British Museum Expedition to Elkab and Hagr Edfu, 2011

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The latest British Museum expedition to Upper Egypt took place between 29 January and 7 March 2011, when work was continued at the sites of Elkab and Hagr Edfu.¹

Elkab

W. Vivian Davies

The work of recording, conservation and protection continued on the tombs of Sobeknakht, Renseneb, Bebi, Senwosret, and Ahmose-Pennekhbet, as did the more general mapping of the necropolis.

The Tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet

The primary focus of the season was the replacement of the old metal gate, which protected the façade and entrance of the tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, with a new, more effective gate and grill, a regrettable but necessary measure. The old gate (Fig. 1) was placed too close to the façade, offering limited protection, and was relatively easy to climb over. It also prevented full viewing of the decoration on the jambs. The new, stronger gate encloses the façade entirely, preventing, it is hoped, access from above, and has sufficient depth to permit reasonably unhindered sight of the decoration from within (Fig. 5).

The project took several weeks to plan and prepare, but the actual removal and replacement of the gate were completed very efficiently in one working day (Figs 3 and 4).² During a break in the proceedings, while the façade was unencumbered and free of the shadow cast by the grill-struts (Fig. 2), opportunity was taken to make a photographic record of the decoration on the jambs and thicknesses of the doorway.

¹ The work was carried out with the kind permission of the Permanent Committee of the SCA. The team comprised W. Vivian Davies (Director/Epigrapher), Elisabeth R. O’Connell (Co-Director/Epigrapher), Marcel Marée (Deputy Director/Epigrapher), Lamia El-Hadidy (Senior Conservator), Mohamed Badawy (Conservator), Thomas Beckh (Ceramic Specialist), Kathrin Gabler (Archaeology Assistant), Günter Heindl (Archaeologist/Surveyor), Elke Mählitz (Archaeology Assistant), Edina Petersmarck (Surveyor Assistant), Claire Thorne (Artist/Epigrapher). Our SCA inspector was Ramadan Hassan 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. Thanks are also due to the American Research Center in Egypt for their support and cooperation.

² ¹ March 2011. The work of constructing and fitting the gate was carried out by a team from the metal workshop of the monastery at Hagr Edfu. We are most grateful for the co-operation and help in this matter of Father Moussa El-Pakhoumi. Assistance on the day was provided by personnel of the SCA under the supervision of our inspector, Ramadan Hassan Ahmed.
It can now be seen clearly that both jambs are decorated with similar scenes and inscriptions, finely done in sunk relief, comprising an offering-scene at the bottom surmounted by four vertical columns of large hieroglyphs, each an offering-formula for the tomb-owner. The scene on the right (Figs 6 and 7) shows Ahmose-Pennekhbet seated on a chair before a table of offerings, holding a stave and sceptre, wearing a shoulder-length wig, short beard, long skirt, and a shebyu-necklace over a broad collar, the necklace being part of the ‘gold of honour’ awarded to him by the king in recognition of his deeds on the battlefield. He faces left towards a standing figure (his head and right arm now missing), identified in the accompanying columns of inscription, which reads: ‘Making a botep-di-nesut, pure, pure, by his brother, who causes to live his name, first king’s son of Nekhbet, assistant [ … ] [Amenhotep called] Hapu.’ A similar offering-scene occupies the equivalent position on the left jamb (Fig. 8). The long offering-texts above the scenes include the major titles of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, including ‘treasurer,’ ‘god’s father beloved of the god,’ and ‘first royal herald,’ the last two attested for him here for the first time.

Also previously unnoted are two garden-scenes located on the outer thicknesses of the doorway. The best preserved is the scene on the right (Fig. 9). This shows figures of the ‘scribe of the divine book, (Amenhotep-) Hapu,’ and his wife, ‘mistress of the house, Mutnesut,’ seated under the left side of a huge sycamore-tree, facing outwards towards a standing figure holding offerings before them. An inscription accompanying the standing figure reads: ‘for your kas, a coming out before Nekhbet, by his son, wab-priest Ked.’ The scene is flanked by columns of inscription, now incomplete, probably representing speech by the sycamore-goddess. The outer column ends with the words: ‘all things] good and pure at the entrance of your tomb.’ The inner column preserves the end of an offering-formula: ‘upon the offering-table for the ka of the treasurer Ahmose and his brother who causes to live his name, Hapu.’

It is evident from this scene that the tomb belonged not only to Ahmose-Pennekhbet but also to his descendent, Amenhotep-Hapu, a shared ownership further confirmed by a scene on the left inner thickness (Fig. 10). Here Amenhotep-Hapu, his wife, and five children (two daughters and three sons) are shown proceeding into the tomb. The two daughters are identified respectively as ‘his daughter, chantress of Nekhbet, Usy,’ and ‘his daughter, chantress of Nekhbet, Henutnefret,’ the three sons as ‘his son, wab-priest of Nekhbet, Seked,’ ‘his son, wab-priest of Nekhbet, Khaemwaset,’ and ‘his son, wab-priest of Nekhbet, Djehutymose.’ The fashion of dress and figural shape of the female images shown here combined with the style of portraiture adopted for the features of Ahmose-Pennekhbet (Figs 7 and 8) are consistent with a dating for the tomb-decoration within the reign of Amenhotep III.

It is hoped to continue recording of the decoration and investigation of the interior of the chapel during the next season.

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3 The height of the seated figure is approx. 40cm.
4 The height of the standing figure is 19cm.
5 See Davies in Davies and O’Connell 2011, 104, and Davies, forthcoming.
The tomb of Ahmose Son-of-Ibana: a correction

In a recent paper on the tomb of Ahmose Son-of-Ibana (Elkab no. 5), I gave an account of the members of his family figured and identified in the tomb, which was summarised in a family tree, covering six generations. I regret that the tree as published contains an error relating to the status within the lineage of Itireri, wrongly indicating that he was the son of Ahmose Son-of-Ibana (as well as being the husband of the latter’s two daughters Satamun and Kem). I take the opportunity here to publish a corrected tree with Itireri identified as Ahmose Son-of-Ibana’s son-in-law (Fig. 11).

Hagr Edfu
Elisabeth R. O’Connell

In the 2011 season, the expedition continued to conserve wall decoration, record and collate inscriptions, draw architectural plans and survey pottery.

Tombs 1–3 (Area 3)
Collation of the decoration in the New Kingdom tomb of Sataimau (Tomb 1) is nearing completion with excellent results. In Tomb 2, architectural elevations of the interior walls continued to be drawn. In Tomb 3, conservation team members continued to remove soot from the interior walls in advance of further epigraphic study (Fig. 12). The wire mesh protecting all three tombs was replaced (Fig. 13).

Adaptive reuse of rock-cut tombs in Late Antiquity (Areas 1 and 2)
Investigation of ancient rock-cut tombs adapted and reused in Late Antiquity continued in Areas 1 and 2, where architectural plans were refined and copies of Christian dipinti were collated. Most of the tombs in Areas 1 and 2 are inaccessible due to a combination of collapsed ceilings and wind-blown sand.

Area 2b, Tomb D provides a welcome case study because the rock is relatively stable and the interior whitewashed and decorated (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 55). The architecture of the original tomb consists of two large rooms, the second of which has two small chambers extending from its west and south walls (Fig. 14). The entrance to the tomb is fitted with emplacements for a lintel, door sockets and a plastered mud brick step. A round hole in the façade (max. diam. 25cm) functions as a window, admitting a low, diffuse light (Figs 15 and 16). Removal of wind-blown sand from the first chamber of Tomb D confirmed that the rock-cut tomb had been ‘cleared’ by earlier excavators. Nevertheless, several layers of floor plaster evidence multiple phases of use consistent with habitation. Future analysis of pottery embedded in the floor layers may suggest dates of occupation.

On the walls of the first room of Area 2b, Tomb D, a programme of dipinti consists of six crosses and two framed Coptic texts. Painted on a white earth ground, the texts and all

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6 Davies 2009a, 151–52, 172, fig. 13.
7 Note also the presence now of the more correct triangular brackets as opposed to square brackets in the rendering of the name of Ahmose Son-of-Ibana.
8 I thank C. Thorne for converting epigraphic drawings to a digital format (Figs 17–22, 24, 34).
but one of the crosses are painted in combinations of red and yellow ochre. The two texts are located in the centre of the north and south walls, respectively (Figs 17 and 18). Today, both texts are largely destroyed by a natural fissure running north-south through the first room of the tomb. Nevertheless, *pnode* (‘God’) can be read in the first line of the text on the south wall. The texts are framed by guilloche borders, painted using the same technique documented on various media at Western Thebes (Görecki 2010), and common in 10th and 11th century AD manuscript illumination at Hāgr Edfu. Each framed Coptic text is flanked by two crosses. On the east wall of the first room, two additional crosses are painted at the centre and south end, while a doorway, leading to the tomb’s second chamber and framed by a red painted motif, is cut through the north end of the wall. The majority of the crosses have elaborate, vegetal designs criss-crossing and encircling them (Fig. 19). The exception is a cross located at the west end of the north wall; painted in black, it consists of a knotted design (Fig. 20). Incised in the plaster at the east end of the south wall and below a red and yellow cross is a rough Coptic graffito reading *anok Stephanos* (‘I am Stephan’) (Fig. 21). In the second rock-cut chamber of the tomb, a red and yellow ochre cross is painted directly on the stone wall over the entrance of a large niche in the west wall (Fig. 22).

In Area 1, located to the north along the desert escarpment at the limit of Late Antique activity, is a terrace of rock-cut tombs planned in 2007 (Fig. 23). In the second tomb from the left, on the original prepared and white-washed surface are two extant phases of decoration (Fig. 24). The original configuration of the tomb is difficult to reconstruct due to the collapse of the ceiling in the first chamber and the instability of the rock precludes excavation. At the left-hand side of the surface, the painter took advantage of the bevelled edge of what once may have been the upper part of a stela carved in relief. A depiction of a jewel-encrusted cross occupies the centre of the demarcated area and a vegetal motif extends up its two sides. Above the apparent stela the painted Coptic text reads, ‘The Lord, Jesus,’ and in the upper left and right quadrants formed by the arms of the cross, ‘Jesus,’ and ‘Christ, Tamina,’ respectively are painted. The stone at the centre is badly fractured and the surface is abraded. Nevertheless, patches of extant painting indicate that the vegetal design continues, framing an inscription (± 6 lines) of which there are now only traces of letters. At the bottom edge is written ‘Dios, the sinner’ in a confident script. *A Dios,* perhaps ‘Apa Dios,’ appears in an inscription in the rock shelter on the hill-top (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 56, and below). A thick layer of mud plaster covers the right hand side, probably concealing additional painting belonging to the first phase of decoration. The thick mud plaster is covered with a fragmentary thin yellow plaster painted with red-orange designs in thick brush strokes. Upon this surface are three modern Arabic inscriptions in pencil, ‘Allah,’ the personal name ‘Abdallah,’ and a third as yet illegible.

South along the base of the escarpment, also in Area 1, is a fired tile installation set over the mouth of one in a row of three small rock-cut tomb (Fig. 25). A rectangular basin was constructed of fired tiles, each measuring 29 x 15 x 5 cm. The interior and exterior dimensions

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9 For Latin crosses of similar proportions painted on the interior of the Ptolemaic period Temple of Hathor/church of the holy martyr Isidorus (AD 7–8th century) at Deir el-Medina, Western Thebes, see Heurtel 2004, pl. 15. These do not have the same vegetal motifs.

10 I thank our Inspector, Ramadan Hassan Ahmed, for these readings.
of the basin measure 70 x 101 cm and 102 x 133 cm. The interior surface of the basin is coated in an *opus signinum* and patches survive on the upper surfaces of the tiles indicating that the feature was waterproofed. A drain, 5 cm in diameter, is located in the south wall of the basin. It is blocked by a textile plug, which may have served either to keep the contents of the basin from draining out, or to filter a liquid as it passed through (Fig. 26). The drain leads to a fired brick lined hole, which is also plastered and drops into a partially extant pottery jar located just above the entrance to the small rock-cut tomb.¹¹

*Pyramid* tomb (Area 5)

Investigation of the so-called ‘pyramid’ tomb began in 2009 (Davies and O’Connell 2009, 54, figs 10 and 11). Like other tombs in the immediate vicinity, the rock-cut substructure is accessed through a trapezoidal entrance with a stepped corridor (Figs 27–30).¹² At the base of the stairs, mud brick blocking, extant to eight courses, defines the limit of a second, level corridor that leads into the burial chamber comprised of a trapezoidal room with rock-cut burial emplacements on three sides (Fig. 31). Above, the mud brick super-structure, a probable pyramid base was built around a boulder core and the surface whitewashed (Figs 27, 28 and 30).

In 2010, the area around the ‘pyramid’ tomb was cleared and recorded (O’Connell 2010, 5, cover image). To the south of the superstructure was discovered termite eaten wood and white plaster that may have originally belonged to a coffin and four ‘sausage jars,’ containing embalming materials (Davies and O’Connell 2011, 105, figs 22–26). These jars and the preliminary analysis of surface pottery in Area 5 suggest a Third Intermediate Period date.

Hill-top

While the flat surfaces of the hill-top summit of Hagr Edfu, overlooking the cultivation, are today covered by modern Arabic visitors’ inscriptions, a sandstone outcrop and other surfaces facing the desert to the west bear extant ancient inscriptions (Fig. 32). This season, team members revisited hieroglyphic and Coptic inscriptions that had been systematically recorded in 2007. Hieroglyphic rock inscriptions range in date from as early as the Old Kingdom to the Late Period and name various individuals (Fig. 33). Coptic rock inscriptions contain *nomina sacra* and personal names such as Apa Dios (Fig. 34), Epiphanius and Isaac. In order to record the locations of the inscriptions, a plan of the outcrop and the immediate area was measured and drawn.

¹¹ Cf. a broken pottery vessel used to pipe in a granary in the Theban Necropolis, in Winlock and Crum 1926, 42, pl. 10.

¹² For rock-cut tombs with trapezoidal entrances and a similar sequence of descending stepped-corridor, corridor and burial chamber surmounted by (sandstone encased) pyramids, see the Dynasty 25 royal tombs at Nuri, Nubia, e.g., Nu. 35 (Dunham 1955, 15–19) and at el-Kurru, e.g., Ku. 16 (Dunham 1950, 60–63). Unlike the Hagr Edfu ‘pyramid’ tomb, the rock-cut doorways are rounded, the ceilings vaulted and there are no mastabas with burial emplacements. For private tombs of much rougher construction, but with similar plans at Hillat el-Arab, see Vincentelli 2006. I thank my colleagues D. Welshy and J. Anderson for these references.
Elkab magazine

In 2009 Coptic ostraca excavated by an Egyptian mission to Hagr Edfu in the 1980s were identified in the Elkab magazine and, in 2010, A. Bloebaum joined the mission in order to study them. In 2011, Ramadan Hassan Ahmed, Inspector of the Elkab magazine, located a box of unprovenanced ostraca and other objects (Fig. 35). The contents happily proved to contain additional Hagr Edfu ostraca. A selection was photographed and further work is intended in the 2012 season.

Bibliography

Fig. 1: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, façade with old gate in place (Photo: W. V. Davies).

Fig. 2: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, façade with gate removed (Photo: W. V. Davies).
Fig. 3: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, installation of new gate in progress (Photo: W. V. Davies).

Fig. 4: Elkab, tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet, installation of new gate, almost complete (Photo: W. V. Davies).
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Fig. 25: Hagr Edfu, Area 1, fired tile installation, view east (Photo: J. Rossiter).

Fig. 26: Hagr Edfu, Area 1, fired tile installation, detail of drain with textile plug (Photo: J. Rossiter).
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Fig. 30: Hagr Edfu, Area 5, ‘pyramid’ tomb (Section: G. Heindl).
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Fig. 31b: View of second, level, corridor, and entrance to burial chamber.

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Fig. 31e: View of second, level corridor and mud brick blocking.

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Fig. 34: Hagr Edfu, rock inscription, sandal containing the name ‘Apa Dios’ (E. R. O’Connell).

Fig. 35: Elkab magazine, recently identified box containing ostraca, including some Coptic ostraca from Hagr Edfu (Photo: E. R. O’Connell).