British Museum Expedition to Elkab and Hagr Edfu, 2010

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The latest British Museum expedition to Upper Egypt took place between 30 January and 4 March 2010, when work was continued at the sites of Elkab and Hagr Edfu.¹

Elkab

Vivian Davies

In addition to continued study of the tombs of Sobeknakht and Renseneb, the team undertook the following work:²

Tomb of Bebi³ (Second Intermediate Period)

Documentation was begun of the inscriptions on the façade of the tomb-chapel (Fig. 1), hitherto unrecorded. The lintel of the doorway is decorated with four horizontal lines of hieroglyphs and the jambs with two columns each, all in sunk relief. The text on the lintel, much damaged in the centre, consists of an offering-formula for the tomb-owner and includes the names of members of his family including his mother ‘royal ornament Satrenutet’ and a son, ‘Neferhotep’ (Fig. 2). The texts on the jambs consist in each case of first-person statements by the tomb-owner. The ending of that on the left is much eroded (Fig. 3) but is now established as ‘I shall be in the following of my god, in the praise of Wenenofer.’⁴

Tomb of Senwosret⁵ (early Dynasty 12)

Cleaning and recording continued, with particular attention paid again to the west wall. The decoration here, all in paint and of fine workmanship, though faded and damaged, includes a scene of huntsmen returning from an expedition, armed with bows and other weaponry,

¹ The work was carried out with the kind permission of Secretary-General Dr Zahi Hawass and the Permanent Committee of the SCA. The team comprised Vivian Davies (Director/Epigrapher), Elisabeth R. O’Connell (Co-Director/Epigrapher), Marcel Marée (Deputy Director/Epigrapher), Lamia El-Hadidy (Senior Conservator), Mohamed Badawy (Conservator), Daniel Antoine (Physical Anthropologist), Thomas Beckh (Ceramic Specialist), Anke Blöbaum (Egyptologist), Robert Demaré (Epigrapher), Marisa Fischer (Surveyor Assistant), Kathrin Gabler (Archeology Assistant), Günter Heindl (Archaeologist/Surveyor), Focke Jarecki (Surveyor), Joel Paulson (Surveyor), Ilona Regulski (Epigrapher), James Rossiter (Photographer), Alena Schmidt (Surveyor), Claire Thorne (Epigrapher), Susanne Woodhouse (Epigrapher). Our SCA inspector was Osama Ismail Ahmed, who was very helpful throughout, as were the senior officials in the Aswan and Edfu Inspectorates, Dr Mohamed Bialy and Zanaan Noubi Abdel Salam.

² The British Museum’s recording project has been generously supported over two seasons by Dr. Ahmed El-Mokadem in the name of his brother, Mohamed El-Mokadem, and is designated as the ‘Mohamed El-Mokadem Project.’

³ PM V, 184, no. 8 bis; Davies in Davies and O’Connell 2009, 52, 58–59, figs. 1–2.

⁴ Cf. Vernus 1988, 147–48, D.

⁵ PM V, 184; Davies in Davies and O’Connell 2009, 52–53, 60–61, figs. 3–5.
and accompanied by dogs (Fig. 4). One huntsman, identified as ‘his brother, beloved of him, Sehetepibef,’ is shown leading a captured gazelle on a leash (Fig. 5).

There was further recording of the many loose fragments which originally made up the façade. The most substantial of these is a section of the door-lintel, which is decorated with horizontal lines of sunk hieroglyphs (Fig. 6), part of an inscription with biographical content, ending with a dedication by the tomb-owner’s son. It is unclear at present how many of these fragments fit together.

Stela of Ipusoneb (early Dynasty 18)
Ipusoneb’s tomb-chapel, yet to be planned, bears in the centre of its rear wall a fine stela in painted relief (Fig. 7), its top now gone (max. width 73cm). It shows the tomb-owner, seated on a lion-legged chair before a pile of offerings, facing the standing figures of his son, Amenmose, and the latter’s wife, ‘mistress of the house, Kem,’ respectively. Both father and son have the military title, $w\text{w} n hmf$, ‘soldier of his Person,’ the son evidently following in the footsteps of his father, as in the case of their contemporary, the famous soldier, Ahmose Son-of-Ibana, whose tomb is situated next door. At the bottom right, three other children or grandchildren are shown, named Sensoneb (female), Senemnetjer (male) and [...] uu-ra (female), respectively. At the bottom left (Fig. 8) is an offering-formula arranged in several horizontal lines (the first part now mostly lost), ‘for the $ka$ of the soldier of his Person Ipusoneb, justified before Osiris. It is the soldier of his Person Amenmose who causes to live the name of his father Ipusoneb, justified before Osiris, the great god, ruler of the west.’ The figures are in shallow raised relief; the hieroglyphs are incised and relatively crude by comparison. The spelling of the title $w\text{w}$ here, $\text{[...]}$, is unusual.

Tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet (or Pennekheb) (mid-Dynasty 18)
A new ground plan of the tomb-chapel was made (Fig. 9) and photographic documentation of the decoration carried out. The plan is provisional, pending the removal of the sand and debris which carpets the floor inside and the courtyard outside. The chapel, one of the largest in the Elkab necropolis and in poor condition internally, consists of a long rectangular chamber, with vaulted roof, and a smaller rectangular niche at its inner end, now collapsed and much damaged (Fig. 10). It is entered through a central doorway in the façade. There appear to be two low doorways in the east wall, only the tops of which can be seen as they are filled with debris. It is unclear at the moment whether they are original or secondary.

There is decoration, in sunk and raised relief, on the façade, now mostly obscured by the modern gate (Fig. 11), and on the thicknesses of the doorway (Figs. 12–13), which are very damaged. The west thickness (Fig. 12) bears in the upper register the well-known biographical inscriptions which recount Ahmose’s career in the service of the kings of early Dynasty 18. There is also unfinished decoration, previously unrecorded, near the rear west corner of the first chamber and on several fallen blocks (Figs. 14–15), some of which may have come from the left façade of the niche. These latter bear the remains of a scene showing Ahmose and

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6 PM V, 183, no. 6.  
7 Cf. Urk. IV, 996, 1.  
8 PM V, 176–77, no. 2.
members of his family worshipping the god Osiris seated in a shrine. On a slab detached from
the west wall (Fig. 14), one of the entourage, a man named Amenhotep, is shown in the garb
of a *sennu* -priest. The workmanship is of excellent quality. For the reading of Ahmose’s second
name as *Pn-Nḥt*, ‘Pennekhbet,’ see Vandersleyen 1971, 22, but note that in one instance, on
the left façade of the tomb (Fig. 16), the name is written without the *t* and with the town-
determinative as *Pn-Nḥ*, ‘Pennekheb.’

It is clear from the scenes and inscriptions that: (1) the tomb-chapel was decorated by a
descendant of Ahmose, identified as ‘his brother’ (possibly a great grand-nephew), named
‘Amenhotep called Hapu,’ who was also buried in the tomb together with his family; (2) a
number of the texts are copies of earlier originals.10

The content and style of the decoration may suggest a date within the reign of Amenhotep
III. Further study is intended.

**Hagr Edfu**

*Elisabeth R. O’Connell*

Since 2001, the expedition has concentrated work on a cluster of three pharaonic tombs and,
from 2005, the topographic mapping of tomb openings at Hagr Edfu (Davies 2006, 2008,
2009). Documentation of Late Antique remains and other features at the site commenced
in 2007 (Davies and O’Connell 2009).11 Over the past decade of British Museum work at
the site, the adverse effects of encroaching settlement and water distribution systems have
become increasingly apparent. Modern settlement, once confined to villages located along the
cultivation to the north and south, now wraps around the antiquities site (Figs. 17–18). A large
reservoir located to the west and extending the length of the site now irrigates ever-increasing
plots of arable land, and is causing the water table to rise. Thus, recent BM work has focused
on completing the topographical of the site and prioritizing features for documentation and
study. The 2010 fieldwork season at Hagr Edfu was generously supported by an Antiquities
Endowment Fund (AEF) grant administered by the American Research Center in Egypt
(ARCE) for a project entitled ‘Hagr Edfu: Conservation through Documentation (Phase
One)’ (O’Connell 2010).

**Topographical map**

Good progress was made on the real-time kinematic differential GPS topographical map of
the main hills constituting Hagr Edfu (Fig. 19). This season, 142 tomb entrances were plotted
for a total of 464. The map is scheduled for completion in the 2011 season.

**Tomb 1**

The epigraphic work in the tomb of Sataimau (Tomb 1) is nearly complete, but new discoveries
continue to be made. The identification of one fragmentary and much abraded painted scene

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11 The Yale Egyptological Institute generously funded the documentation of Late Antique remains in 2008 and
2009.
at the east end of the north wall has long eluded the team’s epigraphers. With careful copying it was at last recognized to depict a calving scene (Fig. 20).

_Tomb 3_
Conservation team members continued to clean the walls of Tomb 3 allowing epigraphers to record inscriptions and secondary motifs systematically (Fig. 21). Wasps’ nests, soot and damp constitute considerable challenges for recording Tomb 3’s superimposed inscriptions and secondary motifs. Hieratic visitors’ inscriptions recorded by R. Demarée suggest that visitors to the tomb understood it as a temple (hwt-nTr) of Isis by Dynasty 18; later inscriptions and secondary motifs attest its continuing cultic significance (Davies 2009, 26). Further work is intended to make a full record of the tomb.

_Pyramid’ tomb_
In 2009, rubbish from modern settlement was removed from a rock-cut tomb with three burial emplacements and the chambers were measured and planned (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 54 and pl. 10). In 2010, the expedition focused on clarifying the character of the mudbrick superstructure located directly above the tomb and the area around it (Figs. 22–23). Cleaning supported the identification of the superstructure as a probable pyramid base. Constructed around a boulder, the brickwork is stepped to follow the east-west slope of the hill. On both the north and south walls of the superstructure, patches of extant white plaster coat the bricks (Fig. 24–25). To the south of the superstructure, at a distance of 50cm, four ‘sausage jars’ were discovered in the course of cleaning (Fig. 25). Discolouration of the sand and fragments of termite-eaten wood suggest the the presence of a coffin, which may have been associated with the jars. Dating c. eighth-seventh century BC, the jars contain embalming materials in accordance with their well-attested function (Fig. 26). Two of the four jars were registered in the Elkab magazine.

Located in the saddle between two hills, the ‘pyramid’ tomb is surrounded by other rock-cut tomb entrances, two of which are surmounted by a pedastaled boulder (Fig. 23). None of the other tombs in the vicinity evidence remains of mudbrick superstructures, but they share the trapezoidal shape of the ‘pyramid’ tomb’s rock-cut entrance and may be contemporary. Further work is needed to establish the approach to the complex.

_Pylon ‘tomb’_
A large rock-cut entrance located on a low terrace near the cultivation leads to a well-cut, sloping corridor that terminates in an irregularly shaped chamber (Fig. 27). The substructure has been especially affected by the rising water table; the damp is disintegrating the walls and destabilizing the rock. Efforts to refine the plan by pumping out excess water were not repaid and must await the identification and procurement of a more powerful pump (Fig. 28). The well-built stone pylon fronting the complex and its approach will be the object of future study (Fig. 29).

_Late Antique complex (Area 4)_
A rock-cut tomb repurposed in Late Antiquity was cleaned and planned (Fig. 30). Although

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12 Following T. Beckh’s 2010 report citing Aston 1996, fig. 221, p. 323.
a fragment of a 1990 Arabic newspaper demonstrated that the chamber had been ‘cleared’ prior to the British Museum Expedition’s work at Hagr Edfu, intact features indicate that the space was an active part of a Late Antique complex consisting of five mudbrick rooms. Accessed through one of these rooms, the original rock-cut entrance was partially blocked up with stones and fired bricks, and the reappointed entrance was fitted with mud plastered stairs (Fig. 31). Disturbed finds included pottery (Fig. 32), sections of palm-bark fiber matting, a wooden door handle and, perhaps, a fragment of the locking mechanism (Fig. 33).

The south hills

Up until 2010, British Museum Expedition work at the site focused on the northern hills of Hagr Edfu. This season, the expedition’s topographers concentrated on mapping the southern hills. This area is especially vulnerable to modern settlement with many tombs along the lowest terraces currently used for depositing rubbish.

Along the eastern faces of the southern hills, D. M. Bailey’s 2007 preliminary surface survey of pottery suggested first to fifth century AD activity (unpublished report). Over the entrance of one rock-cut tomb at the southern limit of the site, a Roman period Greek inscription carved on a prepared surface reads ‘Harpokration, son of Hierax, farewell’ (Figs. 34 and 35). The name and patronymic of the deceased—meaning ‘Horus-the-Child’ and ‘Falcon,’ respectively—are fitting for an individual from the Edfu region, the cultic life of which centered on the Temple of Horus at Edfu.

Elkab magazine

In the 2009 season, pottery and ostraca from earlier SCA excavations at Hagr Edfu were identified in the Elkab magazine (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 56–57). In 2010, the team returned to the magazine in order to record a selection of pottery (Fig. 36), and clean and study Coptic ostraca (Fig. 37). Wooden boxes were commissioned from Dayr Anba Bakhum at Hagr Edfu and the expedition’s Senior Conservator, L. El-Hadidy, working with the Edfu Inspectorate Magazine conservators, lined them with foam and acid free tissue before placing the ostraca inside (Fig. 38). A. Blöbaum will publish the ostraca.

By targeting a range of features for documentation, the chronological horizons of use and reuse at Hagr Edfu are gradually coming into focus. AEF funding for a second phase of the project entitled, ‘Hagr Edfu: Conservation through Documentation (Phase Two)’ has been awarded for a planned field season to commence in January 2011.

Bibliography


Fig. 1: Elkab, tomb of Bebi, recording of façade inscriptions in progress (Photo: L. El-Hadidy).

Fig. 2: Elkab, tomb of Bebi, detail of lintel inscription (Photo: W. V. Davies).
Fig. 3: Elkab, tomb of Bebi, detail of inscription on left jamb (Photo: W. V. Davies).
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Fig. 5: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, detail of hunting scene on west wall (Photo: W. V. Davies).
Fig. 6: Elkab, tomb of Senwosret, inscribed block from lintel of doorway, detail (Photo: W. V. Davies).
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Fig. 9: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekheb, ground-plan (Günter Heindl).

Fig. 10: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekheb, interior (Photo: W. V. Davies).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_16/davies_oconnell.aspx
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http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmae1/issue_16/davies_occonnell.aspx
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Fig. 35: Hagr Edfu, Greek inscription over tomb entrance, detail (Photo: James Rossiter).
Fig. 36: Elkab magazine, Isis pot from SCA expedition to Hagr Edfu (Photo: James Rossiter).

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_journals/bmsaes/issue_16/davies_occonnell.aspx
Fig. 37: Elkab magazine, ostraca from SCA expedition to Hagr Edfu (Photo: James Rossiter).

Fig. 38: Elkab magazine, ostraca rehoused in new boxes lined with acid-free tissue (Photo: Lamia El-Hadidy).