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Keeper, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The Museum has long been renowned for its collections, displays and research on the ancient cultures of Egypt and Nubia. In the following pages, we explore recent and ongoing fieldwork projects from the Fifth Nile Cataract to the Mediterranean, and from exhibitions in London to the conservation of papyri.

Yet the British Museum is not one of ancient cultures, but rather all human cultures from deep prehistory to the present. We are now increasing our focus on the longer history of the Nile Valley, beyond ancient times. The exhibition *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs* allowed visitors to trace the transformation of an ancient land into the vibrant world of Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities who coexisted, but also came into conflict. The exhibition, despite ending with the fall of the Fatimid empire in AD 1171, had a clear modern resonance.

We are also seeking to research and collect objects from 20th- and 21st-century Egypt. The postcard collection – and the stories it can tell about national identity, tourism and social history – is highlighted here, and next year sees the first British Museum Curator of Modern Egypt start collecting. Meanwhile, through the Egypt Documentation Project, supported by the Arcadia Fund, the Museum has a staff member based full-time in Egypt for the first time, overseeing the training of Ministry of Antiquities staff in documenting objects in archaeological storerooms.

With the support of the Royal Anthropological Institute, we have instigated a fellowship programme to undertake anthropological research in northern Sudan. This will provide insights into communities undergoing considerable transformations, prompted by economic, technological and environmental change.

The Museum's collection is more accessible than ever before to those who cannot visit London. Thanks to a new partnership with Google, anyone can walk through the galleries, explore highlights of the collection through a new interface and visit several online exhibits. Find out more at britishmuseum.org/withgoogle

2015 ended with sad news, with the death of Dr Robert Anderson. In recent years, Robert's generous programme of scholarships to the UK for Egyptian curators and inspectors has seen dozens of talented scholars come and use the British Museum library and collection. We are thrilled to hear that the Robert Anderson Trust will continue this programme, which is making a real difference in developing the next generation of Egyptian Egyptologists.

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Exhibitions and galleries

A renewal of the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery

Marcel Marée
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Room 4 of the British Museum houses one of the world's finest collections of ancient Egyptian sculpture. Statues and reliefs from temples and tombs represent three millennia of history, art and religious beliefs. The gallery's general layout dates back to 1981, as did most of the panels and labels, until they were recently refreshed. The gallery refreshment was completed late last year, with the aim of updating the information presented to visitors, making it more engaging to a wider, non-specialist audience.

The new texts explore in greater focus how, why and for whom the ancient monuments were created. The deeds and activities of the original owners are explained in accessible terms, as many of their titles are insufficiently self-explanatory. Hieroglyphic passages of special relevance have been translated. The panels, as before, offer brief introductions to the great periods of ancient Egyptian history, but the texts are more concisely concerned with key characteristics. Moreover, they explore how the objects were made, from their quarrying to completion. Attention is drawn to conventions of representation, and visitors are encouraged to examine details of interest more closely.

The latest Egyptological discoveries and insights are incorporated, some of which only arose as the new texts were being written. A fresh look at even the most familiar objects has generated new knowledge, and some of the results are quite exciting. For instance, a monumental false door formerly dated to the 5th Dynasty can now be securely attributed to a son (and vizier) of Sneferu, the founder of the 4th Dynasty. The prince's own son, who commissioned this

door, can now be identified with a famous vizier who served Sneferu's successor, Khufu. A colossal red granite head and arm, also displayed, are from a statue of Amenhotep III that flanked a temple door in Karnak with a second colossus. It has now emerged that parts of that second statue are also in the British Museum: the head and a lower leg, whose provenance had long been forgotten. Full discussions of these findings are being prepared for publication.

The panels and labels have also changed in general appearance through the inclusion of numerous colour photographs evoking the sites and contexts from which the objects derive. Timelines on all the labels and history panels highlight the period in focus at any one point. They are an essential tool for visitors and help them appreciate the exceptional longevity of pharaonic culture – the gallery covers a staggering 3,000 years of history.

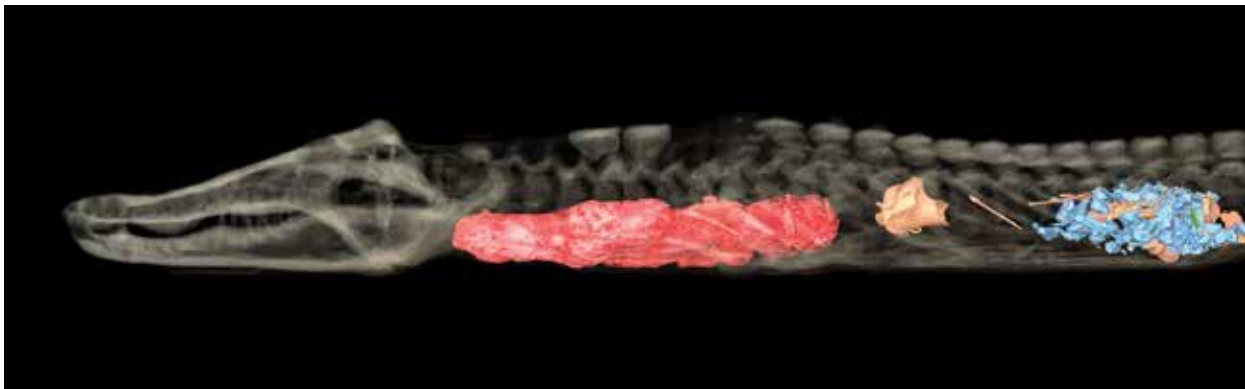
The project did not end with these changes to the graphics. Over recent years the gallery's chronological narrative became blurred by object swaps as objects travelled to exhibitions around the world, and by the demolition of side rooms to open up the Great Court in 2000. To rationalise their order of presentation, many objects have now been moved around or replaced – a feat accomplished with great skill by our Collections Managers. All the objects have been cleaned by a team of dedicated conservators. The walls of the gallery received a fresh lick of paint – the old grey has made way for light blue, a more natural backdrop resembling a sunny Egyptian sky. The lighting in the gallery has also been greatly improved – a major job due to the very high ceiling. Judging from visitors' comments and from the time that many spend reading the interpretation, the gallery's transformation is clearly a success.



Views of new information panels in the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery.

Exhibitions and galleries

A mummy of the crocodile god



Julie Anderson and Daniel Antoine
Curators, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

A large mummified crocodile, nearly 4 metres long with over 25 mummified crocodile hatchlings attached to its back, was brought into the limelight in a special Room 3 display in December. It focused on the life, death and mummification of this large reptile who was worshipped by the ancient Egyptians as the manifestation of Sobek, the crocodile god. During life, the sacred reptile was kept in captivity in a temple, called 'Per Sobek' (the House of Sobek), situated by the Nile at Kom Ombo in Upper Egypt. When it died, it was mummified and afforded all due ritual.

Sobek was worshipped in a variety of forms throughout Egypt, most notably in places where crocodiles were common such as at Kom Ombo and in the Fayum. The ancient Egyptians feared and respected the Nile crocodile in equal measure – a large, dangerous, unpredictable man-eating predator that inhabited the riverbanks and marshes. As a crocodile god, Sobek possessed many of the qualities and demeanour of the living reptile and bore epithets such as 'Sharp of Teeth'. He was feared for his voracious appetite, but also venerated for his fertility and association with the annual Nile flood upon which Egyptian agriculture was dependent. Placing crocodile hatchlings on the mummy, perhaps inspired by seeing hatchlings riding on the backs of adult crocodiles, echoed the living world and emphasised the fertility and nurturing behaviour of the crocodile.

Exhibitions prompt new questions, research and analyses. Scientific tests on this crocodile yielded some surprises. While Kom Ombo is famous for its Ptolemaic Period temple (332–30 BC), radiocarbon dating revealed the crocodile had been mummified between 650 and 550 BC. Had this crocodile been carefully rehoused in a later temple?

The mummy was scanned at the Royal Veterinary College in London using non-invasive, high-resolution computer tomography (CT) scanning, one of the largest mummies to undergo this procedure. Dried in natron, covered with conifer resin and beeswax, and wrapped in linen bandages that had been removed prior to its arrival in the Museum, the CT scan data allowed unique insights into the reptile's life and the mummification process. Its upper torso had been eviscerated and packed with textile, but within the lower torso sat remnants of the crocodile's last meal: part of the shoulder and forelimb of a cow. Numerous rocks in the stomach might have been swallowed in life for ballast and to aid digestion. Three small mysterious rounded metal objects were also present and remain (as yet) unidentified.



The mummy was excavated in 1893 by Jacques de Morgan and presented to the British Museum in 1895 by the Egyptian government. It was displayed following its arrival in the Museum, but removed during gallery renovations in the 1930s, where it resided in the storerooms, almost unnoticed, until this display allowed its re-emergence once again.

The Asahi Shimbun Display Scanning Sobek: mummy of the crocodile god ran from 10 December 2015 until 21 February 2016.

CT scanning of the crocodile was made possible with the support of the Institute for Bioarchaeology and the Royal Veterinary College, London.



3D visualisation of the crocodile mummy with the textile in its upper torso (red) and stones (blue) and bones (off white) in the stomach.

Bronze statuette of Sobek as a crocodile. Egypt, c. 600 BC. (EA 37450)

View of *Scanning Sobek: a mummy of the crocodile god*, with 3D visualisation behind the displayed crocodile.

Exhibitions and galleries

Faith after the pharaohs

Elisabeth R O'Connell

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Great God... Reveal yourself to me here and now in the same shape in which you revealed yourself to Moses, the shape which you assumed on the mountain, before you created the darkness and the light... so that I may praise you in Abydos, so that I may praise you before Ra...

Probably copied in the 3rd century AD, the London-Leiden Magical Papyrus is just one of the many objects in the exhibition *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs* that challenged expectations. Here, the God of the Jews is called upon alongside the ancient Egyptian sun god Ra as part of a spell for divination. This is the milieu of Roman Egypt in which individuals – in some circumstances – sought as many divine powers as possible: the more the better. In this papyrus handbook of spells and elsewhere, God and figures from the Jewish Bible are invoked alongside divinities from Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Mesopotamian pantheons, among others. At the same time, under the influence of Greek philosophy the phrase 'One God' (*heis theos* in Greek) was applied to deities like Serapis, and referred not to the 'only god', but the foremost among many. This would soon change when the title 'One God' came to refer to the God of Jews and Christians.

The exhibition traced the development of Judaism and emergence of first Christianity, then Islam, in Egypt from Roman Egypt though to the end of the Fatimid period. By the 5th century AD something astonishing had happened – the religion of a small sect of Jews who identified Jesus as their 'anointed one', *messiah* in Hebrew, *christos* in Greek, had become the dominant religion of the state. The title 'One God', commonly found at the beginning of Egyptian Christian funerary stelae, now referred to the only God. Still, in everyday life, our modern assumptions are challenged, as when the Greek- and Coptic-literate Christian lawyer and poet, Dioscorus of Aphroditō (d. after AD 585), compares the



(Christian) emperor to Christ in one set of circumstances, and a (Christian) bridegroom to Zeus and the beloved to Europa and Leda in another. Thus categories that appear fixed from our vantage point today – especially Greek/Egyptian, 'pagan'/Christian – were in fact permeable.

Just over 50 years after the death of Dioscorus, Islam arrived with the armies of the general 'Amr ibn al-As. Proclaiming Muhammad to be God's last prophet, Muslims rejected much of Jewish and Christian belief and practice, but not everything. Material culture was slow to change – people still wore tunics with decoration little changed from Roman times and marked their graves with stelae, even if text in the Arabic script now typically filled the spaces once reserved for figural decoration. The name of God in Arabic (Allah), and statements of faith such as the *basmala* ('In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate') and *shahada* ('There is no god but God and Muhammad is his messenger') communicated religious identity on these objects and others. But again, we find fluidity, for example, when the beginning of the *basmala* appears in Coptic on a silver chalice donated to a church in the Fayum.

Egypt: faith after the pharaohs ran from 29 October 2015 to 7 February 2016, generously supported by the Blavatnik Family Foundation and organised with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. You can see an online exhibit relating to the exhibition at g.co/britishmuseum

Sandstone funerary stela of a woman named Fatima bearing a statement of the Oneness of God. (1887,0402.1437)

An amulet depicting Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac with an angel intervening with a handled-cross on one side, and a handled-cross with the inscription 'One God, in heaven' on the other. (EA 56469)

Reverse of gold coin of 'Abd al-Malik with an Arabic inscription declaring the Oneness of God. (1849,1121.88)



Exhibitions and galleries

Napoleon and Egypt

Sheila O'Connell

former Curator, Department of Prints and Drawings

When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798 he saw himself as following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great and his army was supplemented – like Alexander's – by a team of scholars whose role was to study the societies he intended to conquer, and the flora, fauna and history of lands that were still little known in Europe.

To British propagandists these intellectual ambitions were examples of French pretension. Last summer's exhibition at the British Museum, *Bonaparte and the British: prints and propaganda in the age of Napoleon*, displayed examples of satirical prints ridiculing these scholars. The greatest of the caricaturists, James Gillray, depicted 'a party of the Scavans who had ascended Pompey's Pillar for Scientific Purposes [and] were cut off by a Band of Bedouin Arabs, who having made a large Pile of Straw and dry Reeds at the foot of the Pillar, set Fire to it ...'. Gillray was receiving undercover payments from the government to ensure that his skills were used to support the war effort and his instructions concerning this large and splendid print are now in the British Library. Another print by Gillray shows a couple of terrified Frenchmen who have been attempting to domesticate crocodiles, and even to teach them their rights as members of post-Revolutionary society. The crocodiles have reacted predictably: one seizes the leg of his tutor between his jaws and the other snaps at the coat of a man who runs off dropping his volume of *Les Droits du Crocodile*.

In reality the savants took the opportunity for impressive studies of Egypt which appeared in the monumental *Description de l'Égypte*, published from 1809 to 1828. Furthermore they collected significant material that was to be shipped to Paris. Perhaps most significantly, they recognised the potential of the discovery at Rosetta (el-Rashid) of part of a stela with text inscribed in hieroglyphic and in Greek as well as in cursive demotic script.

In the event, the treasures of Napoleon's savants found their way to the British Museum rather than to the Musée du Louvre. When the French army finally capitulated to British and Turkish forces in 1801, the antiquities became the property of George III. They were guarded with proper caution. General John Hely-Hutchinson warned that 'not only the [Rosetta] stone but everything which we get from the French should be deposited in some place of security. I do not regard much the threats of the French scavants, it is better however not to trust them.'

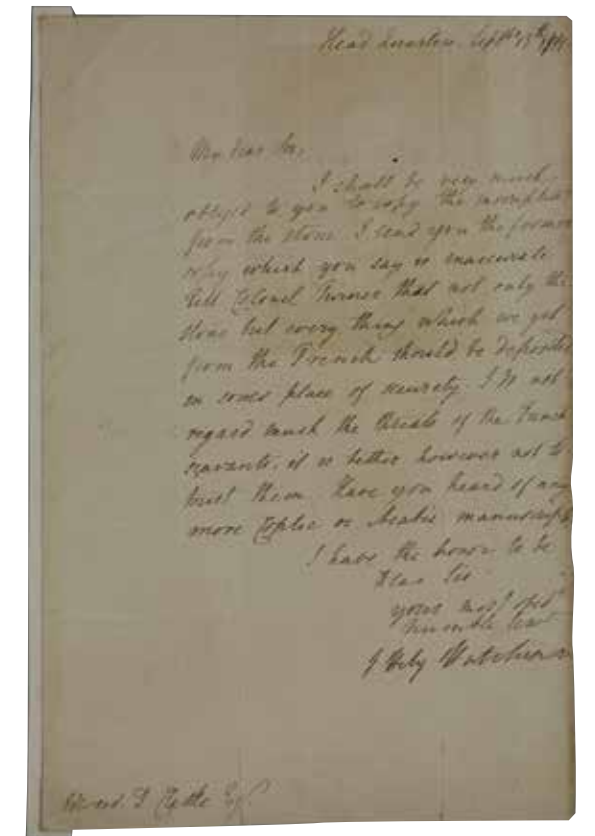
In 1816, Henry Salt was appointed British consul general in Egypt. He collected avidly and – rather than attempting to move one of the huge stone pieces acquired immediately after the French capitulation – two small wooden figures from Salt's collection were displayed in the exhibition to suggest that we might consider Napoleon as the father of European Egyptology.



James Gillray
(1756–1815),
Siege de la Colonne de Pompee (detail).
Hand-coloured
etching, 1799.
(1851,0901.959)

A letter from
General Lord
Hely-Hutchinson,
Commander of
the British Army in
Alexandria, Egypt,
to the traveller and
scientist Edward
Daniel Clarke (13
September 1801).
(EA 76990)

James Gillray
(1756–1815),
L'Insurrection de l'Institut Amphibie.
Hand-coloured
etching, 1799.
(1868,0808.6826)



Sunken cities

Aurélia Masson-Berghoff

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The Museum's first major exhibition focused on underwater archaeology will reveal spectacular discoveries made by the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology, led by Franck Goddio, in the last 20 years off the western Mediterranean coast of Egypt. These new finds will be presented for the first time in the UK in a narrative that explores the encounter of ancient Egypt with Greece. The era of rich interaction, trade and cultural exchange from the 7th century BC to Alexander the Great's conquest and the ensuing centuries of Greek (Ptolemaic) rule will be evoked through remarkable examples of ancient Egyptian and Greek art alongside objects that combine the art of both civilisations – from intricate metalwork to colossal stone statues.

The cities of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus, located in the bay of Abukir, between Alexandria and Rosetta, were submerged beneath the Mediterranean Sea for over a thousand years, ensuring the preservation of a vast number of artefacts and monuments of unique importance and beauty. Attempts to identify the cities, which were known from Egyptian decrees, Greek mythology and ancient historians, were either limited or fruitless in their results. The survey the European Institute for Underwater Archaeology initiated in the western part of Abukir Bay in 1996 covered a vast area of 110km², deploying state-of-the-art remote sensing technologies. The multidisciplinary team succeeded in locating the cities and their ongoing excavations continue to yield spectacular and groundbreaking discoveries. Thonis-Heracleion was one of Egypt's most important hubs for Mediterranean trade, three centuries before Alexandria. Along with Canopus, it was a major religious centre, particularly for the worship of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the afterlife. Both cities once stood on the fertile, shifting landscape of the Delta, at the mouth of the Canopic branch. This was the most navigable branch of the Nile, allowing sea-going vessels from the Mediterranean world to reach Naukratis, the sister harbour town of Thonis-Heracleion located further south along the now completely silted-up Canopic branch of the Nile.

The rediscovery of Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus illuminates the relationship between Egypt and Greece during the late first millennium BC. It had provided some of the most stunning examples of the religious art of that period, such as a statue of Arsinoe II discovered at Canopus. Eldest daughter of Ptolemy I, the founder of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, and wife of her brother Ptolemy II, Arsinoe II is represented as the perfect embodiment of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty believed to grant 'fortunate sailing'. Her long pleated dress leaves her shoulders bare and the shawl knotted above her left breast accentuates the curves of her body.

The sensual rendering of her flesh is revealed through the play of the transparent garment, in a style reminiscent of Greek masterpieces, yet the hard dark stone, and the pose of the figure, is distinctively Egyptian. Ptolemy II established and disseminated his sister-wife's cult after her death. Sometimes identified with Isis or Aphrodite, she was venerated by both Egyptians and Greeks. By royal decree, a statue of the queen had to be placed in all temples of Egypt and this sculpture was probably one of them.

More traditional in form but impressive with its sheer size of 5 metres, the colossal statue of a king once guarded the entrance of a temple dedicated to Amun-Gereb at Thonis-Heracleion. The Ptolemies embraced the Egyptian tradition of placing colossal statues of pharaohs outside temples. Here, the Greco-Macedonian ruler adopts pharaonic paraphernalia, including the double-crown embodying the union of Lower and Upper Egypt. The small cylinder in his fist probably represents the *mekes* case, a symbol thought to contain the inventory of Egypt and conveying the right to rule the country. The generous loans from Egypt are supplemented by a select group of material from the British Museum's collection, highlighting foreign presence and intermingling of cultures in Egypt – notably from Naukratis, but also Canopus, Tell Dafana and the Memphite region. The relief representing the Greek god Hermes was discovered in the non-submerged part of Canopus around 1825. Hermes is shown with his usual attributes, wearing a *petasos* – a large traveller's hat – and carrying a winged staff (*caduceus*) and a tortoiseshell lyre, the musical instrument he is said to have invented. Mediator between the mortal and divine worlds, Hermes conducted the souls of the dead into the afterlife. Greeks saw in him the equivalent to Thoth, the Egyptian god of sacred scripture and sciences, and clerk in the divine tribunal of the underworld. The relief was made in an Alexandrian workshop at the end of the Ptolemaic period, in a style imitating Attic art of the late 6th to early 5th century BC.

The BP exhibition *Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds* is a rare opportunity to bring together works that are often displayed separately in museum collections, offering new insight into the quality and unique character of the art of this period and the extent of interconnection between Greek and Egyptian communities in Egypt at this time.

The exhibition runs from 19 May to 27 November 2016.
Supported by BP.
Organised with the Hilti Foundation and the Institut Européen d'Archéologie Sous-Marine.
In collaboration with the Ministry of Antiquities of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

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Colossal statue of a Ptolemaic ruler wearing the traditional paraphernalia of a pharaoh in pink granite. Thonis-Heracleion, 3rd century BC. Maritime Museum of Alexandria. Photo: Christoph Gerigk. © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation.

A cult statue of the deified queen Arsinoe II, in black granodiorite. Canopus, 3rd century BC. Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Museum of Antiquities. Photo: Christoph Gerigk. © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation.

Next page: Colossal statue of a Ptolemaic king. Thonis-Heracleion, 3rd century BC. Maritime Museum, Alexandria. Photo: Christoph Gerigk. © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation.

Relief of Hermes, the divine guide to the souls in the underworld, in granite or basalt. From Canopus, c. 100–30 BC. (1848,1014.1)



Exhibitions and galleries

Thonis-Heracleion and the Greek world

Franck Goddio

European Institute for Underwater Archaeology

Over a century after Flinders Petrie identified the site of the ancient Greek trading post of Naukratis, underwater excavations by the European Institute of Underwater Archaeology (IEASM) in the Bay of Abukir located the site of the ancient town of Thonis-Heracleion in the submerged area of the Canopic mouth of the Nile. This Mediterranean seaport lay 7km off the current coastline, and 77km as the crow flies from the site of ancient Naukratis, situated upriver on the same branch before it dried up. Thonis-Heracleion was located at the Canopic mouth which was the entrance into Egypt for all ships trading with the Greek world, as recorded by Herodotus (II, 178–179). It was an *emporium* and Diodorus Siculus (90–30 BC) noted that 'this river (*Aegyptos*) flows into the sea near the place called Thonis, the ancient warehouse of Egypt' (*Bibliotheca Historica*, I.19.4). The town's vast system of harbour basins linked by canals was protected against the prevalent winds, the heavy swell and the waves of this coast by a stretch of land to the north, and was separated from the Nile by a belt of sand dunes lining the river.

Excavations have provided precise archaeological data concerning relations among Egyptian and Greek communities in the Canopic region from the 7th to the 2nd century BC. Two inscribed royal stelae underline the Greek presence, and provide historic, geographic and onomastic information. Both are exceptional in their way – one because of its perfect state of preservation after over a thousand years underwater, the other by its sheer size, its surface rendering it one of the biggest currently known stelae.

Found on the *temenos* of the main temple of Heracleion, the Thonis-Heracleion stela is a granodiorite monument 1.99m high and 88cm wide, a double of the stela discovered in 1899 at Naukratis. It bears a decree issued by Nectanebo I in the town of Sais in his first year of rule. The lunette scene shows the king making a double offering to the goddess Neith in her temple, to which the donation is destined: the king grants the sanctuary one tenth of the taxes on all imports passing through Thonis-Heracleion, and on all transactions and local production of goods at Naukratis, in addition to what the temple already received from the royal domain. The text details the economic ties between the two *emporia* of Thonis and Naukratis and the town of Sais, and provides insight into the period of greatest prosperity of Thonis-Heracleion. In the ports and waterways over 60 wrecks and some 700 antique anchors date from at least the 7th to the 1st centuries BC, and a particular cluster between the 5th and the early 3rd century BC, reflecting the era of the greatest port activity. The text on the stela emphasises the military and customs surveillance exerted in this city that controlled the main entrance from the Mediterranean into Egypt, echoing an episode recounted by Herodotus. Having abducted Helena, Paris is driven by contrary winds into the Canopic mouth, where some of his servants, seeking asylum in the temple of Heracles, accuse their master 'before the priests and the warden of the Nile mouth whose name was Thonis' (Herodotus II, 113–114). The word appears on the stela in a passage saying '... this stela is to be set up in the town, The-hone-of-Sais is its name'. The stela provides a certain identification of the town as 'Thonis' and 'Heracleion' – two names for the same site.

The second imposing royal stela of pink granite, 6.17m high, 3.14m wide and weighing around 17 tonnes, had probably cracked into pieces following an earthquake. Dating from Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II's reign (c. 169–116 BC), it is bilingual, only a few sparse Greek signs remain, and the Egyptian text is greatly damaged, but it describes a request from the priests of Amun's temple to recover a piece of land whose ownership was confirmed 'from the times of the ancestors until the year 44 of Amasis' as well as a lost right of asylum. Paradoxically, this Egyptian monument, among the latest found at Thonis-Heracleion, refers to the earliest period of the town and the above-mentioned episode of the servants of Paris seeking asylum in the temple. Herodotus states that 'the custom has continued unchanged from the beginning down to my own time.' Thus, it was only after his passage, later than the mid-5th century BC, that the privilege had lapsed. The reference on the stela to year 44 of Amasis, according to Christophe Thiers, refers to the compilation of the laws of Egypt commissioned by Darius I, but the mention of Amasis – well known as a lawgiver – recalls the role of that king in the reorganisation of custom and trade at the Canopic mouth and the legal structure of the particular statute he conferred to the Greeks at Naukratis (Herodotus II, 178–179).

In addition to these two major monuments, emblematic both of the town and the relations between Egyptians and Greeks, numerous artefacts like arms, jewellery, coins, cult objects, and images of divinities bear witness to the presence of a Greek community in this Egyptian township. Objects and utensils of cult also illustrate the Egyptian celebrations of Osiris rituals as well as Greek Dionysian festivities.

All underwater photographs are by Christoph Gerigk.

© Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation. For further information, see Franck Goddio, *The Topography and Excavation of Heracleion-Thonis and East Canopus* (1996–2006) (Oxford, 2007), *Damian Robinson and Andrew Wilson (eds.), Maritime Archaeology and Ancient Trade in the Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2011), *Anne-Sophie von Bomhard, The Decree of Sais* (Oxford, 2012), and *Christophe Thiers, La Stèle de Ptolémée VIII Évergète II à Héracléion* (Oxford, 2009).

Stela of Thonis-Heracleion, in black granodiorite. 30th Dynasty, Year 1 of the reign of Nectanebo I, 380 BC. National Museum of Alexandria. Photo: Christoph Gerigk. © Franck Goddio/Hilti Foundation.





Exhibitions and galleries

Refreshing Sudan, Egypt and Nubia at the British Museum

Anna Garnett and Derek Welsby
Curators, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

New displays in Room 65, the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery of Sudan, Egypt and Nubia, aim to showcase the diversity of the Nubian and Sudanese civilisations and further highlight the great cultural and political flowerings in this region over more than six millennia. This gallery refreshment includes the first public exhibition of a number of objects which were excavated by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society and then donated by the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (Sudan) to the British Museum, highlighting important ongoing collaboration and fieldwork.

The display is arranged chronologically, beginning with the story of prehistoric Sudan and Nubia. The oldest object in the gallery is a quartzite hand axe dating to around 100,000 BC. Tools, weapons, pottery and items of personal adornment illustrate the story of early food-producing societies who lived in the region during the Neolithic period (4900–3000 BC). The narrative explores the A-Group, C-Group and the Pan-Grave cultures that lived along the Nile Valley upstream of the First Cataract between around 3700 and 1070 BC, including jewellery, stone tools and decorated ceramic vessels. The sophistication of the material and funerary cultures of these groups is notable, distinct from, but influenced by, Egyptian neighbours to the north.

The Kingdom of Kush, the first urban society in sub-Saharan Africa, with its capital at Kerma, flourished from around 2500 to 1450 BC. Delicate handmade pottery vessels are the most distinctive product of this society, reflecting a high degree of technological innovation. One showcase presents a reconstructed burial based on the typical layout of a Kerma Moyen period grave, dating to around 2050–1750 BC, excavated in the Northern Dongola Reach, the deceased accompanied by pottery vessels, sacrificed animals and cuts of meat.



Moving to more recent times, a display of objects from the period of the Kushite Empire highlights the increased contact and sporadic conflict between the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Kush from the late 1st century BC onwards. Due to the extraordinary preservation of organic material at Qasr Ibrim, a major Kushite religious centre which was captured and briefly occupied by the Romans, we are able to richly illustrate the theme of conflict during this period with a variety of objects including weaponry and leatherwork. A figure of a bound prisoner dating to the late 1st century BC, preserving an inscription which calls him the 'King of the Nubians', demonstrates how the Kushites typically represented their defeated enemies during this period.

Contextual images have also been introduced to complement the objects including panoramic views of Sudanese and Nubian landscapes and a fine, almost lifesize, image of the Kushite king Anlamani. It is hoped that these displays will enable visitors to better understand the developments in Nubian and Sudanese history while gaining a new appreciation of the beauty and diversity of the material cultures of those who lived and died along the Nile Valley south of the First Nile Cataract.

Follow Anna on Twitter @beket_aten

Room 65.

Kerma culture burial from the Northern Dongola Reach, Site P37, Kerma Moyen period, 2050–1750 BC.

Figure of a prisoner, with characteristic Nubian features, inscribed with Meroitic text that says, 'This is the king of the Nubians'. From Meroe, c. 50–1 BC. (EA 65222)

Fine handmade vessels from Kerma, Kerma Classique period, 1750–1450 BC. (EA 55423–4, EA 65577)



Exhibitions and galleries

A Sudanese lyre

Chris Spring

Curator, Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas

This display presented the historical and contemporary cultural significance of a magnificent lyre from northern Sudan, and of the charms and pendant decorations attached to it, including coins from Yemen, Egypt, the UK and even Indonesia. These pendants must have made an ethereal tinkling sound as the musician carried his instrument to his next performance. We recorded this sound on the Africa floor at the Museum store at Orsman Road, and combined it with two numbers performed by contemporary Sudanese musicians to create a soundtrack for the exhibition. Music

played in the exhibition by contemporary artists demonstrated the development and continued use of a very ancient style of musical instrument. The first lyres were probably constructed in ancient Mesopotamia where the remains of this type of instrument were excavated at the Royal Cemetery of Ur dating to 2600 BC. More recent ancestors of the lyre come from lands to the south of Sudan in what is now northern Uganda and Kenya, where very similar instruments are played today.

The Asahi Shimbun Display Music, celebration and healing: the Sudanese lyre was in Room 3 from 18 June to 16 August 2015.



The collection

New acquisition:
General Menou's proclamation

Patricia Usick

Volunteer in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

This poster dated to 6 December 1800 bears a proclamation from the French General 'Abd Allah Jacques Menou, then in command of Egypt, to the inhabitants of Cairo and Egypt. Revealing insights into colonial ambitions in Egypt at the time of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, the iconic 'key' to the decipherment of hieroglyphs, the poster was issued by the General just months before the defeat of the French by British and Ottoman forces in 1801. Addressing the people of Egypt, promising them peace and justice under French rule, Napoleon is described as 'the celebrated warrior', after leading an army to Egypt in 1798 seeking to challenge British influence in India. He was forced to return to France in 1799 after Nelson's defeat of the French navy at Abukir Bay and the disastrous Siege of Acre. Napoleon was succeeded by Jean-Baptiste Kléber, who was then assassinated and succeeded by General Menou, a Muslim convert, who was determined to maintain the French occupation and settle the country.

Although a military failure, the French invasion of Egypt was a turning point for the career of Napoleon Bonaparte as well as an important moment in the study of ancient Egypt. The army had been accompanied by a group of 'savants'; scholars who returned to France and later published an extensive survey of ancient and modern Egypt, the *Description de l'Égypte*.

The proclamation is of particular interest for the British Museum as it was General Menou who strongly resisted relinquishing the Rosetta Stone to the British after the French army was defeated in 1801. Article 16 of the capitulation treaty ceded the antiquities collected by the French Expedition to the British, but Menou claimed the Rosetta Stone was as much his own personal property 'as the linen of his wardrobe or his embroidered saddles' and was said to sleep with it under his bed for safe-keeping. Despite Menou's vigorous protestations, the Rosetta Stone and other antiquities were sent to London where George III donated them to the British Museum in 1802. The poster also relates to a letter from the British military commander in Egypt, General Hely-Hutchinson, written less than a year after Menou's proclamation, ordering the traveller Edward Daniel Clarke to take possession of the Rosetta Stone from the French army (see Sheila O'Connell's article above). Curiously, this poster reflects the Rosetta Stone in that it is also a proclamation to the inhabitants of Egypt written in two languages, here French and Arabic, with different scripts. Both Rosetta Stone and poster are the edicts of conquering dynasties following a time of strife in Egypt. The decree written on the Rosetta Stone, issued in 196 BC, responded to a turbulent period in Egyptian politics, recording a grant by priests of a royal cult to the king in return for favours. While the Rosetta Stone is a product of the Egyptian priesthood, the Menou proclamation invokes an equally religious standpoint with its reference to one God and 'Mahomet'. At the end of both texts – Rosetta Stone and poster – it is specified the decrees should be set up all over Egypt.



General Menou's
proclamation.
AES Ar.1971

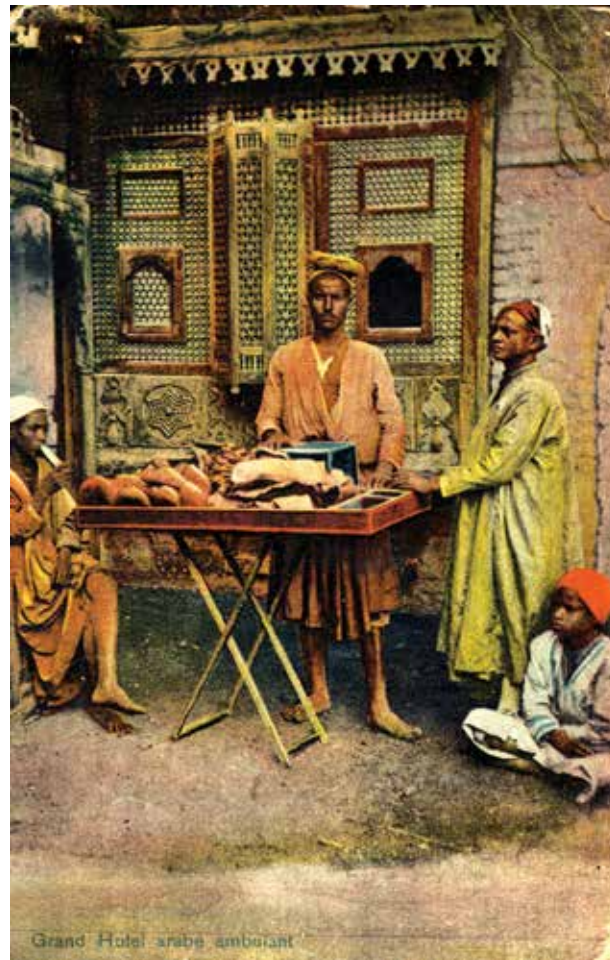
'A picture is worth a thousand words': collecting postcards at the British Museum

Curator, Department of the Middle East

Postcards have rarely been considered worthy of institutional collecting, yet they have been eagerly sought after by private collectors for over half a century. A new initiative at the British Museum is helping to change that view as a major project is underway in the Department of the Middle East to collect postcards from all parts of the region – from Egypt and North Africa to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The aim is to develop a world-class public resource which captures the disappearing present and allows us to use these commercial images to explore aspects of how and why the region we love, work in and curate is changing rapidly.

As with personal or commercial photographs, postcards capture a wide range of subjects – but not all is what it seems. Pictures can be posed, props added and the scene purposefully framed or cropped by the photographer in order to emphasise a particular view. This may be stereotypical and therefore the most commercially successful, but it could be an alternative take on the normal in order to develop a new market.

The history of photography in Egypt, particularly during the 19th century, has attracted serious research but the replacement of these early images by mass produced postcards from the early 20th century onwards has attracted less scholarly attention. In 2007, the first of several projected volumes was published on the postcards of Alexandria but the remainder have never been completed and the rest of Egypt – let alone the Middle East in general – remain to be catalogued in detail. The scale of



A posed street scene from Cairo; postmarked Marseille 1st October 1909. The message reads: 'A P.C. [postcard] for your collection. Have passed thro' [through] the Suez Canal & have reached middle of the Red Sea. A blazing hot day & very little improvement tonight'
BM EPH-ME. 1729

An Englishman at
Saqqara, c. 1905.
BM EPH-ME.2871



this task is clearly huge, but the field is finite and the potential rewards are great. Like prints, postcards contain information on the makers, photographers and the places of production as well as the subjects themselves. Equally importantly, they offer deep personal insights into social history as they capture the names and genders of the senders and recipients and the style of handwriting. If used, they illustrate developments in postal history and the different ways in which messages have been added. Prior to the adoption of the so-called 'divided back' (this was first adopted in Britain in 1902), only the face of a postcard could be used for a message and, as these usually showed a picture, there was insufficient space left to add more than the equivalent of a short text message. During the First World War many postcards were sent in envelopes. This did not mean that they evaded the censor but it allowed for longer messages. However, the content of these is often the same and in the case of those sent from Egypt dwell on the heat and boredom of 'active service'.

The subjects also show huge swings in popularity. Early postcards show Egyptians and everyday life, Nilotic scenes, views of downtown Cairo, colonial architecture from Alexandria to Suez, mosques and the eerily quiet and still largely buried landscape at Giza. But the partially unrobed ladies disappear, as do views of traditional life. Modern Egypt and its tourism industry rise to the fore with views of government buildings, hotels on the Nile, the Sphinx illuminated at night, and an emphasis on pharaonic rather than Islamic heritage. There is clearly much to be explored but a PhD student, Seonaid Rogers, has already begun to work on part of the collection, and a small selection is on display in Room 2, while others are on the Museum's collection online. If anyone is interested to hear more, send me a postcard!

PhD student Seonaid Rogers is funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme.

Round the houses: a newly acquired group of objects from Amara West

Project Curator: Amara West, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

As part of my ongoing research into the material culture of Amara West, part of the project on this Ramesside administrative centre of colonised Kush (c. 1300–1070 BC). I have catalogued and studied a set of objects excavated over 60 years ago and just acquired by the British Museum. They were excavated in several seasons between 1938 and 1948 by the Egypt Exploration Society (EES). Due to the contemporary system of 'division of finds', some objects were exported to the UK and then further distributed – from the Musée du Louvre to the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and many places in between. The newly acquired group of 1,255 objects was originally assigned to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery but were never formally accessioned. With the agreement of the National Corporation of Antiquities and Museums (Sudan), the Birmingham Museum and the EES, these objects have now been formally accessioned by the British Museum.

The objects from the EES excavations can now be integrated into the research of the current fieldwork undertaken by the Amara West Project, and therefore build a broader picture of the Ramesside settlement and the complexities of cultural entanglement between Egyptians and Nubians there. This assemblage provides insights into beautification (jewellery including amulets and beads), production activities (stone and metal tools) and administration (hieratic ostraca, scarab seals and seal impressions). Other objects such as ceramic vessels and fishing weights inform us about the nutrition of the inhabitants and the local environment.

A full documentation of the objects, with photography, is currently underway, and these will soon be made available through the Museum's collection online.

Research on Amara West is supported by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project.



Selection of
objects from the
newly acquired
collection from
Amara West.

The collection

Digitising the Wadi Sarga archive



Elisabeth R O'Connell
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

In 1913/1914, Reginald Campbell Thompson excavated Wadi Sarga and three other nearby sites in Upper Egypt on behalf of the Byzantine Research and Publication Fund. Like other excavations undertaken in Egypt that season, the results were never published in full due to the beginning of the First World War. A 1922 edition of 385 texts (*P. Sarga*) – papyri, ostraca and inscriptions – was the most substantial and easily accessible publication resulting from the project.

But the site yielded much more than texts. The location of a monastery dedicated to Apa Thomas, its probable founder, Wadi Sarga contains the remains of settlement in and around earlier, pharaonic quarries. A church making use of part of one quarry contained an extensive painted programme with Christ at the centre of the apse composition and the so-called 'houses' contain facilities of everyday life such as kitchens with well-preserved ovens.

Today, the British Museum houses over 2,800 objects from the expedition together with the unpublished excavation documentation: field notebooks, plans, photographs, negatives, 1:1 scale tracings of wall-paintings, watercolours and an unfinished book manuscript. Together, this documentation allows us to reconstruct much of the site as it was encountered by Thompson, especially valuable since the site is today in a military zone and inaccessible. Study of his records reveals his excavation methods so that it is sometimes possible to recontextualise objects within the rooms, rubbish heaps or graves in which they were found. In order to make use of the documentation, it first had to be rehoused, conserved where appropriate, photographed or scanned. This process has been slow, but systematic. Patricia Usick catalogued the archive in 2008, watercolours were digitised in 2009, photographic prints and negatives in 2011, and architectural plans and 1:1 tracings of wall-paintings in 2012. In 2014, 100 years after the completion of R Campbell Thompson's excavation of Wadi Sarga, the digitisation of the documentation was completed by intern Tessa Baber, a graduate student at Cardiff University, with the assistance of Ruiha Smalley. Thompson's field notebooks, his unfinished manuscript prepared for publication, correspondence and the original register of objects that came to the British Museum have now all been digitised.



The notebooks in particular presented a significant challenge because their pages are today are extremely brittle, powdery, or both. Working closely with British Museum paper conservators, Tessa scanned each of the pages, creating easy-to-use PDFs. Since conditions in the field in 1913/1914 meant that Thompson started and stopped work at various locations at the site, often turning the notebooks upside down to start fresh from page 1, they are tricky to use today. Tessa's meticulous ordering of the pages now enables researchers to study the notebooks without further damaging them.

Active from about AD 600 to 800, the Christian settlement provides an excellent case study for the social function of monasteries during the period in which Christianity became the dominant religion in Egypt and Islam was introduced. In parallel, the early 20th-century documentation of the monastery gives us insight into life on an Egyptian dig on the eve of the First World War.

I am--as everything goes well, as I believe it does--leaving for the East on Saturday as a Captain on the Staff (Intelligence), Indian Army. I don't know if I shall have time to see you, so don't forget:

- 1) *I owe you about £4*
- 2) *The editor of the Illustrated London News has a lot of the Wadi Sarga photographs*
- 3) *The ostraka and papyri are half the property of the Cairo Museum*

Richards, who was getting the map of Wadi Sarga done, is now serving his country on the sea.

I put in a rough map of my own.

Please say good-bye to Read for me.

R. Campbell Thompson.

(A postcard from Thompson, written in haste and post-marked New Year's Eve 1914)

For more information, visit britishmuseum.org/wadisarga

Wadi Sarga. Rock-church, watercolour, signed and dated, 'C. O. Waterhouse '20' (AES Ar. 716).

Wadi Sarga. Child next to an oven, Room 24a (AES Ar. 712).

Postcard from Thompson.

The collection

A story of success: excavated books, mummy print and the Shapira Strips

Susanne Woodhouse

Ann El-Mokadem Librarian, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Between 1882 and 1884 the 'peerless poet laureate of his majesty Rhampsinit III' (Ramesses III, r. 1187–1156 BC) Carl M Seyppel (1847–1913) published three burlesques inspired by ancient Egypt. The highly creative German artist and writer intended them as a trilogy: the missing third part entitled *Die Plagen* (The Egyptian Plagues) was recently acquired for the departmental library.

Tapping into the general interest in archaeology at the time, the creator claims that the books were excavated at the pyramids of Giza. Additionally, the famous archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann – and the Leipzig Professor of Egyptology Georg Ebers – supported the publications. To give more credibility to their alleged origin, Seyppel invented the so-called mummy print: very thick paper was aged artificially and given the look of ancient papyrus. Furthermore, the copies are bound in frayed sack cloth, a seal with a pharaoh's head is affixed to the front cover and leather straps hold the book together. Contemporary reviews stressed with amazement that despite their laborious manufacturing copies cost only three times the price of a normal book. Consequently, these antiquarian looking bibliophile curiosities sold quickly – an estimated 48,000 copies – in seven editions, including the English and French translations.

Perhaps the events surrounding the antiques dealer and forger Moses Shapira (1830–1884) – exposed in 1883/1884 when he attempted to sell fake biblical manuscripts, the so-called Shapira Strips, to the British Museum for £1 million – made Seyppel aware of a potential audience for his very affordable, eccentric excavated books. By the time Shapira had committed suicide the English translations of the first two books became available in 1884 and 1885.

The first burlesque is the famous story of the master thief as related by Herodotus, the second one is a fictitious continuation thereof and the third is based on the Exodus. Tongue in cheek, hearty, sarcastic, witty doggerel verses are entwined with dynamic, highly inspired drawings in which the artist mixes ancient Egyptian culture with European elements. By integrating the handwritten text (narrative, comments and speech) as much as possible in the drawings – for example



as divider, architectural element or vanishing point – both components become inseparable and speech bubbles are rendered obsolete. As each page has its own layout Seyppel chose to print the books as lithographs: text drawings in black with a few red highlights.

Georg Ebers pointed out that Seyppel's drawings are very close to the Egyptian originals and indeed elements from the *Description de l'Égypte*, from a major coffee table book by Ebers on ancient Egypt and from the wall paintings of the Neue Museum in Berlin, can be identified as prototypes. What was originally intended to imitate an antiquity has aged during the past 110 years with the leather and the seal deteriorating while the paper is in excellent condition. The books are now housed in the rare book collection of the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan.



Die Plagen (1884).

Ministers awaiting an audience with Ramesses (*Die Plagen*) cover and title page.

The first burlesque *Schlau, schlauer, am schläusten* (5th ed., 1884).



The collection

Painted ladies of the Predynastic era: out of the cupboard and into the show case

Renée Friedman

Heagy Research Curator of Early Egypt,
Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Janet Ambers

Conservation and Scientific Research

The figurines and statuettes representing the human form are perhaps the most engaging and intriguing – even enigmatic – creations of Egypt's Predynastic period (c. 3900–3100 BC). Modelled from a variety of different materials and in styles ranging from realistic to highly abstract, they seem far distant from the human representations of later times, yet in them we can detect the beginnings of some of the concepts and concerns that informed their Dynastic counterparts.

Relatively few Predynastic figurines have been found during scientific excavations, and questions about authenticity surround many. This is especially the case for a series of highly stylised female figures modelled from white (unbaked) calcareous clay and painted with geometric and figural designs over their bodies. Most portray a woman seated with her legs extended straight before her, her arms curving round to hold small pendulous breasts. The modelling of the head varies, but most have faces dominated by a large, beak-like nose and elongated black eyes outlined in green, giving them an almost extra-terrestrial appearance. With the exceptions of one excavated example, of which only the legs remain (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), all of the statuettes of this type were purchased and, more worryingly, many from the same dealer. Concerns raised about the two obtained for the British Museum in 1912 and 1925 (by E A Wallis Budge) from the dealer Mohammed Mohassib (1843–1928) had caused them to be relegated to the 'fakes cupboard' early on. However, intrigued by the encouraging results being obtained by researchers in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on a painted lady purchased from the same dealer, we decided to take another look at ours.

Examination of the statues started with an analysis of the pigments used to paint them. Since green is one of the hardest of the ancient pigments to replicate, we concentrated especially upon the colour surrounding their black eyes. Analysis of that pigment on one (EA 50680) revealed ingredients not available prior to the early 19th century AD, a result not entirely unexpected given that painted on her neck is a scarab, a motif not popular until the Middle Kingdom. So it was back to the fakes cupboard for her.

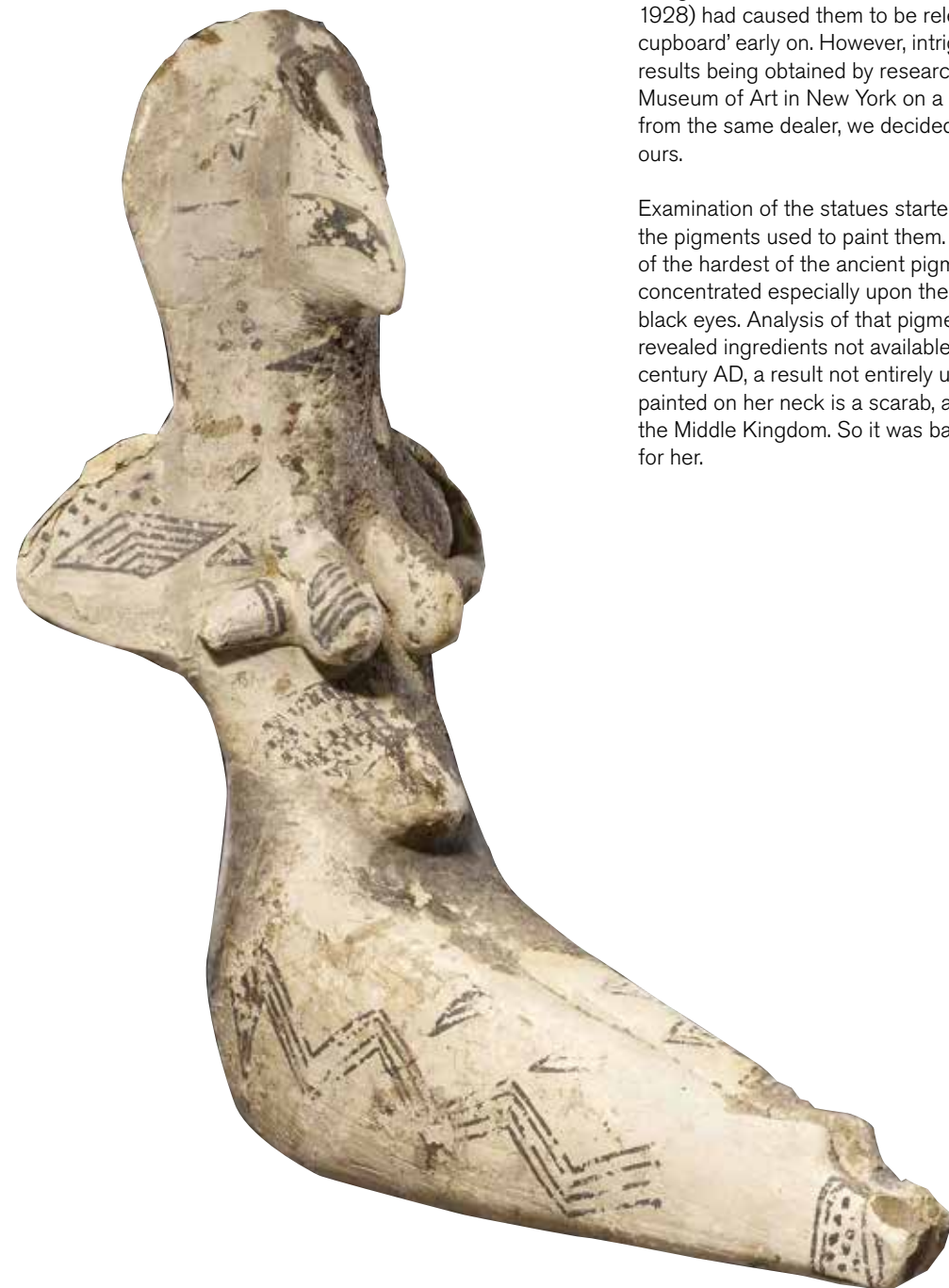
The second statuette (EA 58064), being larger and odder in appearance, was even more suspect that the first, but it surprised us. Analysis of the pigments showed the green to be copper based, the red coloured by hematite and the black to be carbon. While these identifications did not provide a definitive date, they did not rule out a Predynastic date either. Encouraged, further examinations were carried out. Detailed microscopy showed that, in contrast to the solid limestone of the companion piece, this statue was made of calcareous clay. This was a good sign. Even more exciting was that radiography showed it was made up of a large number of broken pieces, held together by four concealed modern metal screws, with recent materials filling the gaps. Since it is very unlikely that forgers would repair a broken fake in this way – it would have been easier and cheaper to simply start again – it suggests that this statue is in fact a much repaired and restored original! A close look under the microscope revealed how the joins had been carefully masked by overpainting so as to 'restore' the decoration, but ghost lines of the original, ancient black paint could still be detected below. It also seems likely that much of the dirt still adhering to one side of the statue was added in modern time to hide some of this restoration.

With the balance of evidence strongly in favour of authenticity, it was time for this statue to come out of the cupboard and into the show case. Now on display in Case 3 in the Early Egypt Gallery (Room 64), she serves to illustrate how cosmetic pigments were used in Predynastic times to decorate not just the eyes but also the body, at least on special occasions. The finery represented by the anklets and necklaces painted in black and red certainly suggest that she is dressed for more than just everyday life. In addition, the motifs on her body had special meaning and help to show how the Predynastic Egyptians conceived of their world as an amalgam of two conflicting parts.

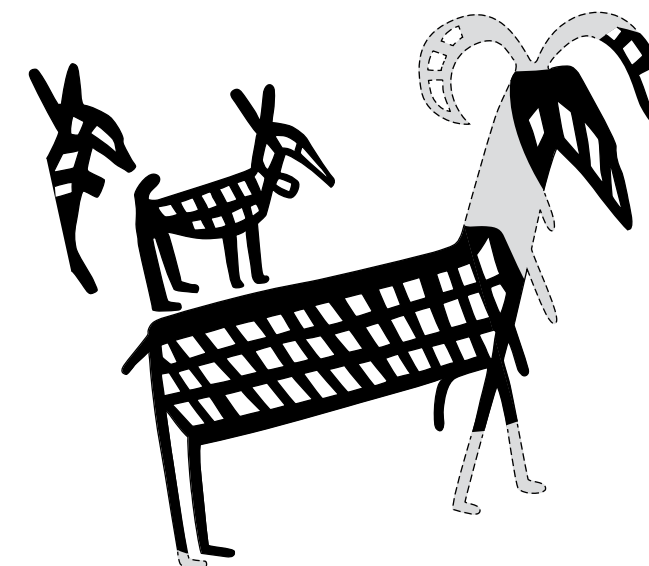
On the front of her body, the designs evoke elements of the fertile Nile Valley with representations of rippling water and verdant vegetation. A hippopotamus, an animal that was both feared for its dangerous disposition and admired as a good mother, is painted on her swelling belly, further reinforcing a concept of fertility. In contrast, on her back, the vignette of Barbary sheep being hunted by dogs wearing collars and bells symbolises the untamed dangers present in the surrounding arid desert and the need to keep them under control.

Based on later practices, these expressive statuettes are thought to represent dancers who performed at various ceremonies, such as funerals and possibly also those accompanying births. Their bodies painted with evocative imagery, these dancers embodied and mediated the dualities of river and desert, celebration and sacrifice, life and death. Imbued with such symbolism and possessed of undeniable personality, the newly rehabilitated statuette has been chosen as host for the family app soon to be available in Room 64. With the statuette as guide, the user will learn about how climate effected the development of early Egyptian civilisation and how the inhabitants living in the desert and by the Nile sought to understand their changing world through the meaning of the animals they encountered in different environments.

The Early Egypt app and the refurbishment of the Early Egypt Gallery were made possible with the support of the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation. British Museum research on Early Egypt is made possible through the generosity of Mr Thomas C Heagy and Mrs Linda Heagy.

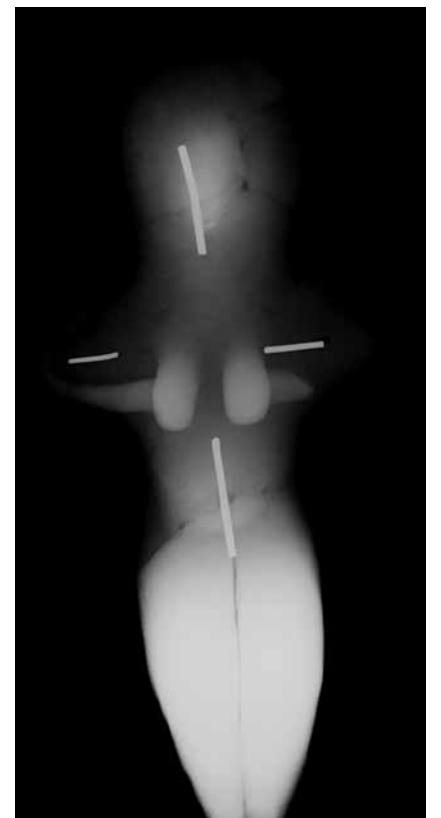


Clay statuette.
(EA 58064)



Reconstruction of
the design on the
back of statuette.
(EA 58064)
Drawing by Claire
Thorne.

Radiograph of the
statuette revealing
the modern metal
screws holding the
pieces together.
(EA 58064)



The collection

The papyrus collection

Paper conservator Vania Assis (now British Library) explaining conservation methods.



Ilona Regulski
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The British Museum's papyrus collection is one of the most significant outside Egypt because of its chronological span and large variety of text genres. In order to enhance accessibility and share the collection with Egyptologists, museum professionals and the wider public, several particular issues have been addressed in the past year.

On 12 March 2015, the first Papyrus Curatorial and Conservation Meeting was organised with the support of the Museum's UK Partnerships team. The initiative brought together a network of colleagues from 21 institutions in the UK and Ireland – both curators and conservators – working on different aspects of papyri, and addressed methodologies and approaches for better knowledge exchange and potential collaboration. Short informal presentations on acquisition history and the nature of the collections, collection management and storage, public access, outreach and research focused on both large and smaller collections. A specialised conservation session was led by Bridget Leach, the British Museum's papyrus conservator, with the assistance of Helen Sharp and Vania Assis from the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research. A follow-up meeting is planned for June 2016.

To promote our collection and encourage further research, our papyri and ostraca were temporarily reduced to digital bits and numbers for incorporation into the interdisciplinary portal of papyrological and epigraphical resources Trismegistos (trismegistos.org). The database now shows live links to the

British Museum's online database for each text, and hyperlinks to the Trismegistos database can be found in the British Museum's website. The interlinking between these databases allows for a more efficient search for metadata of individual texts.

Extensive documentation and conservation work continues behind the scenes. Apart from the usual preparations for loans and exhibitions, conservation work on a particular group of demotic papyri has led to significant new research, as described by Bridget Leach and Cary Martin on the following pages, while Ellen Jones from the University of Oxford and Rebecca Thompson from UCL enhanced the Museum's database records of papyri.

The papyrus workshop was supported by the Vivmar Foundation as part of the Museum's UK Partnership programme. Follow Ilona on Twitter @ilonareg

The collection

Representing the divine in the Book of the Dead



Book of the Dead of Anhay; sheet 5. The full colour vignettes show Osiris watching the judgement of Anhay (right) and the Field of Reeds as part of spell 110 (left).

Ellen Jones
Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, and British Museum intern

Reading spells from a variety of papyri (many in the British Museum's collection), and considering production, materiality and the interplay between the text and images, as part of my Egyptology degree at the University of Oxford, I was keen to undertake an internship at the British Museum focused on papyri. This allowed me to use skills from my university degree but also further my understanding of the Book of the Dead and expand the range of spells and papyri I am familiar with.

I studied many Book of the Dead papyri, sheet by sheet, to check database records, and then added information on type of script (cursive hieroglyphic or hieratic), the colours used and the presence of vignettes. The main focus point was improving the subject field 'ancient Egyptian deity' and 'ancient Egyptian demon'. When possible, I included the name of the deity mentioned in the text or depicted in the vignettes. As the British Museum collection database is available to anyone via the website, making these details accessible allows external scholars and members of the public to more easily identify papyri relevant to their research, among the vast Book of the Dead collection at the British Museum.

The collection

Conservation of demotic papyri



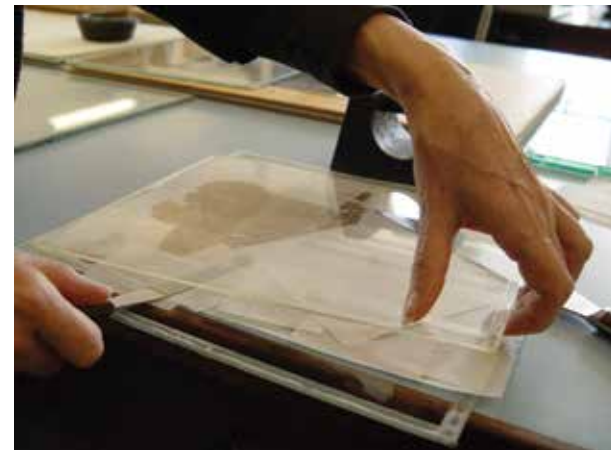
Bridget Leach
Former Papyrus Conservator,
Conservation and Scientific Research

15 unregistered demotic texts were first noticed hidden away in Perspex frames on a shelf in the papyrus storeroom more than a decade ago. The initial assessment of these demotic papyri suggested that the majority of the fragments were in poor condition – the Perspex, or acrylic sheets, bend easily and had been sealed with Sellotape, which in many places had failed to secure the frames. To provide adequate physical support for the fragile material, the fragments needed to be removed from the Perspex frames, repaired and remounted between glass.

Conservation work began in 2005, a challenging and time-consuming task due to the generally degraded nature of the material and the static charge inside the Perspex mount, which causes the papyrus to fracture further when moved, and small particles to separate. To remove the Perspex, small pieces of non-stick silicone paper, effectively blocking the static charge, were slipped inside between the Perspex and papyrus. Beginning at the edges, the entire papyrus surface was gradually covered, and the Perspex could be safely lifted away, the small pieces of paper then replaced with one large piece. The same method was then repeated for the other side.

Once removed from the old mounts and mounted in temporary glass, repair work could begin. Lightweight Japanese paper was used to support the material and small amounts of wheat starch paste were used to attach the repairs to the papyrus. The work was carried out over a light table in order to see the weak areas clearly and possibly fold back any overlaps or reposition areas which had fallen out of alignment.

When repaired, the fragments were strong enough to be moved around over the light table in search of physical joins with the pattern of the papyri's fibre structure helping matching of fragments. However, as papyrus rolls are made up of individual sheets, the fibres do not necessarily match up on either side of the sheet joins. The demotic sheets under discussion are an example of this as they are narrow – 11–14cm wide and frequently fractured along the edge of the sheet join itself, therefore finding fibre matches between the individual fragments was not successful. At this point, Cary Martin, Honorary Research Associate, UCL Institute of Archaeology, was asked to advise on the layout of the fragments in their new mounts. Finally the fragments were mounted between glass and sealed around the edges with a linen binding to provide the rigid support needed for the papyri and allow for safe access and study.



Bridget Leach examining one of the demotic papyri through transmitted light in the conservation studio.

Removing one of the papyri from the statically charged Perspex frame.

The collection

Studying the conserved demotic papyri

Cary Martin
Honorary Research Associate, UCL Institute of Archaeology

The bulk of the British Museum papyrus collection was catalogued many years ago and new material has been regularly included in the online database as it was acquired. Following their conservation by Bridget Leach and her colleagues, I have been studying a group of 15 demotic texts, EA 76273–76287.

As these papyri were found shelved together, we assume that they were acquired together, although there are no records to support this. In many cases, a frame contains fragments that do not necessarily belong to the same papyrus. Some pieces are quite substantial, one measuring nearly 1 metre in length (EA 76281). They are written in a number of different hands, and some can clearly be connected to the same scribe. On the basis of the handwriting, they can be classified as early demotic.

They are all administrative documents. In at least three papyri (EA 76274, 76279, 76283), the place-name 'Herakleopolis' is mentioned and EA 76282 refers to the temple-domain of Herishef, the principal deity of the town. This suggests that the papyri originally came from the area of Herakleopolis, the capital of the 20th Upper Egyptian Nome and an important administrative centre throughout the Late Period.

The texts are not dated, but the presence of a number of Persian names, including that of Arsames (EA 76274), means that they must belong to the time of the first or second Persian occupation. Given the context, which is an administrative report with references to the pharaoh, it is very likely that this Arsames is the well-known Persian satrap, who is attested in Egypt between 435 and 407 BC. A dating of the text to the second half of the 27th Dynasty would be consistent with the script.

Although the texts are all of an administrative nature and are likely to have come from a government office, their content differs. Some are concerned primarily with land measurement, possibly for tax assessment (EA 76275, 76276). Others are accounts, sometimes referring to grain and cereals (EA 76273, 76277 and 76280). Of particular importance are EA 76281 and 76282, originally part of the same papyrus. They contain a variety of different texts, including details of land measurement, reports that refer, *inter alia*, to deliveries and leasing, and accounts. A number of individuals are mentioned by name, as well as people from different localities. Titles that occur in the texts include the 'scribe of the treasury' or 'storehouse', and the 'scribe of the field'. Apart from the Persians in EA 76274, all the other people mentioned in the papyri have Egyptian names. The publication of these texts, which is now in hand, will make an important contribution to our understanding of land administration in Egypt during the time of the first Persian occupation.



Papyrus with name of Arsames, possibly the Persian satrap in Egypt (435–407 BC). (EA 76274)

The collection

Study, conservation and display of a rare pair of curtains from Late Antique Egypt

Amandine Mérat

Project Curator, Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Anna Harrison and Monique Pullan

Conservation and Scientific Research

The exhibition *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs* presented, among other remarkable objects, a large pair of exceptionally preserved curtains. Said to be from Akhmim in Upper Egypt, this almost complete pair was acquired for the British Museum by Sir E A Wallis Budge in 1897, and was displayed in the exhibition for only the second time since then. Said to be from Akhmim in Upper Egypt, the curtains were acquired for the British Museum by Sir E A Wallis Budge in 1897. Made of fine linen and colourful wool, and measuring more than 2.7m high by 2.1m wide, the curtains date to the 6th–7th centuries AD. This makes them a unique example of complete large-scale furnishings from Late Antique Egypt, and a challenge to prepare for display.

Because of its dry climate, Egypt uniquely preserves a range and abundance of organic material that rarely survive elsewhere, particularly clothing and furnishing textiles. These provide unparalleled insight into the lives of individuals from Roman, Late Antique and early Islamic times. From the 2nd century AD, Egyptian people progressively gave up mummification to bury their dead in the clothes they wore in life, sometimes wrapped in furnishing textiles reused as funerary shrouds. This explains why the great majority of the textiles were discovered in cemeteries and burial contexts, as might have been the case for this pair of curtains, judging from the visible staining caused by a body's contact. Now in two pieces, these soft furnishings were originally sewn together at the top, indicating that they were probably used as a door curtain. The lower part of the curtains is ornamented with birds and vegetal motifs in floral lozenges. At the top is a decorative band containing an inhabited vine scroll, below which *erotes* holding floral garlands stand between baskets of produce. Below them, two winged *nikai* (victory figures) hold a wreath containing a jewelled cross with the remains of a Greek inscription. Both *erotes* and *nikai* figures come from the classical, or Greco-Roman, repertoire, the latter often depicted holding busts of mythological heroes or victorious emperors. Later such figures were 're-employed' to present the bust of Christ or other Christian symbols. This pair of curtains represents a good example of continuity and reuse of classical themes throughout Late Antiquity, here in a demonstrably Christian context.

Although at first the curtains appear intact, on closer inspection their fragility is obvious. The curtains were extensively conserved in 1994 for the British Museum exhibition *Byzantium: Treasures of Byzantine Art and Culture*, when a nylon net support from the 1960s was replaced with a stitched support method. The missing coloured wool was not replaced – one of the principal ethical guidelines for conservators today is the focus on stabilising remaining original material rather than restoration of original appearance.

New conservation work started in 2013, once the curtains have been selected for the exhibition. Due to their fragility, a draped display was impossible, so a board angled just off the vertical was chosen, the angle providing some additional support. Exposure to light can result in the chemical

breakdown of the fibres and irreversible fading of dyes, so reduced light levels (50 lux maximum) and limited future display were stipulated. The curtains were surface cleaned using a soft sable hair brush and a vacuum cleaner set to a low setting.

In order to mount the curtains on a fabric-covered display board, Velcro tape was stitched along the top edge of each curtain, to provide a continuous and even support along the top of the textile. As the curtains were too long for the height of the display case, two fabric-covered rollers were prepared so that the lower portion of each curtain could be rolled. With accurate measurements and diagrams, each step of the installation was planned in advance to ensure these fragile curtains were installed with the minimum of handling and readjustments. Once positioned, the long fringing at the top of each curtain was secured with strips of semi-transparent net pinned over the top of it. The challenge of balancing preservation and display is difficult, particularly given the rarity of textiles surviving in this near-complete state.

Egypt: faith after the pharaohs ran from 29 October 2015 to 7 February 2016, generously supported by the Blavatnik Family Foundation and organised with Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Thank you to Helen Wolfe.



On examination for the current exhibition, the conservation stitching worked 20 years previously was found to have held the textile elements securely in position.

In Egypt

The port of Berenike: pottery from beyond the Roman world

Roberta Tomber

Honorary Visiting Researcher,

Conservation and Scientific Research

The function of Berenike as a key embarkation point for Rome's trade with the east has resulted in a range of finds from outside the Roman world. On one level these finds are expected – ancient authors, including Pliny, Cosmas Indicopleustes, and the anonymous author of the *Periplus Maris Erthyraei*, all mention the importation of black pepper from south India into the Roman world. Yet other items of trade are absent from the documents, suggesting they were not so much items of trade, but were for the use of traders, either on board the ships or during their stay in the foreign port. In this category are a range of archaeobotanical items, including rice as well as numerous types of pottery from India, East Africa, South Arabia and the Persian Gulf, some of which are described here.

Cooking pots from India include types produced both in south and north India, indicating connections, in some cases direct, between Berenike and those regions of the subcontinent during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. A typical type of Indian cooking pot, ubiquitous throughout India, is distinguished by deep organic wiping marks on the interior. Such marks are only found in Kerala, also the source for black pepper. Storage jars made in India, but not identified to a specific region, also occur in some numbers at Berenike. A complete example was found in situ within an early Roman context north of the 'Serapis' temple, containing 7.5kg of black pepper.



Large Indian storage jar containing black pepper. Photo: S E Sidebotham.

Glazed Sasanian storage jar.

Indian cooking pot with sherd from another vessel showing the type of organic wiping marks that occur inside.



In contrast, a glazed Sasanian storage jar is likely to have originated in southern Mesopotamia and occurs at Berenike in the mid to late Roman period. Such vessels are likely to have reached Berenike via South Arabian trade ports on the coasts of Oman (Moscha Limên) and Yemen (Kanê).

Berenike was a port with wide-ranging contacts and a very diverse population during the Roman period and these imported pottery types provide tangible evidence of this.

The 2015 excavations were funded by the British Museum, the Honor Frost Foundation, University of Delaware Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Institute for Global Studies and the History Department, Exxon-Mobil, the Seeger Family Fund, Het Huis van Horus Foundation, the Museum for Family History (Netherlands), Ministry of Education of the Republic of Poland, the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, including logistical assistance from the PCMA Research Center in Cairo and its director Dr Zbigniew E Szafranski, and numerous private donors.

In Egypt Modern Egypt project

Neal Spencer

Keeper, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

As part of a Museum-wide rethink of how we can best collect, research and present the world after 1800, we have instigated a new project focusing on modern Egypt. The Museum's collection includes, of course, objects from 20th- and early 21st-century Egypt – for example, traditional clothing from Siwa, postcards (see St John Simpson's article above), contemporary art and textiles by Chant Avedissian.

But modern Egypt has never been the subject of sustained research and collecting, and with the appointment of a new curator, Mohamed el-Shahed, this process will begin in 2016. The approach follows a year of meetings and consultations, both in Cairo and the UK, with curators, historians, filmmakers, artists, writers and other interested individuals and institutions. This process ensured that it was a project that would be of interest to Egyptians. It also prompted us to aim to create two collections – one of which we hope to donate to an institution in Egypt – and helped us refine the main themes of our future collecting.

The thematic approach is necessary as space and conservation concerns mean the size of the collection has to be limited, but it also ensures resonance with the objects from earlier periods of Egyptian history. Initially three thematic strands will provide a framework for research and collecting. Firstly, *Urban Egypt – Cairo and beyond*. The majority of the Museum's objects were produced in an urban context, and while Cairo is rightly the subject of much study (though more on its architecture than objects), we also wish

to represent village homelands, how they are present in cities, and the distinct identities of regional towns. Secondly, *The graphic and image in modern Egypt*. The Museum has one of the most comprehensive collections of writing from Egypt, but does not yet reflect the place of the graphic in modern Egypt. How are Arabic and other scripts deployed materially to project identities, whether global, 'Arabic', 'Islamic', political, religious and/or Egyptian by individuals, companies and the state? Finally, *Living with the past*. Tourists are targeted with pharaonic-inspired objects, but how does this material, and other historical allusions, impact modern Egyptians? How do Egyptians deploy such objects in their homes, schools and public spaces, whether pharaonic, 'Coptic' or 'Islamic'? And what role do the late 19th and 20th centuries play in the material identity of modern Egypt?

The project will not seek to collect objects made for galleries and museums, but rather ones that embody the materiality of modern Egypt: street signs, cinema posters, striking modernist sewing machines of the Nasser era, photographs, objects made from recycled materials and the changing forms of Ramadan lamps. We wish to avoid representing Egypt as a primarily rural, traditional, or craft-orientated society, as conveyed by much previous 'ethnographic' collecting in Egypt.



Sheesha-pipes at a wedding in a village in the Western Nile Delta, October 2008.

In Egypt Egypt documentation project

Sara Kayser

Project Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The archaeological heritage of Egypt has been under threat from looting and vandalism since the uprising in January 2011. In addition to the threat to physical sites, monuments and objects, such threats can result in the loss of information and knowledge. A two-year project – part of a collaboration between the British Museum and the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities – seeks to help preserve this knowledge for future generations by training Egyptian specialists to digitally document artefacts in archaeological storerooms. All of the documentation will be undertaken by Egyptian trainees, not British Museum staff.

Early career archaeologists and curators will learn digital photography and cataloguing from British Museum staff, mainly through on-the-job training in their local magazines, but also in workshops and seminars held in Cairo. 12 trainees were selected for the first phase of the project, with the Ministry of Antiquities designating Tanis, Aswan and the third floor storeroom of the Egyptian Museum (Cairo) as priorities. Training started in October, with British Museum photographers John Williams and Saul Peckham teaching object photography techniques, followed by practical sessions on documentation methods and object cataloguing, led by me.

As the project progresses, the trainees will document artefacts in the archaeological storerooms belonging to the sites for which they are responsible. Object types will vary from funerary stelae to Greco-Roman oil lamps and

amulets, and materials from red jasper to bronze and wood, spanning all periods of Egyptian antiquity. The photographs and the catalogue data will be stored on a documentation management system based on a sustainable Open Source software platform created by the project. The software will be available for other Ministry of Antiquities projects to use after the end of the project, along with the project equipment.

Overseeing the documentation work and ensuring consistency of data quality are two trainee registrars and a Lead Registrar working in an office in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. From there they will manage the database and develop documentation procedures and policies which could be used for archaeological magazines all over Egypt. They will be working closely with the other collection management departments in the Ministry of Antiquities, and in particular the Registration, Collections Management and Documentation Department (RCMDD) in the Egyptian Museum.

By creating a digital catalogue with records of each object (information about the provenance, use, dates, and physical descriptions) and high quality images of what is stored in the archaeological magazines, the Ministry of Antiquities will be presented with a tool which can be used in risk mitigation decisions and inventories of the magazines, as well as with a database that can contribute to scholarly research on ancient Egypt and enhance the knowledge about sites and their place in Egyptian history.

The project is made possible by the generous support of the Arcadia Fund.



Ahmed Abdel Hamid and Ayah Zakaria checking image histograms during object photography training. Photo: Ahmed Ameen.

In Egypt Epigraphic work in Asyut



Ilona Regulski
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The ancient city of Asyut in Middle Egypt must have been a busy and influential hub with temples, mansions, and palaces, but also humble dwellings of functionaries and peasants, their workshops, granaries, storage magazines, shops, and local markets. Most of this ancient heritage has disappeared under a modern maze of paved streets but glimpses of the city's legacy can be found in the necropolis located in the city's western mountain.

As part of the German-Egyptian reinvestigations of the necropolis, epigraphy is being carried out in the rock tombs of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom (c. 2180–1700 BC). At the end of the 2012 season, the expedition discovered the tomb of the deputy Khety. The tomb (M12.3) had already been seen by Newberry in 1893 but disappeared again soon afterwards. The rediscovery offers valuable insights into the second half of the 12th Dynasty; a period less well known in Asyut. I completed a closer examination of the tomb's decoration and texts in August–September 2014.

Of particular importance is Khety's autobiography, inscribed in 13 vertical and five horizontal lines on the east wall of his tomb chapel. Most of the text consists of generic epithets in the style of 'I gave bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked', which seem to have been copied from a template used for the earlier and more famous tomb of Djefaihapi. Khety furthermore describes a visit to nearby Shashotep in year 22, probably during the reign of king Amenemhat III. The king himself is not mentioned but the text specifies that the 'great chief of the entire 13th Upper Egyptian nome' Khaikaura-Seneb 'Sesostris is healthy' was in office. One goal of the visit was the retrieving of an offering device from, or for, the temple of Wepwawet.

Shashotep can be identified as modern Shutb, a rural village about 5km south of Asyut. Both Asyut and Shutb were capital cities of their respective provinces, but their proximity suggests that suburbs and hinterland must have partly overlapped. Ancient texts, such as Khety's autobiography, reveal contact between the two places, but the nature and dynamics of this relationship are unclear. It is equally puzzling how, when and why Shutb lost its leading status while the city of Asyut survived as provincial capital. In order to address the changing relationship between Asyut and Shutb, the British Museum and the Free University of Berlin will collaborate from 2016 in a new fieldwork project aimed at investigating dynamic changes in the social, cultural and geographical landscape of the Asyut region.

The German-Egyptian mission to Asyut is directed by Jochem Kahl on behalf of the Free University of Berlin.

Follow Ilona on Twitter @ilonareg

Inside the tomb of Khety: view of the east wall where the autobiography is located.

In Sudan Dangeil: what lies hidden amid the fields



Julie Anderson
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

An unanticipated discovery was made during the 2014–2015 archaeological field season at Dangeil. Enclosed by seasonal cultivation, two rather unremarkable mounds, rising a little under a metre above the surrounding plain, are situated some 300 metres northeast of the main temple site. Their surface is covered with sandstone, lime plaster, Nile oyster shells, fired brick and mud brick fragments and some human bone. Although discovered in 1997, the site was not further investigated at that time as it was not endangered and, while surrounded by cultivation on three sides, the land owner agreed to preserve the site. This changed in 2014 as the agricultural land was transferred to a new owner who wished to expand his fields and cultivate the area.

A rescue excavation was initiated and much to our surprise, traces of the foundations of three very small square Kushite pyramid superstructures were uncovered (c. 1st century BC – 1st century AD). They were constructed of mud bricks, faced on the exterior with sandstone. One pyramid was excavated: it measured 4.5x4.5m on the base and was preserved to a maximum of five eroded mud brick courses. Due to the degraded nature of the superstructure, the original slope remains unclear, though an angle of between 68 and 73 degrees is common in other Late Kushite pyramids. Such a slope would have created pyramids that stood between 5.6 and 7.4m high.

A sandstone chapel was situated on the east side of the pyramid, over a descending passage leading to the burial chamber. The chapel's northern half was preserved, but little remained of the southern side. The pyramid had been robbed in antiquity and the robbers' hole was filled with tumbled masonry and the occasional pot sherd. Few objects were recovered aside from part of a sandstone falcon sculpture: a

yellow head, blue eye and red beak with the detailing marked in fine black lines. Part of a rectangular slot, likely for a sun disc, was present on the top of the head. It was found on the surface mixed with the sandstone rubble from the pyramid's casing and may have been part of a capstone or associated with the chapel.

Beneath the pyramid, the burial chamber had been sealed by a stone and brick wall. Fragments of beer jars and a few human bones were tantalisingly visible in the disturbed fill but unfortunately there was not enough time to excavate the burial chamber. Hopefully clues as to who the pyramid's occupant might have been will be discovered next season when the chamber is excavated. In the meantime, the site has been backfilled, awaiting future work, and has been enclosed by a protective fence.

Since 2013, fieldwork at Dangeil, a project of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (Sudan) in cooperation with the British Museum, has been funded through the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project, the Institute for Bioarchaeology and the generous support of Dr D Bird.

Follow Julie on Twitter @Amesemi



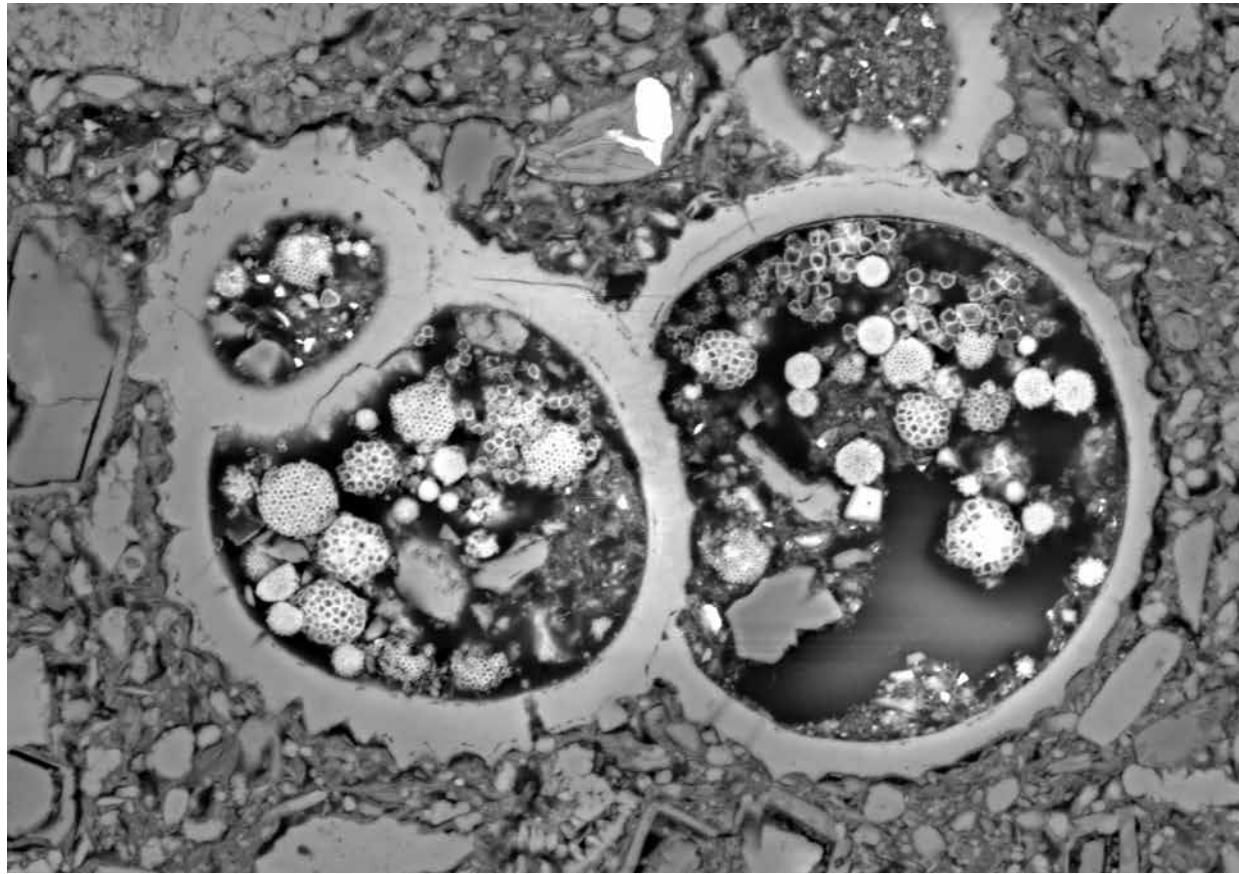
Pyramid structure with chapel in the foreground (facing west).

Sandstone falcon sculpture fragment.



In Sudan

Understanding ancient trade networks at Amara West



Anna Garnett Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan
Andrew Shapland Curator, Department of Greece and Rome
Michela Spataro Scientist, Department of Scientific Research

During the 2008–2014 excavation seasons of the British Museum's Amara West Project, fragments from at least nine different Mycenaean vessels were recovered within the walled town and adjacent extramural settlement, suggesting the town's place in a trade network stretching to the Mediterranean, Aegean and Levant during the late second millennium BC. These distinctive 'stirrup jars' and flasks may have been used to transport luxurious commodities such as perfumed olive oil, while also being inherently valuable as 'exotic' objects of foreign trade. As the composition of clay varies from region to region, by studying the sherd fabrics it is possible to indicate where a vessel may have been made, which has further implications for the organisation of production and transportation networks, as well as providing insight into the Amara West inhabitants' access to, and desire for, imported luxury commodities.

Though objects excavated at Amara West remain in Sudan, we have the opportunity to export samples for analysis and conservation at the British Museum with the permission of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (Sudan). These vessel fragments, supplemented by sherds excavated during fieldwork at Amara West from 1938 to 1939 and 1948 to 1950, and recently donated by the Egypt Exploration Society to the British Museum, are the subject of a scientific research project at the Museum.

Optical microscopy with a polarised scanning electron microscope combined with energy dispersive spectrometry (SEM-EDX) allows a detailed understanding of the mineralogical and chemical composition of the individual

samples and throws further light on details of their manufacture, such as clay processing and firing temperature. The samples will also be compared to ceramics produced locally at Amara West and to the other imported pottery. This research has now been complemented with neutron activation analysis (NAA) at the University of Bonn, led by Hans Mommsen. Studying trace elements in the clays used for each vessel has revealed that the Mycenaean vessels at Amara West were made in both mainland Greece and Cyprus. The ongoing interdisciplinary study, and eventual publication, of these important vessels will continue to demonstrate that Amara West did not exist in isolation, but rather that its inhabitants had access to exotic objects from the distant Mediterranean.

The Amara West Research Project has been funded by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project since 2013; the ceramic vessels described here were excavated with the support of an earlier research grant from The Leverhulme Trust (2011–2014). Follow Anna on Twitter: @beket_aten



SEM backscattered image of a vessel probably imported from Cyprus, showing microfossils in the fabric.

Mycenaean stirrup jar (C3206).

In Sudan

Excavations, conservation and site management at Kawa



Derek Welsby
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The long-established project at Kawa, begun by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society in 1993, has moved into a new phase with funds provided by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project. While excavations continue in the town and cemetery, conservation of the largest temple – built by the Kushite king Taharqo between 684 and 680 BC – commenced and a Visitors' Centre was constructed. In the town the excavation of a large mud brick building (Building F1) was completed. The ground floor consisted of a courtyard with a wide entrance from the east, two substantial staircases and rooms used for storage. These contained a range of material including ribbed amphorae imported from Egypt, presumably on account of their valuable contents, matting, a section from a large elephant tusk and many seal impressions. The north-eastern room must at one time have contained important material – its doorway had been sealed by mud, the surface of which bore multiple stamp impressions. In the larger rooms the first floor was supported on stout timber posts of palm. As well as collapsed roofing, several pieces of painted wall plaster, one bearing hieroglyphs, must have come from the opulent accommodation above.

In the cemetery the tomb beneath the large stone pyramid was cleared. It had been much disturbed by robbing activities (a plastic bag was found deep in the fill), but small sections of the mud brick tomb remained along with three gold beads. Unfortunately the other tomb under the pyramid, entered from the west, was too dangerous to excavate.

The temple built by Taharqo is not constructed of the fine white sandstone as he stated on an inscription found at Kawa but of very friable material which is suffering greatly from erosion. In an attempt to preserve the temple's walls, as well as leaving something visible for the visitor, they are being capped by brickwork, the lowermost course set in a mud mortar so that the modern work can be easily removed in the future should that be deemed desirable.

Kawa is an extremely well-preserved site – the Taharqo temple, for example, has walls surviving in excess of 3.5m high. This preservation is the result of buildings rapidly infilling with wind-blown sand when they were abandoned. Today Kawa's fine buildings are all but invisible. In an attempt to enhance the visitor experience and make the site more intelligible, a Visitors' Centre has been constructed. When it is completed it will contain information panels in English and Arabic, a model of the Taharqo temple, and a few large objects, which will help to set the site and its monuments in context.

The project would like to thank the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums and the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project for funds, logistical assistance and permission to undertake its activities.

General view across Building F1 looking west.

The south face of the pyramid.

Capping the walls of the Taharqo temple. The northern half of the pylon looking north.

In Sudan

A medieval fort and cemetery at Kurgus

Derek Welsby

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Following on from the work of the Egyptian Epigraphic Project directed by Vivian Davies at Kurgus, and survey and excavations directed by Isabella Welsby Sjöström, a new campaign of research by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society began in 2014. Kurgus lies in an important region, a frontier zone during the New Kingdom and probably again in the medieval Christian period when the border between the kingdoms of Makuria and Alwa may have been in this area. In the later medieval period it presumably lay within the poorly understood kingdom of Al-Abwab. The current project is focused on the cemetery KRG3 a little to the north of the Hagr el-Merwa, well known for its inscriptions of Tuthmosis I and III, and in a sizeable fort to the west on the banks of the Nile.

The cemetery contains several hundred grave monuments, a wide range of tumuli types along with box graves, the latter dateable to the medieval Christian period (AD 550–1500). Of the tumuli-covered graves excavated so far, associated artefacts indicate a post-Meroitic date (AD 350–550). However the presence of pottery of the Kerma culture suggests that there may have been burials here at a much earlier period. A background scatter of Neolithic pottery suggests even earlier occupation in this area.

Many forts along the Middle Nile feature extremely well-preserved defences but with interiors devoid of evidence for occupation. The fort at Kurgus is very different, with massive thick mud brick walls and projecting towers surviving to a maximum height of about 4 metres. Unusually, the interior is covered in buildings and filled with several metres of associated deposits. Red-brick rubble presumably derives from a church.

Of the other buildings, only the uppermost courses of the latest phase of small rectangular rooms have been revealed, many built against the inner face of the curtain wall. The fort was clearly occupied for a considerable period of time. Its defences, built over post-Meroitic deposits, were themselves modified over time, particularly at the south-western corner which was extensively rebuilt, perhaps following flood damage. The latest use of the site was for a cemetery with graves of Christian type being cut through the highest surviving walls and deposits. At least one substantial building existed outside the fort's defences and a substantial defended annex was added to the south.

The project would like to thank the National Corporation for Antiquities for logistical assistance and permission to undertake its activities. The season was funded by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, with further support from the Institute for Bioarchaeology, the British Museum and SARS Patrons.



A view across the space and time of north Abydos, seen from the wall of Kom es-Sultan. Photo: Laurel Bestock.

In the UK

Annual Egyptological colloquium 2015

Abydos: the sacred land at the western horizon



Ilona Regulski

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Abydos is one of the most fascinating sites in Egypt, chosen as the burial ground for the first kings of Egypt, and later becoming a site of great sanctity which conferred legitimacy on the royal and private individuals buried there. It soon became the cult centre for Egypt's most popular god, Osiris, who ruled the netherworld and guaranteed every Egyptian an eternal life after death. As a result of continued ritual performance, endowments and pilgrimage, a vast landscape of chapels and tombs, temples and towns, developed. For millennia, Abydos was one of the most consecrated places in Egypt.

Since the end of the 19th century, archaeologists have made discoveries at Abydos to reveal this historical and cultural significance. The British Museum's 2015 Annual Egyptological Colloquium aimed to contextualise the most recent fieldwork by including object studies and research on broader patterns of ritual, urban and economic activity. Papers discussed how social and cultural dynamics changed the landscape to serve the unique ritual narrative, from the earliest attempts to create sacred spaces (Laurel Bestock and Matt Adams) to the monastic landscapes of the Late Antique Period (Jennifer Westerfeld), and using temple features (Mohamed Abu el-Yezid) or funerary practices (Kevin Cahail) to compare the royal with the domestic. Several contributions focused on reconstructing ritual performance using pottery assemblages (Julia Budka, Christian Knoblauch) and textual sources (Andreas Effland).

But Abydos did not exist in a vacuum. Zsuzsanna Végh, Marcel Marée and Anthony Leahy discussed how other cultural hubs, such as Thebes and Asyut, and political developments at the court, had an impact on the perception of Abydos as a site of national interest. Ongoing efforts made by the Ministry of Antiquities to save the site's valuable heritage were illustrated by Ayman Damarany's presentation of the Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II cult building, discovered underneath the modern village. John Taylor and Gianluca Miniaci highlighted how objects that have been in the British Museum's collection for over a century can continue to reveal aspects of Abydos' ritual landscape (see following article).

The two-day conference was closed by Janet Richards, who delivered the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation distinguished lecture in Egyptology (see following article). An associated workshop, organised by Elisabeth O'Connell, focused on the transition from 'pagan' to Christian Abydos, with contributions from the directors of various Abydos missions, who often encounter occupation and reuse of earlier monuments at Abydos by Christian communities – a much less studied aspect of this fascinating site. Edited volumes on the conference and Late Antique workshop are in preparation.

Arched doorway in a building immediately outside the north-west angle of the fort. Photo: M Nicholas.

The south-east angle tower of the fort with its stone revetment. Photo: A Ginns.

In the UK

The lion-faced man Aha/Bes and the group of objects from Abydos G62

Gianluca Miniaci

Marie Curie Research Fellow, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris

The hybrid combination of a standing lion-faced man/dwarf with feline limbs appeared suddenly in ancient Egyptian iconography during the Middle Kingdom (1900–1700 BC). This personage was tagged – in some depictions – with the name Aha. The interest towards such a figure quickly took root in ancient Egypt and its cult largely spread in the course of time, giving rise to a creature known by the name of Bes. One of its first appearances is usually coupled with a group of hybrid imaginary compositions, such as griffins, serpopards, and Ipy/Taweret. This last god is depicted as a standing hippopotamus with a prominent human belly, lion's paws, a short lion's mane and a crocodile's skin on its back. The primary intent of all these figures seems to have been the protection of children, mothers during pregnancy and childbirth, and, by extension, the defence of the deceased during rebirth.

This range of figures usually appears on scarabs, seals, bricks, and ivory wands. An example of the rare three-dimensional representations of both Aha and Ipy in the form of small blue faience figurines is preserved in the British Museum's collection, part of a group of objects found in the burial G62 at Abydos, excavated by Petrie in 1902 on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Society. Four other faience figurines were recorded as coming from the same tomb – a pregnant female dwarf, an antelope or a goat, and two model vessels. In addition, the British Museum also holds what is left of the astonishing funerary equipment of this tomb, amounting to 31 objects. These comprise seven calcite and anhydrite vessels (including two lids), a silver

torque, a bronze mirror, three pairs of ivory wands, a copper bowl, a wooden space bar, a wooden fish, a lapis lazuli scarab mounted in a silver ring, an obsidian scarab mounted in a golden ring, a wooden amulet in form of a *wedjat*-eye, eight cowrie shells, and many beads and small amulets (cornelian, garnet, faience, gold, turquoise, green jasper, lapis lazuli, feldspar, silver, glazed steatite).

A more detailed archaeological report about the discovery of this group is still lacking and Petrie only left a few scattered notes about the place of discovery designated Cemetery G. This cemetery was located on the south side of the great valley which leads up to the Early Dynastic royal tombs, between the *temenos* of Osiris and the temples of the Ramesside period. Close parallels with similar better documented contexts in Abydos (tombs 416 and E.1, both excavated by Garstang in first half of 20th century) suggest that the items from tomb G62 belong to a multiple burial of the late Middle Kingdom (1800–1700 BC).

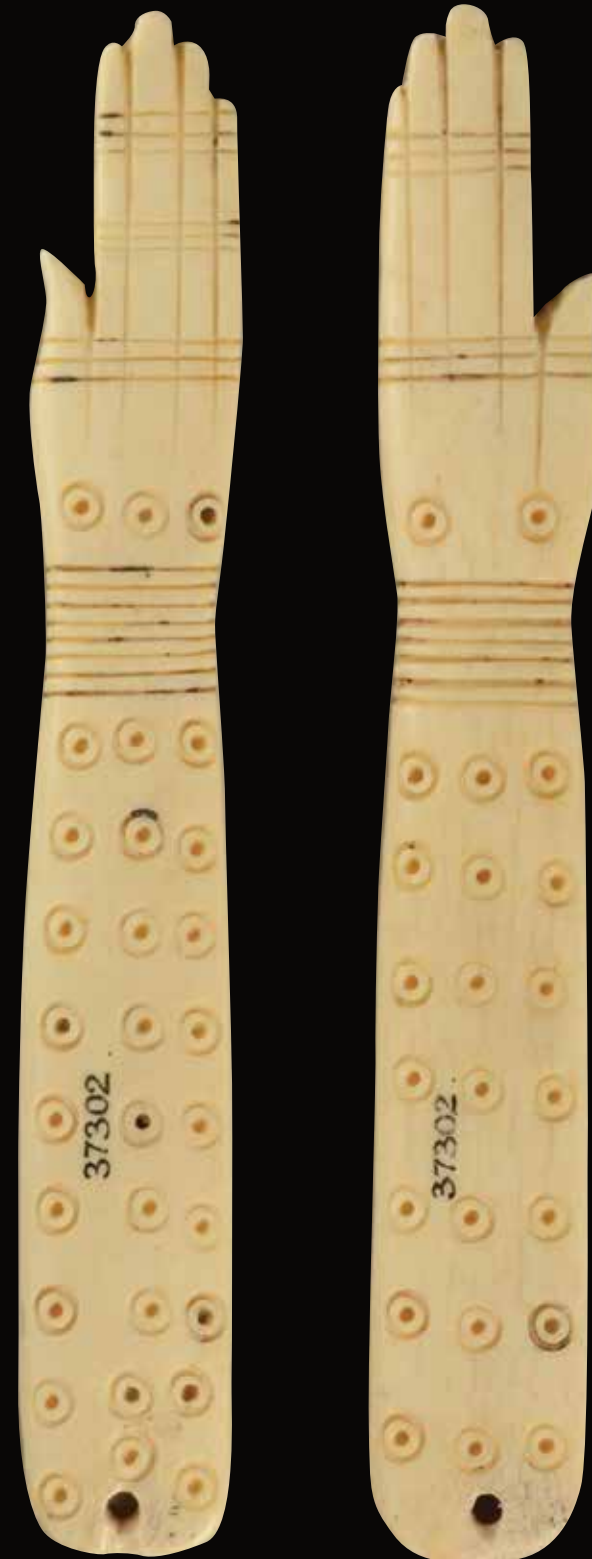
In the late Middle Kingdom, the custom of single burial (based on the nuclear family, man/woman, or man + woman, with the potential addition of children) started to give way to the introduction and widespread of multiple burials, where family depositions succeeded one after the other in a prolonged use of funerary structures. The appearance of images of Aha/Bes and the deliberate choice to be buried with a large number of people could be related, with the aim of creating a more fluid link between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. The tomb had become that deposit of memory, where ancient bodies were deposited next to images and tools for the protection of the living.



Pregnant female dwarf from Abydos G62 (EA 37296).

Aha/Bes figurine from Abydos G62 (EA 37297).

A pair of ivory clappers from Abydos G62 (EA 37302).



In the UK Contextualising Idi

Janet Richards University of Michigan
Heather Tunmore West Australian Museum

The British Museum holds in its collection two uninscribed calcite statuettes on limestone plinths (EA 2312 and 2313), acquired in 1835 from the Salt collection via Sotheby's and said to be from the tomb of the late Old Kingdom official Idi at Abydos. These statuettes are on display in Rooms 62–63, with numerous objects from the same lot including calcite bowls and vases, a bronze offering table and vessels, and a series of bronze implements, some of which bear inscriptions with Idi's name. As a result of recent fieldwork in Egypt, research in London, and consultation with John Taylor on the Salt and d'Athanas material, we have been able to refine the date and provenance of these statuettes. Our research has shed light on their similarity to a third statue acquired by the British Museum at the same time (EA 2296) and the connection of all three to a cult structure in the Middle Cemetery at Abydos, adjacent to the burial of Idi.

That building, the ruined northern end of which we discovered in 2013, is not a tomb. Stratigraphic, ceramic and textual evidence indicates that it housed a long-lived saint or hero cult focused on Idi, the 6th Dynasty overseer of priests, vizier and governor of Upper Egypt. The cult was initiated as a local phenomenon in the late Old Kingdom, but fell into hiatus as of the second half of the First Intermediate Period, attested by Christian Knoblauch's analysis of offering activity throughout the Middle Cemetery. This hiatus may have related to the desecration event noted in the well-known *Instruction for Merikare*, and is also suggested archaeologically by evidence for burning throughout the cemetery. Subsequently an official of the late 11th Dynasty Intef III named Nekhty 'found Idi's tomb in ruins' (according to inscriptions excavated by Mariette's men) and appropriated it for his own burial. He formally revived Idi's saint cult, most likely constructing at that time a monumental limestone building as its primary focus. The cult then grew steadily through the early Middle Kingdom: an ostrakon with ink drawing of a building, perhaps a representation of Idi's cult building, dates to this phase. Following another hiatus in activity, votive dedications resumed in the late Middle Kingdom when numerous small mud brick chapels clustered around the cult structure and Idi's tomb.



Destroyed Idi cult building.
Photo: K D Turner for the Abydos Middle Cemetery Project, 2013.

Calcite statue from the tomb of Idi. (EA 2313)

The Museum's calcite statuettes (EA 2312, 2313) do not resemble other 6th Dynasty sculpture or relief recovered from the Middle Cemetery either during Mariette's excavations or the new work of the University of Michigan. The style and quality of these latter productions suggest they derived from royal workshops. Rather, the exaggerated details of the statuettes' facial features align with those of a votive stela excavated at Idi's complex in 2007, dated by Detlef Franke to the very early First Intermediate Period. Further, the plinth detail they share of stairs leading to the surface on which they sit or stand evokes the status of a deified individual – Idi the saint or hero, acting as intermediary between his local descendants and the world of the gods. These statuettes, we propose, were not part of Idi's burial assemblage: they were produced in a regional workshop during the First Intermediate Period and dedicated to the memory of Idi as a local saint – somewhere near his tomb, but not in it.

Close examination of a third statue in the Museum's collection (EA 2296) led to the surprising conclusion that it was produced in the same workshop at the same time and for the same purpose. Considerably larger, it is of limestone with a surface layer of plaster. Its surface is badly burnt, obscuring visual nuances. Yet it shares stylistic details seen on the calcite statuettes: a peculiar variation of the wig, the wasp waist, the execution of other parts of the body. That it is burnt allows for an even more specific refinement of the likely findspot of this statue: to an area north of the saint cult building where we have documented fire damage.

It is clear therefore that the British Museum material includes objects from the First Intermediate Period Idi cult building as well as from what remained of Idi's 6th Dynasty burial assemblage when Nekhty appropriated his tomb, sealing these objects under a floor laid to hold his own assemblage. Recently it has also emerged that this material has links to a collection in the Oriental Museum of Durham University: Margaret Maitland pointed out to us how very closely their calcite statuette EG 4009 (also on a red painted limestone base), resembles EA 2312 and 2313. Its provenance indicates that all three were first brought to light at the same time in the 19th century, and must be from the same ancient workshop and dedicatory context: either from Idi's cult building or one of the many small votive chapels associated with it, location of one of the world's earliest documented saint cults.



In the UK A decade of the International Training Programme



Amal Attia Alla, Gaber Abdalla and Omima Abd el-Rahman presenting their exhibition concept with Kerma ceramics from the British Museum collection.

Claire Messenger
Manager, International Training Programme
Emma Croft
Assistant, International Training Programme

Five curators from Egypt and Sudan joined the 2015 International Training Programme (ITP): Mohamed Mokhtar (National Museum of Egyptian Civilization), Fatma Ali Abbas Mohamed (Egyptian Museum, Cairo), Wesam Mohamed Abd-El-Alim (Museums Sector, Ministry of Antiquities, Cairo), Amal Attia Alla Gaber Abdalla and Omima Abd el-Rahman Mohammed (both Sudan National Museum). They joined 19 other curators from 11 countries to share knowledge, skills and experiences and to explore a wide range of museum practices, including time spent at museums elsewhere in the UK.

Alongside studying the Egyptian and Nubian collections, library and archives to further their own research, they focused on exhibition interpretation and design, collection storage, management and access. Each participant had to develop a proposal for a temporary exhibition based on the physical space and dynamic concept of the Asahi Shimbun Displays in Room 3 at the British Museum. Choosing a single object with their department mentors – Anna Garnett, Ilona Regulski and Julie Anderson – the participants explored how their exhibition could engage with audiences and might be designed and marketed, having chosen the following subjects:

- *Shaping lives: mud brick craft in ancient Egypt* (Mohamed Mokhtar)
- *Wrestling in ancient Egypt* (Fatma Ali Abbas)
- *280 days of excuses: work absence in ancient Egypt* (Wesam Mohamed Abd-El-Alim)
- *The potter's craft: handmade ceramics from ancient Sudan* (Amal Attia Alla Gaber Abdalla and Omima Abd el-Rahman)

Looking back over the past ten years we are proud to see continuing examples of dialogue and cascaded training within Egypt, with workshops, 'mini ITPs' and conferences organised and delivered by our past participants. These sustainability projects have enabled us to expand our impact beyond the six weeks of the summer programme. In 2015 Nevine Nizar from the Centre of Documentation & Studies on Ancient Egypt, a participant in 2012, returned to the British Museum for an additional training week, while Wesam Mohamed Abd-El-Alim was selected as a registrar on the Museum's Egypt Documentation Project (see article by Sara Kayser).

Since its inception in 2006, the ITP has developed a global network of 207 heritage professionals from 31 different countries, and the tenth anniversary of the programme was celebrated in Mumbai on 20 and 21 November 2015. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), the former Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai, in collaboration with the British Museum and with the support of the Getty Foundation, hosted a three-day workshop in Mumbai titled 'Creating museums of world stories'. The workshop provided a forum for global museum and heritage professionals to brainstorm and debate around proposals to develop new forms of 'encyclopaedic museums' that might be created beyond Europe and North America. Divided into multinational groups to develop exhibition proposals that combined global and local stories, one proposal used the Suez Canal as a thread connecting the cotton trade, Armenian architects and European colonialism – all presented by an Indian curator. A recurrent theme was a desire of past participants to move beyond exhibitions on the great and famous men and women of history, towards displays that foreground the experiences of everyday people.

2015 ITP placements in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan were supported by Lady Keswick, the Aall Foundation, the John S Cohen Foundation, the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust and the Sfumato Foundation.

Further information

Further resources

To search the collection database and download free high-resolution images for non-commercial use, visit britishmuseum.org/collection

For information on visiting the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan's collection, library and archive, or objects held in other departments, visit britishmuseum.org

For *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*, the free online journal presenting the latest research including fieldwork, click on 'Publications' at britishmuseum.org

For membership of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, and free online access to the *Sudan & Nubia* journal, visit sudarchrs.org.uk or follow @Sudan_and_Nubia on Twitter.

To order the monographs in the series *British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan*, visit peeters.be

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With special thanks to Rikki Bream (1934–2015)

New publications

Anna Garnett, *The Colossal Statue of Ramesses II* (British Museum Press, 2015)

Cäcilia Fluck, Gisela Helmecke and Elisabeth O'Connell (eds), *Egypt: faith after the pharaohs* (British Museum Press, 2015)

Aurélia Masson-Berghoff and Franck Goddio (eds.), *Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds* (Thames & Hudson, 2016)

Dates for your diary

Sudan Archaeological Research Society
Recent archaeological fieldwork in Sudan
9 May 2016

The Raymond and Beverly Sackler distinguished lecture in Egyptology
Colossal and processional statuary in ancient Egypt: Where? When? Why?
Christian Loeben, Kestner Museum, Hannover
13 July 2016

The annual Egyptological colloquium
Statues in context
13–14 July 2016

The Kirwan Memorial Lecture
(Sudan Archaeological Research Society)
Nile Valley Archaeology and Darfur Ethnography. The impact of Women in cultural evolution
Dr Randi Haaland, Professor emerita of Middle Eastern and African Archaeology, University of Bergen, Norway
19 September 2016

British Museum exhibitions

The BP exhibition
Sunken cities: Egypt's lost worlds
Supported by BP
19 May – 27 November 2016

Writing for eternity
Tullie House, Carlisle
12 March – 8 May 2016

Salisbury Museum
20 May – 4 September 2016

Abergavenny Museum
16 September 2016 – 9 January 2017

Pharaoh: King of Egypt
Cleveland Museum of Art
13 March – 12 June 2016

A British Museum spotlight tour
A Greek in Egypt: the hunter of Naukratis

Corinium Museum, Cirencester
28 May – 17 July 2016

Nottingham University Museum
22 July – 16 October 2016

South Shields Museum & Art Gallery
22 October 2016 – 26 February 2017



Figure of a kneeling king from the exhibition *Pharaoh King of Egypt*. Cleveland Museum of Art, 13 March – 12 June 2016. EA 11496

Front cover:
Portrait of a man, possibly
steward or *Reis* (foreman) of
workmen. From the 1913/14
Byzantine Research
and Publication Fund
excavations at Wadi Sarga
(British Museum
AES Ar. 719)