British Museum Expedition to Elkab and Hagr Edfu, 2012

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The expedition took place between 2 February and 4 March 2012, when work was continued at the sites of Elkab and Hagr Edfu.1

Elkab

Vivian Davies

Within the overall programme of documentation and planning, the main focus this season remained on the tomb chapels of Senwosret (early Dynasty 12) and Ahmose-Pennekhbet (probably the reign of Amenhotep III).

The Tomb of Senwosret

Conservation work continued to concentrate on the careful removal of as much as possible of the soot which covers large parts of the interior walls and obscures the painted decoration, while good progress was made in recording the decoration in the clearer areas of the east wall (Fig. 1). Here there is a large scene, mostly destroyed, showing the tomb owner hunting with bow and arrow. Well preserved, in front of him, is the smaller figure of an attendant holding a dog straining on the leash (Fig. 2); below is a ploughing scene showing a drover with two cattle very finely drawn (Fig. 3). To the left, nearer to the back of the chamber, a major offering scene is beginning to emerge. It shows the tomb owner and his wife seated on a chair. Figured prominently beneath them is a pet monkey coloured green (eating an item of food, possibly a fig) (Fig. 4), a motif repeated in a similar scene on the opposite wall and reproduced in other later tomb scenes at Elkab (Davies 2009, 146, n. 28).

The Tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet

The façade of the tomb chapel was cleaned of the bird lime which covered parts of the decoration (Davies and O’Connell 2011b, 12, fig. 8). The fine seated figure of the tomb

1 The work was carried out with the permission of the Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Antiquities. The team comprised Vivian Davies (Director/Epigrapher), Elisabeth O’Connell (Co-Director/Epigrapher), Marcel Marée (Deputy Director/Epigrapher), Lamia El-Hadidy (Senior Conservator), Mohamed Badawy (Conservator), Elise Badouin (Egyptologist), Thomas Beckh (Ceramic Specialist), Anke Blöbaum (Egyptologist), Kathrin Gabler (Archaeologist), Günter Heindl (Archaeologist/Surveyor), Focke Jarecki (Topographer), Catherine Jones (Archaeologist), Eric Miller (Conservator), Joel Paulson (Surveyor), James Rossiter (Photographer), Alena Schmidt (Topographer), Claire Thorne (Epigrapher/Artist) and Susanne Woodhouse (Egyptologist). Our inspectors, very much part of the team, were Jehan Mohamed Salah and Ramadan Hassan Ahmed. We received full support and co-operation from senior officials, Dr Mohamed Bialy and Zanaan Noubi Abdel Salam, and their staff in the Aswan and Edfu Inspectorates. This year’s work at Hagr Edfu was funded by the AEF/USAID administered by the American Research Center in Egypt. The expedition thanks ARCE staff, in particular Amira Khattab and Jane Smythe, for their support.
owner on the left, particularly the well-preserved facial features, can now be fully appreciated (Fig. 5) and compared with the equivalent figure on the right (Davies and O’Connell 2011b, 3, 11–12, figs 6–7; Davies forthcoming).

Within the main tomb chamber, documentation continued of the decoration at the rear. Still in situ in the northwest corner are the remains of a scene showing at least one seated figure, facing outwards, surmounted by an inscription which once contained the titles and name of the tomb’s second owner, Amenhotep-Hapu, followed by those of his father, mother and wife (Fig. 6). There was cleaning and further study of the decorated blocks, fallen from the left façade of the niche (Davies and O’Connell 2011a, 103–104, 119, fig. 15; Davies forthcoming), parts of a scene depicting Amenhotep-Hapu (now missing), and Ahmose-Pennekhbet with his arms raised, adoring Osiris with accompanying text (Fig. 7), the section shown here largely comprising the priestly titles of Amenhotep-Hapu, among them, ‘chief of the altar,’ ‘chief of the second phyle,’ ‘great one of the council’ and ‘scribe of the divine book.’ Ahmose-Pennekhbet is shown wearing on his wrists the large msktw-bracelets, which form part of the ‘gold of honour.’ Additional pieces of the scene were discovered among the debris on the floor.

A start was made in documenting the large number of decorated blocks, fragments and sculptures (all unpublished) deposited in the chapel in recent years, many evidently belonging to other monuments at Elkab. Among these are a section of the lintel missing from the doorway of the tomb of Reneny (Fig. 8) (cf. Tylor 1900, pl. 1, upper); a fragment from one of the interior walls of the tomb of Setau (Fig. 9), which belongs to the large figure on the tomb-chapel’s south wall, right, middle register (Kruchten and Delvaux 2010, 156, 356–57, pls 36–37, 5.2b.2, 386, pl. 66 and 397, pl. 77b); an inscribed offering table, probably from the tomb of Ti-ent-is (Fig. 10) (cf. PM V, 176, ‘Tentis’); part of a stela showing the ‘king’s son [of Kush] Setau’ adoring the goddess Sekhmet (Fig. 11); a section of the right upper body and head with wig lappet and collar, as well as parts of the inscribed back pillar, from a statue of the ‘king’s son of Kush, Hu[y]’ (Figs 12–13); and a very finely worked, though badly damaged, limestone head from a private statue, probably datable on stylistic grounds to the reign of Amenhotep III (Fig. 14).

Investigation was begun of the area above the niche (Fig. 15). Here an aborted burial shaft, part of the funerary complex of the neighbouring tomb of Pahery, appears to have broken through, causing the collapse of the ceiling of the niche. The first chamber of the complex contains a well-made doorway (now blocked), which connects it with Pahery’s tomb chapel (Fig. 16, left corner) (cf. Tylor and Griffith 1894, 1, pl. 1, plan and pl. 6). The sequence of building the two tombs has bearing on their relative dating. A detailed plan is under preparation.

2 To be added to the long list of attestations of Setau, viceroy during the reign of Ramesses II, published by Raedler 2003, 139–46; cf. Török 2009, 174, no. 18.

Hagr Edfu

Elisabeth R. O’Connell

During the 2012 field season, the expedition completed a topographical map and surface survey of pottery at Hagr Edfu and continued to plan a representative sample of architectural features, conserve wall decoration and collate inscriptions in Tombs 1–3 and on the hilltop.

Map

Work to create the first topographical map of Hagr Edfu began in 2005 using real-time kinematic GPS and was completed in 2012. More than 500 rock-cut tombs have been mapped together with mud-brick structures and other features. Today, roads, water distribution systems and settlement surround the site (Figs 17–18) (O’Connell 2010). The value of the map was immediately apparent this season when the mission returned to find new construction over several ancient tombs at the south end of the site (Figs 19–20). The completed map demonstrates a variety of rock-cut tomb types and other architectural features which, together with the surface survey of pottery, can provide the foundations for future targeted work.

Pottery survey

Since 2008, Thomas Beckh has conducted a surface survey of pottery (Fig. 21). The completed survey suggests a preliminary chronology for the development of the site. The earliest identified pottery belongs to the New Kingdom and clusters near Tombs 1 (Sataimau), 2 and 3 in Area 3, which is located at the base of the highest hill, and Areas 9c–d, at the base of the second most prominent hill. While Third Intermediate Period (TIP) and Late Period pottery are common all along the desert escarpment from north to south in Areas 0–9, Graeco-Roman period pottery is concentrated on the two southernmost hills, particularly in Areas 8–10. Evidence for occupation of the site by Christians in Late Antiquity is limited to Hagr Edfu’s most prominent hill, Areas 1–4, where pottery dating from the 5th–9th centuries AD is concentrated. Since this is the location of the site’s largest and best-cut rock-cut tombs, it is not surprising that Christians chose these to reuse.

Adaptive reuse of rock-cut tombs in Late Antiquity

Architectural installations in and around earlier rock-cut tombs in Areas 1–4 have been the subject of study since 2007 (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 54–56; 2011a, 105–106; and 2011b, 4–6; O’Connell forthcoming). Based on pottery, inscriptions and ostraca, this phase of use can be dated to the 5th–9th century AD. In 2012, G. Heindl made final architectural descriptions, refined plans and proposed reconstructions for two mud-brick structures, one in Area 2b with an internal stairway (Figs 22–23) and another in Area 2a with a fired-tile floor and benches along its interior north and south walls (Figs 24–25). In addition to these mud-brick structures, the first chamber of the best preserved rock-cut tomb evidencing Christian reuse—including Coptic inscriptions and crosses painted on the north, west and south walls of the first chamber (Davis and O’Connell 2011b, 4–5, pls 17–22)—was planned in detail and elevations of its walls drawn (Figs 26–27).
Tombs 1–3 (Area 3)
Architectural elevations for all three tombs and their facades were completed. Final collation of the epigraphic documentation was undertaken in Tomb 1 (Sataimau) (Fig. 28). Cleaning and recording of inscriptions and motifs in Tomb 3 continued (Fig. 29).
In 2011, the wire mesh of the gates of Tombs 1–3 was replaced (Davies and O’Connell 2011b, 4). This season, the gates were fortified with steel bars and covered in a second layer of wire mesh, and the doors were fitted with new, stronger locks.¹

'Pyramid' tomb (Area 5)
Work at the ‘pyramid’ tomb began in 2009, continued in 2010 and was completed in 2012. This year’s investigation sought to clarify 1) the approach to the rock-cut tomb and its mud-brick superstructure (the probable pyramid base), and 2) the relationship to surrounding tombs which appear to be oriented towards it. The approach to the tomb was remarkably ‘clean,’ containing only limited quantities of pottery that might be used for dating (analysis pending). The approach consists of an artificial platform created from the stone excavated from the rock-cut tomb (Fig. 30). A test trench through the platform (Fig. 31) contained TIP and Late Period pottery, which may suggest that the tomb should be dated to this period, although it cannot be excluded that this pottery belongs to a subsequent phase of use, perhaps at a time when the rock-cut tombs were reused for burial. The relative lack of material culture may be a result of previous excavation undertaken in the area. Exploration farther east, where the escarpment slopes steeply, was hindered by the wall of the modern Coptic monastery. Investigation of the tombs oriented towards the ‘pyramid’ tomb and numbered 2–9 (Fig. 32, clockwise from south, to west, to north) was stopped in each case by the discovery of modern burials (cf. Fakhry 1947). Like the rock-cut tomb belonging to the apparent pyramid, Tombs 1–8 each had a descending staircase, but only the first two or three steps could be excavated. Four modern funerary inscriptions were read by Inspector Jehan Mohamed Salah. Two were carved on different sandstone slabs ex situ, and two on the pedestaled boulder to the west of the ‘pyramid’ tomb (Fig. 33). The content of the inscriptions clarifies the dates of the modern burials. One reads ‘Osama Zahi 22 June 1997.’

Hilltop
Hieroglyphic and Coptic rock inscriptions on the hilltop were collated and photographed, and plans indicating their locations were drawn (Figs 34–35).

Elkab magazine
Work in the Elkab magazine concentrated on the recording of ostraca and pottery. In addition to the c. 150 ostraca known to have been excavated by an SCA mission at Hagr Edfu in 1981 (Effland 1999, 27–28; Gabra 1991), c. 380 more ostraca can now be attributed to the same excavation at the site. The known corpus of c. 150 ostraca, numbered 81.001–81.154, is comprised principally of Coptic ostraca with a handful of Greek texts that were located in

¹ We thank Abba Moussa and the metal workshop of Dayr Anba Bakhum for assistance in this endeavour and the inspectors of the Ministry of Antiquities for supervising on the day.
the Elkab magazine with the assistance of Ramadan Hassan Ahmed, Inspector of the Elkab magazine, in 2009 and 2011 (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 56; 2011b, 7).

Also comprised of Coptic and a few Greek texts, the group of c. 380 ostraca was stored in a large box together with the numbered ostraca that had been located in 2011. That they are related to the corpus known to be from Hagr Edfu is suggested by the comparable forms and wares of the pot sherds themselves, by the content of the texts inscribed upon them, mainly letters containing names and titles, and the fact that some share the same hand (Fig. 36). Indeed the relationship between the corpora is proven by physical joins (Fig. 37). In the 2012 season, the original numbered corpus was cleaned, photographed and collated for publication. A photographic record of the new corpus was made, and it will be the subject of future study by Anke Blöbaum.

In addition to the Coptic (and Greek) ostraca, the box in which they were found contained one hieratic and eight demotic ostraca. The possibility that these too were excavated at Hagr Edfu cannot be excluded. Preliminary study by Katrin Gabler suggests that the hieratic ostracon contains a hymn to Horus that uses a hymn to Thebes as its model (Fig. 38). The model dates to Dynasty 18, but the ostracon in the Elkab magazine, for palaeographic reasons, can be dated to the Ramesside period. The text belongs to a corpus of so-called ‘praises of cities,’ of which about fifteen examples are known at present. The ostracon would be the first hymn dedicated to Horus and the first dedicated to a city other than Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis or Pi-Ramses. Collation and further study to confirm the contents and provenance are planned.

Pottery also from earlier SCA excavations at Hagr Edfu was drawn and studied by Thomas Beckh. In particular, fragments of ‘Hathor jars’ discovered in his surface survey of pottery in the vicinity of Tomb 3 (Area 3) at Hagr Edfu are complemented by a series of complete vessels excavated by the SCA mission and mainly registered in 1975 (Fig. 39). These jars, probably used in a ritual context (Seiler 2006), considerably expand the corpus of known jars and are suggestive of cult activities that took place at Hagr Edfu in the New Kingdom. These objects will form the basis of a forthcoming study by Dr Beckh.

Frontispiece: Edfu, view west over Tell Edfu to Hagr Edfu in the distance (Photo: James Rossiter).

Bibliography


Fig. 1: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, interior, cleaning and documentation of east wall (Photo: W. V. Davies).
Fig. 2: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, detail of hunting scene with dogs (Claire Thorne).

Fig. 3: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, detail of ploughing scene (Claire Thorne).
Fig. 4: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, detail of offering scene with figure of monkey (Claire Thorne).
Fig. 5: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, façade, left jamb, figure of tomb owner (Photo: W. V. Davies).
Fig. 6: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, interior, west wall, inscription in northwest corner (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 7: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, interior, detached sections of niche-façade (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 9: Elkab, fragment of decoration from tomb of Setau (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 8: Elkab, section of lintel inscription from tomb of Reneny (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 10: Elkab, offering table, probably from tomb of Ti-ent-is (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 11: Elkab, part of stela of the viceroy Setau (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 12: Elkab, part of statue of the viceroy Huy (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 13: Elkab, joined sections of the back pillar of Huy’s statue bearing his title and name (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 14: Elkab, part of the head of a private statue (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 15: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, interior, investigating area above niche (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 16. Elkab, funerary complex of tomb of Pahery, first chamber (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 17: Hagr Edfu, view north, the completion of a new road to the west means that the site is now surrounded on all sides by settlement (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 18: Hagr Edfu, view south (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 19: Hagr Edfu, view east, at-risk rock-cut tombs recorded in 2010 and located at the southwest end of the site and adjacent to the modern road (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 20: Hagr Edfu, view east, new construction recorded in 2012 and located over rock-cut tombs (cf. Fig. 19) (Photo: E. R. O’Connell).
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Fig. 23: Hagr Edfu, Area 2b, plan, section and possible reconstruction of mud-brick structure with internal stairway (Günter Heindl).
Fig. 24: Hagr Edfu, Area 2a, view northwest to mud-brick structure with fired-tile floor on the escarpment (a); view southeast, with doorway, fired-tile floor and bench along the south wall (b) (Photos: James Rossiter).
Fig. 25: Hagr Edfu, Area 2a, plan, section and possible reconstruction of mud-brick structure with fired-tile floor and benches along north and south interior walls (Günter Heindl).
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Fig. 28: Hagr Edfu, Area 3, collation of inscriptions, pottery drawing and measuring elevations in Tomb 1 (Satumau) (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 29: Hagr Edfu, Area 3, cleaning and recording of inscriptions and motifs in Tomb 3 (Photo: James Rossiter).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_19/2012davies_oconnell.aspx
Fig. 30: Hagr Edfu, Area 5, view east over the 'pyramid' tomb with the artificial platform that forms the approach visible at left (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 31: Hagr Edfu, Area 5, view west, test trench cut through the artificial platform yields small quantities of TIP and Late Period pottery (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 32: Hagr Edfu, Area 5, plan of the ‘pyramid’ tomb and surrounding rock-cut tombs (Günter Heindl).
Fig. 33: Hagr Edfu, Area 5, team members examine modern Arabic funerary inscriptions on the pedestaled boulder west of the ‘pyramid’ tomb (a); detail of inscription (b) (Photo: E. R. O’Connell).
Fig. 34: Hagr Edfu, view east, hilltop, recording rock inscriptions (Photo: E. R. O’Connell).

Fig. 35: Hagr Edfu, plan of sandstone outcrop with placements of hieroglyphic and Coptic rock inscriptions (Günter Heindl).
Fig. 36: Elkab magazine, collation of Coptic ostraca (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 37: Elkab magazine, joining fragments of a Coptic ostracon (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 38: Elkab magazine, hieratic ostrakon (Photo: James Rossiter).

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Fig. 39: Elkab magazine, ‘Hathor jar’ (Photo: James Rossiter).