CONTENTS
BACE 19 (2008)

Editorial Foreword 5

The Church of Deir Abu Metta and a Christian Cemetery in Dakhleh Oasis: a Brief Report Gillian E. Bowen 7

Guaranteeing the Pax Aegptiaca? Re-assessing the Role of Elite Offspring as Wards and Hostages within the New Kingdom Egyptian Empire in the Levant Paul J. Cowie 17

Metalworking at Amarna: a Preliminary Report Mark Eccleston 29


The Use of Stone in Early Dynastic Egyptian Construction Angela La Loggia 73

Ceramics at Mut el-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis: Evidence of a New Kingdom Temple Richard J. Long 95

The Naos of King Darius I Heba Mahran 111

New Tombs at el-Mo'alla and the Family of Ankhtify Yahia el-Masry 119

Theban Tomb 147: its Owner and Erasures Revisted Boyo G. Ockinga 139
EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The year 2008 has been an exciting one in the life of the Australian Centre for Egyptology. Towards the end of the field-season, in February 2008, Corroboree was held in Cairo: a celebration of 25 years of Australian and Egyptian cooperation in archaeology. It comprised a special exhibition held in the Egyptian Museum under the patronage of Dr Zahi Hawass and the Australian Ambassador His Excellency Dr Robert Bowker, and a one-day Conference hosted by the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Zamalek. This gave the Australians from Macquarie and Monash Universities the wonderful opportunity to showcase the work conducted over the last decades by exhibiting some of the outstanding objects found and by presenting papers on the current field projects. The speakers were Susanne Binder, Gillian Bowen, Colin Hope, Naguib Kanawati, Christiana Köhler, Boyo Ockinga, Karin Sowada, Anna Stevens and Elizabeth Thompson.

Between November 2007 and February 2008, the archaeological teams from Macquarie University continued their fieldwork in Saqqara (Naguib Kanawati and Boyo Ockinga), Helwan (Christiana Köhler), Tehna (Elizabeth Thompson), Meir (Naguib Kanawati) and Luxor (Boyo Ockinga). They reported on the season's achievements at a conference held in Sydney in April. In March, Christiana Köhler also presented aspects of her archaeological project at the Archaeology Study Day at the Western Plains Community Centre in Dubbo, and in May, Naguib Kanawati was invited to the University of Queensland by the Friends of Antiquity.

The other highlight of the year was the two-day international conference hosted at Macquarie University, 14–15 August 2008, as part of the department's ongoing major research project supported by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme. Memphis in the First Two Millenia was sold-out months ahead and a great success. Our key-note speakers Miroslav Barta (Prague), Beatrix Gessler-Löhr (Heidelberg), Yvonne Harpur (Oxford), David Jeffreys (London), Audran Labrousse (Paris), Jaromir Malek (Oxford), Adela Oppenheim (New York) and Alain Zivie (Paris), together with twenty-two other speakers from Macquarie, Monash and LaTrobe Universities and the universities of Montpellier and Helwan made for very stimulating and thought-provoking days of lectures and discussions. Preparations for the publication of the proceedings have begun.

Our annual symposium took place the following day entitled Egyptology: A Global Perspective with the key-note speakers from the Memphis-Conference presenting topics of their choice. The audience were treated to a feast of lectures ranging from "Sphinx – Obelisk – Pyramid: the Egyptian Revival in European art and architecture", "Imhotep: an always current myth", "..."
"Approaches to studying 2-dimensional Old Kingdom art" to "The collapse of the Old Kingdom: myth or reality?", "Senwosret III's pyramid temple" and "The cow and the ambassador: a recently discovered tomb at Saqqara". Individually and in groups, our guests from overseas then went to other centres in Australia, to Adelaide (Adela Oppenheim), Melbourne (Beatrix Gessler-Lühr, Jaromir Malek, Alain Zivie), Brisbane (David Jeffreys) and Perth (Yvonne Harpur and Paolo Scremin), to speak about their recent work in Egypt. Our warmest thanks are due to Mrs Janet Gale for her continuing generosity in supporting the activities of the Australian Centre for Egyptology and making this year's special event possible.

This year, congratulations go to Shingo Fukagawa, Christian Knoblauch, Sophie Willoughby-Winlaw and Alexandra Woods who were awarded the PhD for their theses in Egyptology. We also congratulate Linda Evans on taking up the position of Macquarie University Research Fellow, and Alexandra Woods and Christian Knoblauch for being appointed as lecturers at Macquarie and Monash Universities respectively.

A group of staff and post-graduate students from Macquarie University delivered papers on their latest research at the 10th International Congress of Egyptologists held in Rhodes under the auspices of the University of the Aegean, 22–29 May, 2008: Camilla Di-Biase Dyson, Linda Evans, Todd Gillen, Stephen Renton, Hanada Tarawneh and Alex Woods. Christiana Köhler, Angela La Loggia (PhD candidate, Macquarie University) and Lisa Mawdsley (PhD candidate, Monash University) spoke at the international conference Origin of the State: Predynastic and Early Egypt at the British Museum in London.

For the Egyptological Society of Victoria and for the Centre of Archaeology / Ancient History seminar series, Colin Hope and Gillian Bowen delivered lectures on recent work in Dakhleh Oasis; James Hoffmeier (Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois) presented "New Evidence on the Sea Peoples' Invasion of Egypt", and Gae Callender spoke about the Czech excavations at Abusir and Egyptian queens regnant.

The Sixth International Dakhleh Oasis Project Conference will be held in Lecce, Italy, in September 2009. Further information on the event can be obtained from the website of the Centre for Archaeology / Monash University.

As every year, I thank the BACE production team, especially Leonie Donovan and Joyce Swinton, for their time and continued support.

Susanne Binder
October 2008
Macquarie University, Sydney
THE EXCAVATIONS AT MUT EL-KHARAB, DAKHLEH OASIS IN 2008

Colin A. Hope, Gillian E. Bowen, Wendy Dolling, Emmeline Healey, James Milner

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Excavations at Mut el-Kharab were carried out between 8/1/2008 and 31/1/2008, the principal aim of the excavations was to continue the exploration of the remains of the Temple of Seth in the centre of the site and its associated buildings on the west, and to study further the large mud-brick structures within the south-east corner of the temple temenos. The results of each of the excavation areas are summarized below; also provided is a discussion of the newly-discovered monumental inscription.

I: The Main Temple Area (Figure 1)

Trench 32 (excavator James Milner)

Trench 32 is positioned approximately one metre south of Trench 4, excavated in 2001, and aligned along the eastern face of the mud-brick shrine, Trench 6, on the west of the temple (Figure 2). The excavation area of the trench is 7 metres north-south and 4 metres east-west; it had been extensively plundered. The main features revealed by the excavation are shown in Figure 3a.

A small remnant of an in situ sandstone block pavement in the north-west corner was revealed (Context 20). This includes 13 blocks that have been smoothed to create a level surface (Plate 1). Further blocks, presumably from the same feature, were found throughout the area but were in disturbed positions. One block from this area is decorated in incised relief with the head of a male fecundity figure coloured blue carrying offerings, and may possibly date to the 20th Dynasty. To the east of the stone pavement was an occupational surface sitting above a brick platform. The ceramics indicated that this floor could possibly date to the 4th century CE. The brick platform covers the majority of the trench and is present across the temple area in Trenches 4, 16, 17, 24 and 27, but is often truncated by robbers' pits. Similarly,
there were four pits cut through the platform within this trench. Two of these pits were extended down to a depth of Old Kingdom occupation.

In one of these robbers' pits, in the south-west corner, a truncated grey-brick wall (Context 22) emerged, which is possibly the oldest architectural feature revealed (Plate 2). Its bricks measure on average 47 x 19 x 9–11 cm, and are thus considerably larger than those in the higher walls, which are 36 x 22 x 10–12 cm. This wall is built directly upon a sandy deposit; ceramic evidence dates this strata to the Old Kingdom. A roughly east-west, yellow mud-brick wall revealed at the south edge of the trench (Context 8), aligned with the southern wall of the shrine to the west, is built over the lower wall. A small part of the early wall was also found below a second east-west, yellow mud-brick wall (Context 21) that occurs approximately in the middle of the trench. Possibly associated with this section of the early wall is a sandstone block (Plate 1). On its west, the yellow brick wall (Context 21) underlies the upper part of the west wall of the Trench 6 shrine (Contexts 4 and 54 in Trench 32), which is built from red mud bricks. This yellow wall was also cut by a robbers' pit, which revealed that it was built on a similar level to the Old Kingdom deposits on the south. Further excavation into this pit and through deposits of sandy loam with lenses of ash, produced a large stone hammer tool and a small amount of debitage from flint working. All ceramics and lithic material from this context date to the Old Kingdom.

A one square metre extension was dug from the north-west corner of Trench 32 into the east wall of Trench 6 with the aim of determining the location of the doorway between the main temple area and this structure. Rubble fill was taken down to the level of the stone pavement. No stone was preserved here but traces of gypsum mortar suggest this area was once paved and indicate the original location of a stone door jamb.

II: Area West of the Main Temple

*Trench 30* (excavator Dr Gillian Bowen)

Trench 30 is located to the north-west of Trench 6 and due west of the structures on its immediate north (Trenches 18, 21 and 25; Figure 2) in an area with numerous mud-brick features visible at surface level. This area was chosen for excavation in order to clarify the architectural development of these buildings and their relation to the shrine, and to try to establish their chronology and purpose. The trench begins 1 metre south of the north-west corner of Trench 6 and continues north for a further 12 metres; it communicates directly with Trench 25. The area was covered by dense collapse from substantial walls that had fallen in a north-westerly direction,
more extensive in the south-east than in the north-west. Excavation was confined to two parts of the trench: one a 5.7 by 5.5 m area in the north and the other a 4.8 by 3.2 m area in the south (Figures 2 and 4).

**South Excavation Area**

The southern area was divided by a north-south wall (Context 18) that was visible just below surface scatter. West of this wall, dense mud-brick collapse filled the area to a depth of 1.5 metres. At the base of this collapse, two ¼ sections from a sandstone column-base were encountered against the south baulk and the remaining half of the column base was visible in the baulk. The column-base is substantial with a diameter of 1.10 m and a height of 20 cm; from the marks on the top of the two ¼ sections it can be determined that the column would have had a diameter of 50 cm. The column-base sections were lying on a shallow deposit of rubble, just above a deposit of sand. This sand, which extended throughout the trench, contained potsherds of the Old Kingdom, and worked ostrich egg shell, and is the same context found beneath Trenches 6, 18, 21 and 25. There were no structures in this section of the test and the wall that divided the test was shown to be only three courses high and 1.5 metres in length; it does, however, continue south beyond the excavation. A grey mud-brick wall (Contexts 31 and 121) was observed below it at a depth of about 60 cm; it continues to both the north and south beyond the excavation area. The lower courses of this wall sit on the same deposit as the half column-base and the two may be contemporary. This wall clearly represents a different occupational phase from the upper wall. It was decided to extend the excavation to the east of the upper wall in order to determine the extent of the lower wall and whether any other structures from this occupational phase remained *in situ*.

Removal of collapse revealed a series of structures built above and to the east of the lower wall (Plate 3). These focused upon the northern half of a circular feature (Context 108), probably a silo, divided north-south by a narrow, single brick wall; the southern half lies beyond the excavation area and its western end has been cut through for the erection of the Trench 6 structure. It has a laid-brick floor (Context 109) and an oil deposit covered the floor of the eastern section. Two bonded walls (Contexts 79 and 80), one brick wide, and at a 90° angle to one another, are located to the north-east and represent one corner of a late structure the remainder of which has been cut away. Other features are located to the west, but these require further excavation before their extent, nature and function can be determined. The ceramics found within and around these structures comprise almost exclusively small offering bowls, which are ascribed provisionally to the period of Dynasties XXII to XXV. ⁷
Three caches were retrieved. The only other item found was a mud seal (6.4 x 2.9 x 2.8 cm) preserving two oval impressions in which a winged sun's disc surmounts what may be read as nefer sutekh neb pet 'Perfect is Seth, Lord of Heaven'.

The lower wall (31) was concealed by the features built above it and so it was not possible to determine its width or whether there were any contemporary structures to its east. Excavation in this section of the trench revealed that the upper wall (Feature 18) was built on a layer of packing, which was laid above the possible silo. This represents a third occupational phase.

**North Excavation Area**

The western half of this area was filled with extensive mud-brick collapse that lay directly upon sand; this had destroyed all trace of structures that might have been originally located in this area. Removal of mud-brick collapse in the eastern part revealed the presence of three short sections of grey-brick walls, oriented east-west (Contexts 3, 5 and 7), due south of two larger sections of walls, one in yellow brick (Context 20) and the other in red brick (Context 45). These larger walls abut a north-south red-brick wall on the east, which is the exterior wall of the complex located in Trenches 18, 21 and 25 (Figure 4). To the west of the ends of the larger walls a brick pier emerged that appears to comprise several separate parts all in grey mud brick (Contexts 43–4). This pier and the southernmost short section of wall (Context 3) are built down to the same level and set upon sand that contained ceramics of the Old Kingdom, and upon which the collapse in the western part of the area lay. Between the pier and southern wall, a mud-brick floor had been laid, again upon sand but at a higher level than the former features. Overlying this platform was brick rubble that also extended to the east of the pier and upon which the two other short sections of walls (Contexts 5 and 7) were built (Plate 4); they clearly post-date the pier and the southern wall and their exact function cannot yet be determined. Between the pier and the end of the red brick wall (Context 45), a rectangular recess was located (Context 14) and there is another to its east between the larger walls (Context 46). The floors of these two features are at the same level, considerably lower than the laid brick floor; they were filled with brick rubble and may be contemporary with the pier and southern wall.

A large sandstone block had been laid at the entrance of the western recess (Context 45) and this served as a foundation for the pier. The block was removed; it is 1.10 m in height and is inscribed on three faces with a text commemorating the activity of a local administrator, Sa-Igai, who records making additions to a shrine of the god Igai. The piece probably dates to the Middle Kingdom (see below). Several demotic ostraka, a greywacke plate and
numerous small ceramic vessels (many broken) were found in this cupboard. The pottery comprises mostly small offering vessels and no doubt relates to the same occupational phase as those offering vessels found in the southern test. An ovoid of worked sandstone with flat ends and some incisions was found in collapse against the pier and a large, sandstone offering table was found lying in collapse in the north-west corner of the excavation.

In summary, the eastern half of the southern section of Trench 30 attests at least three occupational phases:
1. the lower wall, which is built immediately above probable Old Kingdom strata and may be of that period; this was later covered by substantial collapse in the west;
2. flimsy structures including a possible silo, built probably in Dynasty XXV;
3. the Trench 6 structure was then erected, cutting through the part of the silo; this probably took place at the beginning of Dynasty XXVI on the basis of epigraphic data found within and nearby; a north-south wall was erected on rubble packing above the structures on the west.

In the northern section all structures post-date the complex on the east. There are two distinct, pre-collapse, phases here:
1. contemporary with the earliest activity immediately to the south, and comprising the pier and southern wall, associated recesses on the north, and the red-brick and yellow-brick east-west walls; the area was then filled with brick rubble.
2. later the two central short sections of wall were built on this rubble.

The material immediately below all of the earliest buildings was sand in which Old Kingdom material was found. The erection of structures immediately above an Old Kingdom horizon is consistent with the pattern found in Trenches 6, 18, 21 and 25.

_Trench 33 (excavator Emmeline Healey)_

Trench 33 was opened to the west of the shrine in Trench 6, approximately four metres south of Trench 30. The excavation area measured 3.1 x 4.1 m and was defined by the four red mud-brick walls of a room exposed by surface brushing (Contexts 2–5; Figure 3b). Trench 33 was aligned along a partially standing wall (Context 37) of a large structure built over the western wall of the trench, other parts of which remain on the south. The southern and northern walls extend beyond the trench.

Excavation revealed yellow mud-brick walls against the pre-existing red mud-brick walls that define the room along the northern and eastern edges (Contexts 6–7). The room is thus similar to those found in Trenches 18 and 25.
(Figure 2). It was entered by a door in the north-east corner, with the eastern yellow brick wall as the door sill; this door is now blocked with bricks. Further excavation revealed a layer of grey brick rubble above compact red-brown fill with many small ceramic sherds concentrated in the north-west quadrant of the room. In the southern section of the room eight incomplete worked stone blocks were removed, one of which had been used as a door pivot, and another had grooves from knife sharpening along one side. Beneath these stone blocks was an ashy lens which lay above the lower horizon of the stone material. The ceramic record associated with these upper contexts includes New Kingdom bread moulds, one New Kingdom blue-painted sherd and Nile Valley amphorae sherds from the New Kingdom, and material covering the Third Intermediate Period to Mamluk Period.

Excavation continued below the compact red-brown fill and two related, thick red mud-brick walls were found extending west-east across (Contexts 12 and 17), and continuing beyond, the trench. The fill between these parallel walls was largely grey brick rubble; a compact brown-grey surface that was possibly a floor was revealed. The ceramics from between these early walls was of the Old Kingdom, and included a few possible Early Dynastic pieces. Excavation continued between the early walls in the east section only, where sandy contexts yielded little material; work stopped at the base of the early walls (Plate 5).

The fill between the southern wall of the trench and the southern early wall was then removed until the bottom of the early wall was revealed. The upper contexts were of red-grey packing mixed with small rubble, while the lower contexts contained more sand than rubble. The pottery from this section of the trench was mixed, including sherds of Old Kingdom, Late New Kingdom, Third Intermediate Period and Late Period date. Amongst the finds, a small greywacke fragment with a sculpted cobra within a frame in pharaonic style is of note.

III: The Southeast Corner of the Temenos (excavator Wendy Dolling)

Previous excavation of a series of trenches in the south-east corner of the Temenos identified several phases of occupation around a substantial mud-brick, rectangular structure, probably dating to the Roman Period, which was cut through earlier mud brick buildings. A large amount of ceramic dating to the Late Period and Early Ptolemaic Period was recovered, though the significant degree of disturbance, both ancient and recent, meant that much of this was recovered from disturbed contexts. A series of eroding mud-brick walls were visible at surface level approximately 75 metres to the west of these
excavations, having the appearance of a substantial building or buildings. It was hoped that investigation of this structure could clarify the nature of the activity in this part of the site and potentially reveal in situ Roman and/or Ptolemaic material. Two trenches were laid out: Trench 28 covering a 12 x 13 m area that included the surface mud-brick walls, and Trench 31, a narrow 2 x 9 m strip trench, linking Trench 28 to the southern temenos wall.

**Trench 28**

The limits of this trench were determined by the extent of the remains visible at surface level; some additional surface clearance was undertaken to the east and west so that a total area of 25 m east-west by 13 m north-south was incorporated into Trench 28 (Figure 5, Plate 6).

The base of the walls of a yellow/brown mud-brick structure (Building 1) were quickly revealed, but are not easily interpreted as a meaningful structure at this stage. Large mud-brick walls in the east and south (Contexts 6, 10 and 58–9) have been exposed that seem to be the outer walls of the building; however, the western and northern limits of the structure remain uncertain. Several distinct intrusive cuts within this building and further areas of pitting have disturbed the stratigraphy considerably: a single pot emplacement containing a base fragment of a Roman cooking pot within a compacted surface was the only undisturbed floor deposit encountered (Context 50). The foundation level of all of the walls was found to be set down into, and built over, a thick layer of clay and broken mud-brick packing. A relatively small area of this packing was excavated and found to overlie a horizon of crushed but mostly complete ceramic vessels, preliminarily identified as of the Ptolemaic Period, as well as brick walls or possible floor levels that presumably date to the same period or earlier. The ceramics recovered from the packing requires study but at present the majority seems to date to the Ptolemaic Period with some earlier and later sherds. This suggests that the building constructed with this packing (Building 1) was constructed during the early Roman Period.

Clearance of surface sand and rubble to the east of Building 1 exposed an abutting wall of a different colour brick. There appears to be a large amount of structural collapse to the east of this wall as well as possible in situ structural elements.

**Trench 31**

In the southern end of the trench abutting the face of the temenos wall is a red/brown mud-brick wall or possible floor that extends to the north for a distance of 3.7 metres. A large intrusive cut was found truncating
archaeological deposits in much of the central trench area, clearance of rubble fill of which exposed several mud-brick walls. Two abutting east-west walls were found that seem to pass beneath the later brick structure, and a north-south section of slumped wall was exposed along the western edge of the trench. The exact relationship of these walls cannot as yet be determined. At the northern end of the trench abutting Building 1, there is a compacted surface. Although this surface is severely eroded, it does seem to be original; it is truncated by the intrusive cut in the centre of the trench. Given that most of the deposits so far cleared from this trench were disturbed rubble fill, it is not possible to date the structures that have been revealed. The majority of the ceramics date from the Late Period to the Roman period. The complexity of the remains mirrors that found to the east.

IV: The Inscription of Sa-Igai (Olaf Kaper) (Figure 6)

The inscription is carved into a block of reddish sandstone, which has been broken at the top and bottom. Its remaining height is 118 cm; the width tapers from 37 cm at the base to 34 cm, and its thickness is ca 25 cm. The front of the stone is badly damaged through secondary use.

The Text

This may be described as an autobiography of Sa-Igai, governor of the oasis, written in four columns of hieroglyphs over three sides of the block. There does not seem to be much missing from the top of the inscription as all four columns start with the name and titles of the governor or of the god Igai to whom the inscription is dedicated.

Right side: (Words spoken by) the chief of the priests: I am one who returns, whom his city loves, after I have inscribed my name upon the stone that was brought by the army, a ruler who is loyal (…)

This first line of the inscription describes the governor, who is only given the title Chief of the Priests, as he returns to the community having completed the building works commemorated by this inscription. His relationship with his town, presumably Mut, is emphasized, as is the origin of the stone that was quarried and brought by an army. Instead of a military force, the word may also specifically indicate a quarrying expedition, so we can not know for certain which is intended here.

Front face, right column: (Words spoken by) Igai (Lord of) Mut (Mrt?) of the Oasis (… he has given) strength (…)

56
This column is badly damaged and only fragments of the inscription can be reconstructed and read. The only certain part is the name of the god Igai. This column seems to focus exclusively on the god. His name is followed by titles and further qualifications that are all but lost. I have reconstructed the usual title of the god, Lord of the Oasis, attested on several other monuments (see below). Following this, there are traces of a word that is possibly to be read as the place name Mut, but as the ancient name is unknown, this is extremely speculative.

Front face, left column: (Words spoken by) the leader of nobility, mayor, chief of the priests: I have erected a monument in the temple of my lord Igai, so that (my name lives …)

The governor declares his purpose; his official titles are given and he records carrying out building works in the temple of Igai. This column comes close to what would be a dedication inscription in a royal monument, except that the text is phrased in direct speech.

Left side: (Words spoken by) the leader of nobility, mayor, chief of the priests Sa-Igai, beloved of Nebeh (another deity?), who does what is praised by his god: I have erected monuments for (…)

In this column the name of the governor is given following his titles. There is no clear solution for the signs following the name. I have chosen to read the sequence n+b+h as the name of a deity, because of the verb "beloved" following; this is highly tentative as this divine name is unknown. It is not impossible, however, to encounter various local gods in the oasis. The text continues with a phrase known from autobiographical inscriptions, in which Sa-Igai expresses his servitude towards his god.

The date of the inscription

Sa-Igai is unknown from other texts and this is the first attestation of the name. The inscription is not datable by reference to a king, so that this has to be derived from a close comparison with similar inscriptions.

First, the name and titles of the governor. The name is of a type first attested in the Middle Kingdom. Likewise, the combination of titles "mayor and overseer of priests" was first introduced under Mentuhotep II, and it remained in use until the middle of Dynasty XIII. Previously, during Dynasty VI, the governor of Dakhleh Oasis carried the title "ruler of the oasis", which differed from the titles of the contemporary governors in the Nile Valley. In the Middle Kingdom, the titles of the administration were apparently made identical to
those in the Nile Valley. *Sa-Igai* records having commissioned building works in the temple of Igai. The expression "to make monuments" is nearly always used of the king only. It occurs in a few private dedication inscriptions from Dynasty XI onwards, but mainly with reference to funerary monuments not temples. Private dedications to deities are extremely rare in the Middle Kingdom and only a few parallels may be cited from the time of Mentuhotep II to mid Dynasty XIII. The closest comparable material dates from the time of late Dynasty XI and early Dynasty XII.

The first inscription in which a governor claims to have added to a local temple is in Beni Hasan, Tomb 33 of Baqet II, from Dynasty XI: "who made a monument for eternity in the temple of Khnum of Baqet". In Deir el-Bersheh, the tomb of the nomarch and vizier Ahanakht I carries a long biographical inscription, which starts: "I made great monuments in the temple of (my) lord Thoth" and later: "(the temple, which) I built anew (?) to my lord Thoth, I inscribed my name (upon it) …in order to make my name live upon the monuments that I made". These phrases are nearly identical to the ones used by *Sa-Igai*. The tomb of Ahanakht should be dated to the reign of Mentuhotep II, after the reunification of the country. The date of these two inscriptions from the start of the Middle Kingdom suggests a similar date for the inscription from Mut el-Kharab. During Dynasty XII it was perhaps no longer possible for provincial governors to erect temples in their own right, at least in the Nile Valley. In the Dakhleh Oasis, the relative autonomy of the governors may have been greater, as previously, so that a date for our text in the early years of Dynasty XII may not be ruled out.

Even though the block resembles a doorjamb, this is not its original function, because it has tapering sides. The closest parallel for this shape, in fact the only parallel, is found in the pilasters around the courtyard of the temple of Satet built under Mentuhotep II at Elephantine. A similar court with pilasters should be reconstructed for the temple at Mut el-Kharab, with the autobiographical inscription of the governor who erected the monument inscribed on one of these. Other blocks of similar dimensions have been found at Mut, all but one uninscribed, and this preserved a hymn to Seth from the Ramesside period. The architectural type from the reign of Mentuhotep II again points at a date for our inscription in the early years of the Middle Kingdom.

**Concluding Remarks**

Whilst previous excavations have documented early Old Kingdom and possibly Early Dynastic Period activity at the site in the form of cultural
material, mainly ceramics, in 2008 the first definite \textit{in situ} remains of structures datable to the Old Kingdom were found in Trenches 32 and 33, and further deposits of Old Kingdom pottery were located in Trench 30. This confirms the existence of a settlement of this date at Mut el-Kharab, and the scale of the walls in Trench 32 implies that some of the structures were quite sizable. It is further of note that late Old Kingdom pottery, as characterized by the dark red, slipped and polished, carinated bowls and associated forms are absent from the assemblage, in which the deep-sided, carinated bowls with lighter red, polished surfaces (so-called classic Meidum bowls) are regularly found along with coarsely-tempered shale wares. The former are characteristic of the early Old Kingdom, and their association with structures at Mut el-Kharab indicates that it is one of the first sites settled within Dakhleh by Nile Valley Egyptians. Whether it indicates the date at which their colonization of the region commenced cannot yet be determined, but the existence of inscriptions left by expeditions during Dynasty IV beyond Dakhleh at Khufu Hill/Djedefre's Water Mountain is of great significance in this regard.

The information provided by the inscription of \textit{Sa-Igai} is invaluable for the study of Dakhleh in the Middle Kingdom, a period poorly represented by material from both the Valley and the oasis.\textsuperscript{20} The god Igai is attested in the Nile Valley from Dynasty III to the Third Intermediate Period.\textsuperscript{21} Within Dakhleh he is first depicted at Khufu Hill,\textsuperscript{22} from which site also comes a possible writing of his name upon a small ceramic stand.\textsuperscript{23} Amongst inscriptions from the Old Kingdom capital of Dakhleh at 'Ain Aseel, a possible domain of Igai is mentioned while one high palace official has the name \textit{Mrw-Igai}.\textsuperscript{24} Igai had the title Lord of the Oasis. A hieratic stela from Mut el-Kharab dated to the Third Intermediate Period mentions "the scribe and priest of Seth, Khai, of the temple domain of Igai".\textsuperscript{25} Together with the newly-discovered inscription, this indicates the veneration of the god in Dakhleh for a considerable duration; to date his name has not been encountered amongst the abnormal hieratic nor demotic ostraka from Mut el-Kharab.\textsuperscript{26}

We cannot yet be certain that the shrine dedicated to Igai from which this block derives was erected at Mut el-Kharab, though the discovery of the latter stela might add weight to this proposal. As mentioned above, other blocks of similar size and shape to the new pillar were found in Trench 21, not too distant from the find spot of this piece, likewise used as paving. These also are of relevance to the discussion, and imply that if the shrine was not at Mut then it was not far away. To date only a few sherds of possible Middle Kingdom date have been found at Mut el-Kharab, and the only other contemporary items from the site may be two small figures of hippopotamuses in carnelian, likely votive gifts at the temple.\textsuperscript{27} Elsewhere in Dakhleh, pottery made within valley
traditions of Dynasties XII–XIII has been found,\textsuperscript{28} and rock inscriptions left by officials have been provisionally ascribed to this period.\textsuperscript{29} Hopefully, future work at Mut el-Kharab will provide further data that will enable a clarification of the relationship between Dakhleh and the Valley contemporary with this major phase of Egyptian expansion.

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\textsuperscript{2} As the work in Trench 29 had to be halted before significant progress was made, no discussion is included here.


\textsuperscript{5} This difference in size is not, of itself, an indicator of difference in date as it has been noted that major structures were often constructed with bricks of a larger size: B.J. Kemp, "Soil (including mud-brick architecture)" in: P. Nicholson / I. Shaw (eds), \textit{Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology} (Cambridge, 2000) 87.


\textsuperscript{7} Space precludes illustrating or discussing this material in detail; however, it is worth noting that similar forms were found below the stone paving in Trench 6, and at Elephantine they have been discovered in Phases IIB–III contemporary with Dynasties XXII–XXV: D.A. Aston, \textit{Elephantine XIX: Pottery from the Late New Kingdom to the Early Ptolemaic Period} (Mainz, 1999) e.g. pls 17.528–30, 29.882, 39.1241, 47.1473–8, 48.1503–13 and 1515–37; C.A. Hope, "A Note on Some Ceramics from Mut, Dakhleh Oasis" in: \textit{Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne} 7 (2004) figs 2v and 3m–n.
12 H. Willems, Les textes des sarcophages et la démocratie: Éléments d'une histoire culturelle du Moyen Empire égyptien (Paris, 2008) chapter 1 (esp. 63–65). From mid Dynasty XIII onwards, town and temple administration was separated; S. Quirke, "The Regular Titles of the Late Middle Kingdom" in: Revue d'Egyptologie 37 (1986) 109, which is our date ante quem.
14 Franke, Heiligtum des Heqaib, 30.
15 P.E. Newberry, Beni Hasan II (London, 1893) 39, pl. 36.
17 H. Willems, Les textes des sarcophages et la démocratie, 88–92.
19 For this stela, see Hope et al., in: BACE 16 (2005) 43, pl. 8; C.A. Hope / O.E. Kaper, "Egyptian interest in the oases in the New Kingdom and a new stela for Seth from Mut el-Kharab" in: M. Collier / S. Snape (eds), Ramesside Studies in Honour of K. A. Kitchen (Bolton, forthcoming).
20 L.L. Giddy, Egyptian Oases (Warminster, 1987) 53–65, 94–95, who concluded that the oases were annexed to Egypt and governed by military officials.
23 H. Reimer, "News about the Clayton Rings: Long Distance Desert Travellers during Egypt's Predynastic" in: S. Hendrickz et al. (eds), Egypt at its Origins (Leuven, 2004) 983, fig. 5.
26 Information courtesy of Dr G. Vittmann, University of Würzburg.
Figure 1. Mut el-Kharab: Plan showing location of all excavated trenches.
Figure 2. Mut el-Kharab: Plan of Trenches 6, 18, 21, 25, 30 and 32.
Figure 3. Mut el-Kharab: a (top) Trench 32 and b (bottom) Trench 33.
Figure 4. Mut el-Kharab: Plan of Trench 30.
Figure 5. Mut el-Kharab: Plan of Building 1 in Trench 28.
Figure 6.  Mut el-Kharab: The inscription of Sa-Igai from Trench 30 North.
Plate 1. Mut el-Kharab Trench 32 looking north: pavement on brick foundation (upper left) and stone block possibly associated with Old Kingdom wall (lower left).

Plate 3. Mut el-Kharab Trench 30 South looking north-east: late structures over earlier wall.

Plate 4. Mut el-Kharab Trench 30 North looking east: reused Middle Kingdom block in foreground.
Plate 5.  Mut el-Kharab Trench 33 looking south-east: lower, Old Kingdom walls.
