

Ancient Egyptian Cities and Settlements: Center and Periphery
6/5/2023 TOKYO

Current Research in the Ancient Egyptian Settlements
6/8/2023 OSAKA

ABSTRACTS OF THE PAPERS

Juan Carlos Moreno García (CNRS, Paris)

LECTURE AT TOKYO

TITLE: *“Building a state in Egypt (3100-1800 BC): the relations between centre and periphery”*

ABSTRACT: Usual narratives about the foundation of the Egyptian state depend heavily on concepts and historical dynamics borrowed from modern nation-states, from "city" and "centralization" to "bureaucracy" and "territoriality". Egypt is thus interpreted as the first territorial state in history, vertically organized, exerting homogeneous authority over a relatively vast area and based on a complex bureaucracy. However, this image depends to a great extent on the official ideology. It emphasized royal agency but ignored other powerful forces, which occasionally emerge in the written record and are detectable thanks to archaeological evidence. Hence, the contribution of local elites was essential for the kingdom's stability. At the same time, Egypt's integration into the exchange networks that linked north-eastern Africa with the Near East influenced the dynamics of Egyptian society and its political organization. The weight of such forces will be discussed in the light of selected epigraphic and archaeological sources.

LECTURE AT OSAKA

TITLE: *“‘Hidden forces’: Trade, nomads local potentates and their contribution in shaping ancient Egypt”*

ABSTRACT: The economic basis of ancient Egypt depended on agriculture, and many administrative documents deal with the management and taxation of land. As for trade, it is usually interpreted as depending on the initiatives of the monarchy, which organized costly commercial expeditions abroad and provided the necessary facilities to guarantee their success, from harbours to logistical bases. However, some evidence reveals the importance of non-institutional actors, their autonomy and their initiatives in the organization of crucial economic activities, from mining to trade. This means that these actors usually held their own agendas and may use the state for their benefit. Kings should cope with their interests to ensure the continuity of the monarchy and the kingdom's stability. The lecture will address some of these issues in the light of recent archaeological and epigraphic discoveries.

Nadine Moeller (Yale University, USA)

TITLE: *Tell Edfu - Recent discoveries at a provincial capital*

ABSTRACT: Recent fieldwork at Tell Edfu has concentrated in two zones of the site which each provide new insights into the political and economic role of this regional urban center. Excavations in Zone 2 have focused on two large, official buildings that can now be linked based on the architectural features and associated finds to a royal domain or *hwt* which would be the first example attested archaeologically. Their functions can be connected to royal expeditions into the Eastern Desert for the extraction of raw materials, in particular copper ore. The associated clay sealings and ceramics date this activity firmly to the end of the 5th Dynasty and the reign of Djedkare - Isesi. Zone 1 contains a sequence of installations dating from the late Middle Kingdom until the early New Kingdom. It has been possible to trace the evolution starting with an administrative building with two columned halls to a large granary court with multiple grain silos during the Second Intermediate Period and a large villa that was the residence of members of the highest elite at Edfu during the transition from the 17th into the early 18th Dynasty. The most spectacular discovery in the villa was a small shrine dedicated to the worship of the ancestors which sheds new light on private religious practices and associated objects within a domestic context. The role of the town of Edfu within its region and its link to the emerging rulers of the late 17th Dynasty at Thebes will also be addressed.

Gregory Marouard (Yale University, USA)

TITLE: *Wadi al-Jarf, the King Khufu's Harbor on the Red Sea and its Links to the Early 4th Dynasty Pyramids*

ABSTRACT: Since 2011, a joint team of the Paris-Sorbonne University and the French Institute in Cairo (IFAO), supported by the CNRS and the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has been excavating an exceptional harbor complex from the early Old Kingdom at Wadi al-Jarf along the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea.

Considered now as the oldest harbor in the world, it was used as a departure point for Royal expeditions to the Sinai Peninsula, the principal mining areas for copper and turquoise during the Pharaonic times.

The entire site stretches for 5 km from the shore of the Red Sea and it preserves all the components of an Egyptian harbor, which it seems to be the prototype and whose layout influenced the later port sites on the Red Sea at Ayn Sukhna and Mersa Gawasis. According to the pottery and epigraphy, this massive installation dates to the very beginning of the Fourth Dynasty and seems to have been occupied during the reigns of kings Snofru and Khufu.

In 2013 the site has received a special reputation after the discovery of several hundreds of fragments of narrative and administrative papyri, the oldest inscribed papyri ever discovered in Egypt so far. Some clearly name King Khufu and give important details and describe activities in close relation to the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza.

This lecture will first focus on a decade of archaeological discoveries at the Wadi al-Jarf, which underline a complex organization and well-structured logistics for the royal projects and expeditions 4600 years ago.