papyrus Jumilhac, or the Papyrus Salt 825.

Another Osirian ritual figure was found smashed in a vessel of another in-situ deposition discovered in the vicinity of the tomb of Djer. It contained small and minute fragments of very thin, modelled clay or stucco, a resinous mass, sand, and small amounts of botanical material. Only after elaborate conservation it was possible to reconstruct the mummy-shaped cult figure of the god Osiris from the countless extremely brittle fragments. It is a form of an Osirian statute, which is also rarely documented, as it had previously only been found in the Osiris necropolis in Karnak, Thebes.

The Royal Necropolis of Dahshur

The necropolis of Dahshur, a vast terrain of more than 6 km², was inaugurated by king Sneferu (the father of Khufu, c. 2650 BC) as one of the great state cemeteries of the Old Kingdom. With its buildings, the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid, the canonical pyramid shape with smooth side surfaces and the giant scale of the pyramid complexes were developed. In a second occupation phase, kings of the 12th Dynasty (from about 1880 BC) erected three further and now much smaller burial complexes, followed by the miniature pyramids of kings of the terminal Middle Kingdom. In addition to the royal tombs, there are extensive cemeteries of members of the royal court, high officials, and the priests of the mortuary cults. Initially, research was concentrated on the royal tombs and the great monuments. Now the focus of archaeology is shifting to broader and more synthetic issues: in ancient times, the monumental necropolis was a busy place, including the houses of priests and two pyramid towns. Their location, population, and their role in the development of the urban region around the old capital Memphis form the focus of the current work of the DAI.

Another exciting topic, which can be explored in Dahshur in a unique way, is the layout and organisation of the construction sites of the ancient giant projects. Workplaces, accommodations, and transport routes lie largely undisturbed beneath the desert surface and promise to shed light on the logistics and realisation of the mega-buildings.

Landscape archaeology and geoarchaeology proved to offer key approaches to these questions. Only a sound understanding of the geological and geographical configuration of the site and its development – as it can only be gained through close cooperation between archaeologists and geographers – allows for an appreciation of the functional and aesthetic interplay of the monuments with their original environment.

Stephan J. Seidlmayer

top: View of the pyramid field of Dahshur from the cultivation (photo N. Alexanian).
left: Mastaba rows in the cemetery of the royal family members between the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid.
right: Test excavation in the workmen’s settlement near the Red Pyramid (photos S. J. Seidlmayer).
The Settlement North of the Valley Temple of the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur

Since 1975 the DAI Cairo has been investigating the pyramid cemetery of Dahshur, which was founded by king Sneferu (c. 2650 BC), the father of perhaps the most famous pyramid builder of ancient Egypt, Khufu. Here we find one of the iconic monuments of the country: the Bent Pyramid. Thanks to the use of state-of-the-art technology, it is now possible to investigate a settlement close to this pyramid.

The settlement, which was discovered by a geophysical survey carried out in 2013, covers an area of c. 350 x 200 m and is located close to the valley temple. During the first excavations, a house measuring c. 35 x 40 m was uncovered, the walls of which are built of mudbrick covered with mud and lime plaster. Given the size and the furnishing of the building it may be described as an elegant residential building.

In the northern area an open courtyard with six silos was discovered, indicating a longer period of use of the building, as it offered its inhabitants suitable infrastructures to guarantee their own food production. The labyrinthe western area probably represents the core of the house. During the excavation of three rooms in this area, a large number of painted plaster fragments came to light, clearly showing that the walls were painted white with a black dado, while the ceiling was painted red. In one of the rooms, three limestone column bases were discovered, which once supported lotus-columns. The columns themselves were probably made of wood and are not preserved – presumably they were intentionally removed when the building was abandoned in order to be reused elsewhere. Since there were only few traces of use in the other rooms, the impression created so far is that the house was intentionally abandoned. The majority of the finds therefore consists of ceramics and plant remains as well as animal bones and teeth. Metal and stone objects, faience beads, and inlays were also discovered. Among the more outstanding finds are a fragment of an ivory bracelet and a seal impression.

Judging from the ceramic finds, the house dates to the early 4th Dynasty, which suggests that the building and indeed the entire buried building complex should be interpreted in connection with the building process of the pyramid.

Daniela Rosenow

In the courtyard of the temple, remains of planting basins and offering pits with beer mugs were discovered, which seem to be connected with fertility rites. The mudbrick building was also surrounded by an extensive garden. There were over 260 trees, including palms and sycomores, as well as cypresses imported from the Levant. The garden was surrounded by a massive enclosure wall with a wide path running along the inside. It was not until the 30th anniversary of the reign of king Sneferu that the mudbrick complex was replaced by a stone building. The stone temple served the cult at six statues of the king. Its ground plan is reminiscent of that of the mudbrick temple. The connection of the stone temple to the Bent Pyramid via a causeway framed by limestone walls likely took place shortly before the death of the king.

Within the context of restoration work, the cult site at the foot of the Bent Pyra-

Cult Buildings of the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur

Investigations in the vicinity of the Bent Pyramid in Dahshur provide new insights into the development of its cult buildings and thus the origin of the pyramid temples of the Old Kingdom. As early as 2014, the remains of a predecessor installation were uncovered north of the well-known stone temple in the valley of the pyramid. The building was made of mudbrick and used for ritual activities during the lifetime of king Sneferu (around 2650 BC).

Felix Arnold
The Reliefs from the Valley Temple of Sneferu in Dahshur

The valley temple of Sneferu, the first king of the 4th Dynasty (c. 2650 BC), is part of the complex sacred landscape of the necropolis of Dahshur. Along with the pyramid temple, the upper and lower causeway and a harbour basin, the temple forms an integral component of the pyramid complex of the Bent Pyramid. The decoration programme of the oldest known decorated pyramid temple in Egypt is particularly important, given that many of the scenes are first attested here and can be seen as a prototype for temple decoration throughout Egyptian history. The ongoing excavations of the German Archaeological Institute Cairo contribute to our knowledge of this temple through numerous new relief finds.

The valley temple of Sneferu was discovered and excavated in the early 1950s by the Egyptian archaeologist Ahmed Fakhry. He found the 47 m long and 26 m wide temple complex in ruins. Most of the relief decoration was shattered and spread over the inner courtyard of the temple; only parts of the well-known frieze displaying a procession of personifications of Sneferu’s estates were preserved in their original context. Ahmed Fakhry was only able to publish a small fraction of the 1,400 fragments bearing exceptional scenes. Since 2009, the DAI Cairo has been investigating a transportation pathway made of limestone blocks, which was used during the Ramesside Period when the temple was systematically dismantled. It leads from the temple over a distance of more than 700 m to the cultivated area at the Nile. Numerous architectural fragments and parts of the relief decoration from the valley temple were used to build the stone pavement of this pathway. The finds from this installation supplement the material from Fakhry’s excavations and provide critical clues to identify previously unknown scenes in the decoration programme. A striking example is the depiction of a scene of the sed-festival, an important ceremony celebrating the king’s throne jubilee demonstrating his power, youth, and vigour. Since 2013, the finds of Ahmed Fakhry, which are now kept in the storage facilities of Giza, Athf, and the Egyptian Museum Cairo, were comprehensively documented, restored, and suitably packaged. The aim of the project is to thoroughly document the material, to study and reconstruct the decoration programme and to make the material available both for scientific discourse and for a wider public. Close cooperation with the local authorities and training of Egyptian students and conservators are further cornerstones of the project.

Kyra Gospodar

A New Type of Court Cemetery at the Pyramid of Amenemhat II

Completely unexpectedly, a planned cemetery with more than 60 burial shafts was discovered during magnetometric prospecting west of the pyramid complex of Amenemhat II. From its date and according to its layout, it is to be regarded as a hitherto unknown component of the royal burial complex. This complex now completes the picture of the royal mortuary complexes of the Middle Kingdom and sheds light on how the rulers of the 12th Dynasty referred back to the ancestors of the pharaonic kingship.

In the course of magnetometric prospecting of the vast cemetery area east of the Red Pyramid, carried out by Hellmut Becker, striking rows of dark rectangles caught the eye. The excavation revealed that these were burial shafts of the Middle Kingdom, of which nothing at all can be seen on the surface. The burials in these shafts were robbed in antiquity, but the remains show that they were partly elaborately furnished burial complexes of the court burials of the Middle Kingdom.

The uniformity of the complexes, their grouping, and arrangement in the terrain are striking. Symmetrically aligned with the pyramid complex of Amenemhat II (c. 1870 BC), a series of four particularly large and deep shafts follows west of its enclosure wall, then comes a double line of two sets of 15 burial shafts of medium format, and finally, at right angles to it, to the north and west up to four rows of further shafts of the least elaborate kind follow.

The planned organisation shows that these were the tombs of members of the royal court. The new discovery now complements the image of the royal necropolis of Amenemhat II. Of this extensive complex the tomb of the king himself, the tombs of royal family members within the pyramid complex, as well as the tombs of the highest functionaries south of the pyramid have been identified so far.

The newly discovered planned cemetery takes up the model of the cemeteries of the 4th Dynasty, as they are known at Dahshur itself, at Meydum and Giza from the time of the kings Sneferu and Khufu. The right-angled tomb rows even make it possible to refer back to the rows of subsidiary burials in the tombs and ritual precincts of the kings of the 1st Dynasty at Abydos and Saqqara. These references to the distant past are significant for the ideological construction of the kingdom of the Middle Kingdom.

Stephan J. Seidlmayer

Magnetogram of the cemetery area showing the rows of tomb shafts west of the pyramid of Amenemhat II (graphics H. Becker/T. Gutmann/D. Blaschta et al.).
Landscape Archaeology in Dahshur

Understanding that the Egyptian landscape changed fundamentally even in historical times provided important new stimuli to archaeology. Dahshur is exemplary in demonstrating how the exploration of the geographical configuration opens up a new understanding also of the archaeological evidence.

Thanks to cooperation with the Institute of Physical Geography at the Freie Universität Berlin – namely, with Britta Schütt and Wiebke Bebermeier – landscape change which decisively altered the face of the area could be recognised as a major factor affecting the site.

The dynamics of the Nile Valley play a crucial role. Due to the sedimentation of the river, the level of the arable land has risen gradually since the 3rd millennium BC by more than 5 m. During the Old Kingdom the transition from desert to valley looked very different from today: a wide strip of low desert offered space for settlements and cemeteries. By auger sondages, the pyramid town of the Red Pyramid, now buried under Nile sediments, could be located on this flat desert strip, and its extent and occupation period could be determined. Hopefully it will be possible also to identify the site of the pyramid town of the Bent Pyramid by further exploration.

A second factor which contributed to historical landscape change is the formation of the dune covering, which today characterises the aspect of the Memphite necropolis. As a result of the aridisation, sand was increasingly blown into the Nile Valley from the west, beginning in the 5th Dynasty (c. 2400 BC). By understanding this mechanism it was possible to discover the lower causeway and the harbour basin of the Bent Pyramid under metre-deep, natural wind-blown sediments. The fact that this sedimentation process is connected with datable archaeological evidence also offers the possibility to determine the chronology of climate change.

Geomorphological analyses also help to identify anthropogenic interventions in the terrain. Sanded depressions in the area around the Bent Pyramid were recognisable as old quarries from which the building material for the pyramid core was extracted. At the same time, the installation of these quarries around the pyramid increased the aesthetic effect of the isolated pyramid plateau.

The interaction between man and landscape on ecological, technical and aesthetic-cognitive levels offers a key to understanding the site in its entirety.

Stephan J. Seidlmayer

The Necropolis of Saqqara

The Tomb of King Nynetjer

The tomb of king Nynetjer (c. 2785–2742 BC) is one of the four known royal tombs of the 2nd Dynasty. It is located c. 25 km southwest of Cairo in the necropolis of Saqqara, which served the nearby town of Memphis as a burial ground over a period of 3,500 years.

The king’s tomb was discovered in 1937 by the Egyptian archaeologist Selim Hassan. The first systematic excavations, however, were only carried out by the DAI Cairo between 2003 and 2010.

The tomb of king Nynetjer was cut into the grown limestone massif using a tunnel construction method. The underground complex extends over an area of c. 77 m x 50.5 m and is divided into 192 rooms, corridors, and small chambers that run through the rock like a labyrinth. Originally, there was probably a burial mound bordered with limestone or mudbrick walls above ground, but no remains of it are preserved. Numerous well-preserved pottery vessels, jar sealings with seal impressions, stone vessels, stone knives, and blades as well as wooden staffs and baskets were found from the original grave inventory.

The first structural disturbances of the tomb of Nynetjer occurred after about 400 years in the Old Kingdom with the construction of the Pyramid of Unas and continued almost without interruption into Late Antiquity with the beginning of Christianisation. These later phases of use of the original rock-cut tomb became clear both in the architecture and especially in the finds.

The results of the excavation and research of recent years provide a more comprehensive picture both of burial customs and of the architectural development of the tombs in Early Dynastic times. Clarifying the lines of architectural development could thus not only contribute to architectural aspects, but also to a better understanding of processes of cultic and social development during the Early Dynastic Period of Egypt.

Claudia M. Lacher-Raschdorff

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The Early Dynastic tomb of King Nynetjer in Saqqara also fascinated the inhabitants of Memphis in later times. Thus, from the late New Kingdom to early Christian times, private individuals were buried in the prominent tomb and its surroundings in order to participate in the sacred nature of the place.

Later burials often created separate shafts, which could end in chambers above and below the burial complex, but often they broke through into the early galleries or reused their rooms as burial chambers. While a dense occupation of tombs in this area is already attested since the Old Kingdom (and thus occasionally the unintentional breakthroughs occurred), in later times a change of meaning is evident when rooms of the earlier monument were intentionally reused. The entire tomb of the king and its immediate surroundings were therefore used as a collective burial ground for over 3,500 years.

The excavations carried out by the DAI Cairo since 2003 have yielded a large number of finds from different periods. In addition to statues, Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statuettes, and bead nets, wooden coffins from the Late Period were also found. In the Early Dynastic chamber A200 three mumiform coffins were discovered, which can be dated to the 26th Dynasty. These provide an excellent example of the diversity of decorative programmes and colour schemes which were in use in the Late Period. The coffins feature a complex decoration with a tripartite wig, a decorative broad collar, and the depiction of the goddess Nut on the chest. Below are a longer text containing offering formulae and the so-called Nut-spell, flanked by gods, and typically images of two jackals on the footboard. There are black coffins with yellow decoration and coffins with polychrome painting on a white background and green face. The coffin types represented here fit well into the typology of the already known coffins from Saqqara, but also from the Memphite necropolis in general, e.g. from Giza or Abusir.

The project on the later burials in the tomb of Nynetjer seeks to explore the fascinating continuity and conscious reuse of this sacred place. A central objective will be the restoration of the finds as well as the scientific analysis of the later burials from the Early Dynastic tomb complex.

Katharina Stövesand

Later Burials in and around the Tomb of King Nynetjer in Saqqara

Until the work undertaken by the DAI Cairo, the tomb of king Nynetjer was described as an underground labyrinth. But what was the function of this unusual tomb layout? Was there already a blueprint, and how was the tomb cut out of the rock? These questions were investigated using the methods of building archaeology.

By examining the traces the tools left on the walls, it was possible to clarify the construction phases of the royal tomb and the later phases of its use. It turned out that first a smaller tomb had been carved out of the rock, which was later extended to the south. An analysis of the directions in which work proceeded could show that different groups of workmen were working from different directions. A total of ten meeting points could be detected due to the toolmarks on the walls. The work was executed with flat, c. 2 cm wide copper chisels. The natural rock layers were used as a guide in order to maintain the correct height levels.

The building strategy, even at such an early stage, was based on a construction plan, which itself was based on a grid-like system of Egyptian cubits of c. 52 cm as the basic dimension.

In addition, an interpretation for the labyrinthine layout was presented for the first time. The northern section of the tomb flanking the entrance ramp was probably reserved for the storage of supplies, while the southeast wing imitated parts of the royal place. For the celebration of throne renewal festivals in the afterlife, a model cult place was cut from the rock. It is likely that the “Blue Chambers” in king Djoser’s Step Pyramid complex can be traced back to this model cult place. Unlike the earlier tombs, the tomb of Nynetjer adds another new design element: the model residence. The labyrinthine corridors were designed as streets with house entrances. Like the underground model cult place, this kind of papyrus thinking, in which the house entrance stands as a substitute for a real building, can also be found later in the above-ground buildings in king Djoser’s precinct.

By examining the large-scale construction project of the royal tomb in all its aspects, it was possible to gain information both regarding the constructional and organisational competence of its builders as well as the ritual and functional significance of the room clusters.

Claudia M. Lacher-Raschdorff

Architectural Investigations in the Tomb of King Nynetjer

Interpretation of the different tomb sections (drawing C. M. Lacher-Raschdorff).
Graeco-Roman Egypt

Nowhere else in Egypt is the multicultural society that emerged after Alexander the Great’s conquest as evident as in the oasis of the Fayum southwest of present-day Cairo. At the beginning of the 3rd century BC, the Ptolemaic kings used the know-how of the Greek hydraulic engineers to create extensive farmland in this depression west of the Nile Valley, where thousands of newcomers from the entire Mediterranean region settled. Greeks, Macedonians, Thracians, men (and fewer women) from the Greek cities of Asia Minor, Sicily and southern Italy, and Jews and Syrians came in search of the better and peaceful life promised by the Ptolemies.

New villages were founded in the Fayum, where migrants lived with soldiers and administrative officials who spoke Greek, but also with Egyptian peasants. Egyptian temples were built in which the crocodile god was worshipped, as well as Greek bathhouses in which people sat together naked and washed themselves – an outrageous custom for the Egyptians! But the bathhouses quickly became the social meeting point of all villagers, and the crocodile god remained the most popular god. Marriage brought the population groups closer together; for social advancement Greek was learned, and children were given both an Egyptian and a Greek name. Already in the 2nd century BC it is therefore difficult to recognise the cultural background of members of a family by their name.

Not only archaeological remains such as temples and bathhouses bear witness to this multicultural society in the Fayum, but also an immense treasure of papyri, stored in Greek or Egyptian texts. They contain everything from lists of tax collectors to private letters of love or hate, and questions submitted to the oracle in writing.

Regarding this combination of archaeological and textual evidence, the Fayum is unique. No ancient landscape has preserved so much information about the people who lived there.

Cornelia Römer

The Water Supply of Philoteris/Watfa

Water for Philoteris! Under this motto the team of the DAI has been working in the Graeco-Roman village of Philoteris/Watfa in the north-western Fayum since 2011. A large building outside the settlement, which was remarkably well connected to the irrigation system, turned out to be particularly exciting: here lies the first archaeologically attested Greek gymnasium in Egypt, in operation from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD, with an associated racecourse.

In the course of the land reclamation in the oasis around 260 BC, Ptolemy II founded the village and named it after his sister Philotera. Initially about 1,200 people lived here, 800 of Egyptian descent, the rest Greek-speaking soldiers and settlers. Two canals were led to the village from the east; the wider one transported water to the village of Dionysias (“The village of Dionysos”, today: Qasr Qarun), 5 km to the west. North of it and on a slightly lower level, a narrower channel was carved into the limestone; it fed large reservoirs that belonged to the original layout of the village.

Here in the outermost corner of the Fayum, ensuring a sufficient water supply could become difficult without storage. Wells connected the reservoirs with gardens and fields; people scooped water with shadufs and water wheels. Landing places testify to the fact that the upper canal was also navigable for larger rowing boats.

Gymnasia were widespread institutions in Ptolemaic Egypt – also in the villages, which had a large proportion of settlers from a Greek cultural background. Some wanted to make their village more “Greek” through private foundations. Originally intended as a training centre for young men to prepare for military service, in the Hellenistic Period gymnasium developed into “cultural centres” where people met for sports, intellectual entertainment, and communal meals. The membership worked like today’s sporting clubs.

The gymnasium in Philoteris consisted of a massive building with an inner courtyard, meeting room, and dining room. The adjacent racecourse was long enough for the run over one stadion (185 m); here, Greek culture was lived. From the consideration of the papyrological and archaeological evidence, it will be possible in the future to answer the exciting question of what this institution on the outskirts of the village meant for the community spirit of the people there.

Cornelia Römer
The Michigan Papyri in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo

What was life like in a village of the Fayum when Egypt had long been part of the Roman Empire? What was still Egyptian, what Greek? And how did the Roman Empire’s influence become manifest?

Written testimonies from the village of Karanis in northwestern Fayum give us a taste of daily life there. The papyri were excavated in the 1920s by the University of Michigan, brought to Ann Arbor, Michigan but returned to Egypt in 1952; they are now kept in the Egyptian Museum at Midan el-Tahrir. Since 2010, many of the unbroken envelopes have successfully been opened, the papyri restored, and put under glass.

In the 2nd century AD, Socrates, a tax collector, lived in Karanis; through his activity in the service of the Roman state he possessed both monitory assets and social prestige: he owned fields in the surrounding area and his eldest son ran a pig farm. Socrates read Greek literature and was apparently particularly interested in Homer and the comedies. These texts were found in a house in the western part of Karanis – certainly a good location – together with tax lists, some of which come from his hand. His wife Sempronia Gemella, unlike him, had Roman citizenship. In order not to lose their civil rights, their common sons were only registered under their mother’s name. The sons had Greek names, but the daughter Tasoukharion had a purely Egyptian name.

This was probably a typical upper class family of Karanis, in which the Greek and Roman cultures seemed to predominate. However, the temples of the village were consecrated to the crocodile god Souchos and built in Egyptian style, as they had been since the early Ptolemaic Period. In the northern temple, a worshipper could ask the god, called Soxis here, questions like whether or not to go to Alexandria.

In 2015, some literary texts and documents were already published (P. Cairo Mich. III); 35 new texts are about to be published (P. Cairo Mich. III). One papyrus shows in a particularly vivid way how the Roman state intervened in people’s lives: in 130 AD, farmers were forced to collect over 2,000 bundles of reeds in preparation for the visit of emperor Hadrian. They undertook to do so by taking an oath to the fortune of the emperor.

Cornelia Römer

Settlement and Landscape Archaeology in Kafir el-Sheikh: Buto, Kom el-Gir, and the Surrounding Area

The settlement mound of the ancient Buto, also called Tell el-Fara’In, is situated in the province Kafir el-Sheikh at the north-western edge of the Nile Delta, at an approximately 40 km distance to the present Mediterranean coast and c. 10 km east of the Rosetta Nile branch. In ancient Egyptian times, Buto was directly connected with the Mediterranean Sea by one or more Nile branches and was part of transregional networks. This can be proven not only by finds, such as imported goods and/or local imitations, but also by landscape archaeological investigations. In addition to archaeological inspections, this includes systematic drilling and geomorphological investigations in cooperation with scientists from the Institute of Physical Geography/Goethe University Frankfurt am Main under the direction of J. Wunderlich. Alongside the study of sedimentation processes, a dense network of smaller branches of the Nile, which are no longer visible in today’s landscape, was recently discovered.

Waterways and their shifting courses may play a role in the changing importance of the settlement site. Buto was of transregional importance until c. 2200 BC. After a long hiatus, further settlement activities are attested from 800 BC onwards. The resettlement progressed rapidly and then declined again in the later Roman to early Islamic Period. While the integration of the town into a regional settlement network remains still unclear for the older periods, the investigations of the ancient landscape demonstrate impressively the changes of settlement patterns for the Graeco-Roman Period and beyond. This research also includes the recently begun excavations at Kom el-Gir, which lies about 4 km northeast of Buto. In the future, the investigations will provide exemplary insights into the relationship between these two neighbouring settlements.

Clara Jeuthe / Robert Schiestl
Settlement Archaeology in the Nile Delta – the Town of Buto

Buto, the ancient Egyptian town Dejbout, can probably be identified with the double town of Dep and Pe. It may have been – according to ancient Egyptian sources – the Lower Egyptian capital during the Early Dynastic Period. Also in later periods, Buto played an important role and therefore the site offers an almost unique insight into the settlement history from the 4th millennium BC to the early Islamic time in the 7th century AD.

Buto covers an area of roughly 1 km² and has been investigated by the German Archaeological Institute since 1983. Its occupation spans a period of more than 3,500 years. But, however, does not seem to have been inhabited during the 2nd and early 1st millennia BC. The structures visible on today's surface do not date before the Ptolemaic-Roman Period. This phase is predominantly being investigated by the University of Paris Nanterre/Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale under the direction of P. Ballet. The settlement development in the west was investigated by auger core drilling and magnetometer measurements.

The results show a densely built-up town plan dating from the 7th/6th century BC. During this time, the Saite Period, the settlement probably attained its largest extent. The temple district of the goddess Wadjet, which is being investigated by the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, also dates back to this period.

For more than 30 years, the work of the German Archaeological Institute in Buto had a clear focus on the Pre- and Protodynastic Period. Under the direction of U. Hartung, a 2,100 m² large area was investigated in which the more than 1,000 years of settlement history without a gap can be traced, from the early 4th century onwards. The lowest parts of these strata today lie below the groundwater table and can only be excavated with the help of pumps. Despite such difficulties, the results are unique.

In the oldest settlement layer, local and Levantine traditions seem to have coexisted side by side. By contrast, the material culture in the following phases belongs to the Lower Egyptian culture. Over time, the number of findings related to the Upper Egyptian Naqada culture rises significantly, until the material culture formed a homogeneous picture by the end of the 4th millennium BC. Thus, the Egyptian state formation process appears to have been in Buto a continuous, slow process, without drastic or sudden changes. Afterwards, in the Early Dynastic Period, a large palatial complex was built, evidence of the renewed importance of Buto. Activity during the following Old Kingdom up to the late 3rd millennium is attested to by the pottery finds from drilling cores. However, architectural structures dating to this period are almost unknown. Consequently, future research will focus on the settlement development during the Old Kingdom in Buto.

The ancient landscape of the Nile Delta and numerous ancient settlements lie under sediments that the annual Nile flood deposited. In the course of thousands of years, thick layers accumulated, which now completely cover the surface of the former landscape and many settlements. The project on landscape archaeology and settlement networks around Tell el-Fara’in (ancient Buto) is devoted to the challenge of reconstructing the ancient landscape in the Delta.

The project on landscape archaeology and settlement networks around Tell el-Fara’in (ancient Buto) is devoted to the challenge of reconstructing the ancient landscape in the Delta.

The ancient landscape of the north-western Nile Delta is currently being investigated in cooperation with the Institute of Physical Geography of the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. The challenges are considerable: over time, the annual Nile flood covered the landscape with metre-thick layers of Nile mud. Former branches of the Nile – both large and small – silted up and are no longer visible. Today, the Delta is used intensively for agriculture and the landscape is massively transformed accordingly. There are no indications of the shape of the ancient landscape in today’s surface. The question of the ancient landscape is particularly significant in this region, since the local settlement history is largely unexplained: the central site of Buto (Tell el-Fara’in) is known as an important settlement centre of great age and long duration, but two anomalies stand out. Firstly, the settlement activity at Buto is marked by an interruption of c. 1,500 years, which extends from the end of the Old Kingdom to the Third Intermediate Period, c. 2200–800 BC. Secondly, the settlement history of the region around Buto is largely unknown. Since when and where did people settle in this region? A number of methods are used to clarify these issues: the evaluation of historical maps, remote sensing data from satellites, and underground drilling all play a central role. A breakthrough could recently be achieved using a digital elevation model. Radar measurements by the German satellite pair TandemX revealed fine differences in altitude on the ground that were not visible to the naked eye. This data shows that the landscape was traversed by many smaller branches of the Nile, on the banks of which the ancient settlements were built. These settlements are dated after evaluation of the pottery from the surface and the drillings. They are barely visible in the landscape and may have been synchronised with the Nile floods or with other processes.

Robert Schiestl

Landscape Archaeology and Settlement Networks around Buto (Tell el-Fara’in)

Top: Digital elevation model of the region, based on TandemX satellite data. The higher-lying levees of former branches of the Nile are characterised by a yellow-orange colour (© DAI Cairo/Underten Raum). Right: Drilling in the landscape up to 12 m deep. In the sediments, for example, buried former riverbeds can be found, which are filled with sand (photo R. Schiestl).

Clara Jeuthe / Ulrich Hartung

DAI Cairo

2019
Numerous hitherto unknown ancient settlements could be documented within the context of an archaeological survey in the north-western Delta. What today is a marginal region was densely populated during the Graeco-Roman Period. The site Kom el-Gir, about 4 km northeast of Buto (Tell el-Fara’in), is now being explored and is yielding surprising results.

In Ptolemaic, Roman, and late Roman times (late 4th century BC to mid-7th century AD), the north-western Delta became a booming region. Numerous new settlements were founded in this former peripheral zone of Egypt, which were accompanied by intensive development and use of the landscape. One of these sites, the Kom el-Gir, is now undergoing a more thorough archaeological investigation. This settlement of about 20 ha was strategically located on a tributary of the Nile, which branched into three smaller arms about 2 km north of the site. The ancient settlement mound rises only a few metres above the surrounding level.

The dense development with residential buildings took place along a largely orthogonal settlement plan. In the northern part of the settlement there is a large walled enclosure, most likely a temple district. To the east, a Roman fort, equipped with defensive towers and measuring about 150 x 90 m, adjoins it directly. It was built from unfired mud-brick. The construction method with square corner towers projecting outward suggests a date not before the middle of the 3rd century AD. Drilling in the area of the fort indicates that it was erected on a levelled part of an older settlement. The adjacent temple district was possibly incorporated into the military complex, as can be observed in Egypt at several Roman military installations. After the abandonment of the fort, the surroundings of the camp were filled with settlement waste from Ptolemaic to late Roman times outside the fort.

Robert Schiestl

Research and Restoration

Since all archaeology is based on material evidence, the preservation of these objects is a genuine concern of archaeological research. It would be inadequate to see conservation and restoration just as necessary steps before or after research: conservation and restoration themselves are research.

Current projects are devoted to the restoration of objects in museums and archives. Cooperation with the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz is essential here. The restoration of the decorated golden appliqués from Tutankhamen’s tomb combines innovative technological research with iconographic studies and is intended for a first-ever exhibition of the pieces in the Grand Egyptian Museum. Conservation and restoration work in the archives of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe on the Citadel are thematically linked to the Institute’s projects in historic Cairo and preserve documents for the future that are invaluable both as historical sources and in their own beauty.

Stephan J. Seidlmaier
The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen (KV 62) in 1922 revolutionised our understanding of Egypt's past, bringing to light, for the first time ever, a virtually intact royal tomb. Carter meticulously documented 5,400 objects, but did not have time for a comprehensive technological analysis of the objects. This is especially true for a group of exquisitely ornamented gold-sheet and leather appliqués that were found scattered on the floor, close to the royal chariots.

Decorated leather is rarely found. Therefore, the finds from Tutankhamen’s tomb are of great significance. Despite the deteriorated state, the surviving remains tell a lot about the different technologies used to create these remarkable artefacts. Furthermore, the gold-sheet appliqués are decorated with an extensive repertoire of figural and ornamental motifs. One group of objects depicts elements Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age are often found on small-scale objects, e.g. boxes, vessels, toilet articles, jewellery, etc. The motifs include animal combat scenes, symmetrically arranged caprids nibbling on trees, volute plants, and spiral bands, and show diverse iconographic traits from the Near East, Egypt, and the Aegean. They are attested in Egypt since the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, a period of intense international connections. Tutankhamen’s gold-sheet appliqués represent a paradigm example of how originally foreign iconographical elements were integrated into Egyptian art, combined with traditional Egyptian themes and transformed into local traditions.

The motifs are ancient symbols of Egyptian royal ideology, attested since c. 3000 BC. The “international” motifs circulating in the East-Europe and the Near East, Egypt, and the Aegean. They are attested in Egypt since the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, a period of intense international connections. Tutankhamen’s gold-sheet appliqués represent a paradigm example of how originally foreign iconographical elements were integrated into Egyptian art, combined with traditional Egyptian themes and transformed into local traditions.

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The archive of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l’Art Arabe at the Centre of Archaeological Studies on the Citadel in Cairo is a protected cultural heritage of Egypt. It consists mainly of photo negatives on glass plates and an important collection of architectural plans, but also of prints of the glass plates, mixed with photo prints of the 19th century, such as albumin photographs. Since many of the buildings depicted in the pictures are no longer preserved today or were greatly altered over the decades, the archive holds a high documentary value. The photographic collection consists of approximately 14,000 negatives, some of which suffered considerable damage over time. Therefore, in 2002, the DAI Cairo has been involved in a conservation, digitisation, and training project which is possible thanks to special funding by the German Federal Foreign Office.

The glass photo plates have been in the process of being digitised since March 2019. This work started with a technical training for scanning and saving the digital copies of the glass negatives. At the same time, experienced project team members continued the restoration of the glass negatives and the cleaning of the flat film negatives independently.

As of autumn 2019, there are plans to complete the digitisation of the glass plates and to index the digital copies in a database in cooperation with the Centre of In-
Industrial Architecture of the 19th and 20th Centuries in Egypt

In the early 19th century, under the reign of Muhammad Ali Pasha (ruled 1805–1848), Egypt began a process of industrial development that was to have a critical influence on the history, economic and social structures, cities, and landscape of Egypt over the last 200 years. Despite their historical significance, the architectural legacies of industrial history in Egypt were until now rarely documented or researched. Economic structural change, de-commissioning, decay, demolition, and lack of public interest also led to an accelerated loss of historic buildings. This equates to a loss of the material and archaeological sources that are needed in order to critically explore this important part of Egypt’s modern history, which is at the same time an integral part of global industrial construction history.

Ralph Bodenstein

The Sugar Factories of Khedive Ismail: the Foundation of an Agro-Industry

In addition to cotton production, a second major agro-industry developed in Egypt in the 19th century: the production of cane sugar. The history of cane sugar in the Nile Valley goes back to Late Antiquity. Muhammad Ali Pasha revived and modernised sugar production, but the critical push came under the khedive Ismail (ruled 1863–1879). He laid the foundations for the modern cane sugar industry in Egypt.

With the end of the American Civil War (1861–1865), the cotton boom also ended for Egypt and Ismail had to open up a new source of income. Accordingly, between 1867 and 1875, he carried out one of the largest integrated agro-industrial development projects in Egypt, and perhaps even in the world: More than 130,000 ha of land from the private property of the khedive Ismail in the 1860s and 70s, primarily based on archival source materials.

Ralph Bodenstein

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Location of the sugar factories between Cairo and Asyut, the associated infrastructure and new irrigation areas of Da’ira Saniyya of khedive Ismail, 1867–1875 (map © R. Bodenstein, based on W. Wilcockes, Egyptian Irrigation, London/New York 1899, pl. XIII).
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