



2nd Annual Birmingham Egyptology Symposium
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‘Nationality, Authority and Individuality in ancient Egypt’

Abstracts for oral presentations

The Scarab-makers of the Second Intermediate Period: *Canaanite and Egyptian relations as reflected by the scarabs of Tell el-‘Ajjul*

Stephanie Boonstra, *University of Birmingham*

The excavations at Tell el-‘Ajjul, a large and important MBII-B-C period site at the intersection of trade routes in the southern Levant, have uncovered over 1200 scarabs dating to the mid-second millennium BCE/Second Intermediate Period of Egypt. This phenomenon of massive quantities of scarabs in southern Palestinian contexts is isolated to this period. Why did this occur and who was making these scarab amulets and seals? Do they denote a massive importation from Egypt or do they demonstrate a local production? Based on the archaeological evidence found at Tell el-‘Ajjul, as well as the visual characteristics and iconography of the scarabs, this paper proposes that many of the Tell el-‘Ajjul scarabs were made on site and in the surrounding region. The adoption, modification, and production of the Egyptian scarab amulet by the Canaanites of the late Middle Bronze Age poses interesting questions regarding the mentality of the scarab producers and owners. These scarabs show a complex co-mingling of Egyptian, Canaanite, Hyksos, and Mesopotamian motifs and demonstrate the complex interconnections and interactions between the southern Levant and the Nile Delta during this ‘Dark Age’ of Egyptian history.

Neighbouring Temples, Worlds Apart: authority and identity in Classical shrines next to Egyptian temples in Roman Egypt

Elizabeth Brophy, *Keble College, Oxford*

In the study of Ancient Egypt, the Egyptian temples hold a prominent position; they are not only some of the best preserved monuments, but are physically dominating structures, commanding the landscape. These temples played an important role throughout the history of Egypt, functioning through to the end of the Roman period, by which point the landscape also played host to structures dedicated to the Greek and Roman pantheons. Investment in the native religious structures also continued, with reliefs pointing to ongoing decoration under the Roman Emperors. Investment, though, was not limited to the Egyptian temples; during the Roman period there is clear evidence for the construction and continued use of classical structures, including shrines, adjacent to the Egyptian temples, as part of the wider religious complex.

Religious buildings such as the shrine to Imperial cult at Karnak, the temple of Augustus at Philae, and the temple to Serapis at Luxor stand in sharp contrast to their surroundings, reflecting the developments in authority and culture brought to Egypt by the Romans. Yet, they are also dwarfed in size and history by the physically different Egyptian temple complexes. My aim in this paper is to take a closer look at these and other classical structures placed next to Egyptian temples, to discuss their locations, date, and physical style, and from this to consider why they were constructed, who was responsible, and how they were used. Many of these structures provide inscriptions and evidence detailing their creation and ongoing use, allowing for a discussion as to what these structures tell us concerning the relationship between the Roman rulers and Egyptian population, the exertion of authority and concept of local identity in Roman Egypt.

Dead Ringers: the mortuary use of bells in Late Pharaonic Egypt

Benjamin Hinson, *University of Cambridge*

In keeping with the theme of nationality, this paper considers how national identity is mirrored through the same material culture being employed in completely different contexts by different cultures. Here, it will be explored using the case study of bells.

Bells are attested since the 1st millennium BC, seemingly invented in the East and rapidly transmitted westwards. This paper shall focus on their introduction into Egypt from the Near East, and their earliest use there, between the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. The initial use of bells in Egypt has received little scholarly attention, despite showing a complete re-interpretation of the material culture. The Egyptians treated bells in an entirely unprecedented manner. Rather than being musical instruments with ritual qualities, as consistently elsewhere, the Egyptians understood bells as solely ritual objects. They were placed universally in children's graves, identifying them with a context and social group with which they were hitherto unassociated. This has never satisfactorily been explored – was such practice an extension of Near Eastern custom, or were bells given new agency based on existing Egyptian beliefs?

This paper addresses questions which have been previously overlooked - why bells were first introduced into Egypt, how they were re-understood, and what significance they held during this initial period of adoption. Possible interpretations of the evidence will be explored, in light of both pre-existing Egyptian religious practice, and Near Eastern beliefs and use of bells, to see if these concepts can help untangle the issues surrounding the employment and reinvention of bells in Late Pharaonic Egypt.

The iconography of Kushite kings between imperialistic, dynastic and individual display

Barbara Hufft, *University of Basel*

The comparatively short reign of the Kushites in Egypt, lasting approximately ninety years, is an especially apt case study to incorporate the debate on national/ethnic, cultural and social identity into Egyptological scientific research. This paper will

question the method of discussing Kushite authority over Egypt on the basis of the predominating ethnicity-centred concepts of culture and 'nations'. In that way, it refers to a (large) group of people who share prevailing characteristics such as common descent, culture, history, language and/or territory. However, the *ethnic turn* has proven to be quite problematic in modern discussions on the concept of culture and the interaction between 'nations'.

By being linked to multiple social frames of reference, a person, or in this case a number of people, can belong to more than just one category of identity. Thus, the rulers of the Egyptian Twenty-fifth Dynasty present themselves in visual display not only as Egyptian pharaoh, but at the same time as Egyptian pharaoh of foreign descent, as Kushite king, and as ruler of the Kushite empire, but ultimately also as an individual person. Therefore, the issue of 'cultures' – as non-static and multi-layered entities – needs to be analysed.

In examining to what extent these theoretical constructs may be fruitfully applied, I approach Kushite royal iconographic material in view of the contextualisation of their supremacy over Egypt and Nubia by operating with the term *identity* – be it cultural, political, social or even religious identity. This paper will address the strategies employed to display a specific vision of identity and sense of allegiance as perceived in the artistic depictions of Nubian kings on monumental wall reliefs in temples throughout the Kushite area of authority.

An historical agent's perception of the past: Thutmose III's response to the period of Hatshepsut

Min-soo Kwack, *Durham University*

Perception of the past, in other words how to relate oneself in the present to the past, is important in at least two respects. Firstly, the past could be mobilised to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime. Underscoring differences or correlations with the past is effective as a means to legitimise the present order of things. Secondly, an individual's understanding of the past is closely related to the individual's personal identity. Memory of the past provides a sense of personal identity because one perceives the distinction between the self in the present and the self in the past.

In the field of Egyptology, we may find many examples which relate to the first aspect, but the second is not yet frequently employed in historical studies probably because it is understood to be a psychological phenomenon. However, it should not be overlooked. This approach in particular sheds light on the understanding of an historical agent and his/her agency, as it can assess the capacity of an individual to act independently and to make their own free choices. In the Egyptian context, a pharaoh may well be understood as an historical agent. Thutmose III's understanding of the period of Hatshepsut for example is an immediate response to his near past. For this reason, it is relatively straightforward to observe the mechanism of agency and individual identity as a reaction to the past. Within this framework, I will examine how Thutmose III treated the remains Hatshepsut left, especially at Karnak, how his understanding of the past related to his personal identity, and the extent to which his practices can be seen as a reflection of this identity. Furthermore, my study will be concerned with how Thutmose III's personal identity influenced the history of the New Kingdom.

Did the Egyptian army act as a mechanism for the preservation of non-Egyptian ethnic identities?

Edward Mushett Cole, *University of Birmingham*

For the majority of ancient Egyptian history, and especially for the dynastic period, Egyptian culture presented a homogenous image of the population of Egypt, except in relation to the members of one particular institution: the Egyptian army. The Egyptian army was only one of the Egyptian institutions to make use of captured peoples who had been settled inside the borders of Egypt throughout Egyptian history. Unlike foreigners in wider Egyptian society or captives given to other institutions, however, who appear to have adopted Egyptian cultural customs, those who joined the army appear to have been able to retain their ethnic identity, or at least to maintain the cultural markers of it. In addition to this, it was also acceptable for their distinct non-Egyptian ethnic identity to be presented in wider Egyptian art, including royal inscriptions on temple walls. This paper will examine the evidence for the Egyptian army's role in the preservation of these ethnic identities. Moreover, using cross-cultural comparisons, it will provide some explanations for how foreigners were able not only to retain a different ethnic identity, but also to portray that identity in a break from wider Egyptian cultural conventions.

Displaying Individuality or Creating Authority? Commentary on the animal burials at HK6

Isobel Reid, *University College London*

Locality 6 at Hierakonpolis contains the remains of a number of individuals with impressive grave goods and superstructures, earning it the designation 'Elite Cemetery'. However, it also contains a number of animal burials ranging from individual exotic animals, such as elephants, exceptional domestic animals and large numbers of domestic animals in single graves. At a time of nation building in Egypt, the animal burials are often seen as the elite's way of showing their wealth. However, a design from contemporary artefacts shows rows of different species of animals connected with items of power. Three different methods were applied to the animal burials to show that they do not correlate with the typical model for an 'Elite Cemetery' where the animals are economic units; they instead correspond to the Predynastic design of animal rows. The result of these findings is that the HK6 cemetery is likely the creation of imagery associated with power, rather than a display of the individual's wealth and personal preference for burial.

The Ancient Individual Model, the A.I.M. of Research

Kelee M. Siat, *University of Birmingham*

The ancient Egyptian individual is a presence that is acknowledged through the examination of artefacts and texts, an existence tangible and encoded through cultural memory. It is not possible to understand the full character, or to understand the personality in detail of an ancient individual. Yet, questions still persist as to what

more can be known, and how we can go about finding out more. There is an absence of a succinct model to be utilised by researchers to explore the ancient individual aside from biographical generalities. The introduction of the Ancient Individual Model (A.I.M.) aims to introduce how a much richer examination of the ancient individual can be achieved. The A.I.M. explores intricate links between the spheres of the private individual and influences by and around them, and the wider public spheres of influences. As a socio-historical approach, the A.I.M. demonstrates how the investigation into the life of an ancient individual can be multidimensional, and requires a model which accepts interdisciplinary fields in order to access greater detail about an individual from the past.

Where's my Mummy?...Who is my Mummy?

Mr Taneash Sidpura, *University of Manchester*

A most remarkable discovery was made in 1859 at Dra Abu el-Naga of the burial of a queen. The deceased was named as Queen Ahhotep on her coffin and her burial revealed a large array of jewellery and weapons. It was the latter, along with a chain of three golden flies, that have led to this Queen being identified as a 'warrior queen'.

However, the identification of this Ahhotep with the historically-known wife of King Seqenenra-Tao and mother of King Ahmose was thrown into doubt with the discovery of another coffin from the Deir el-Bahari cache, which was also identified the owner as Queen Ahhotep. This has led to much discussion and debate on the identity of Ahhotep of Dra Abu el-Naga and considerations of the genealogy of the early 18th Dynasty. These debates have raged around if there were one, two or even three Ahhoteps and if she were the queen-consort of King Seqenenra-Tao, the queen-consort of Kamose, or the same person as the owner of the Deir el-Bahari coffin?

In this paper, I will take a new approach to the problem by considering the evidence provided by the King's Daughter Satkamose to conclude the most likely owner of the coffin from Dra Abu el-Naga.

The authority behind statues and the authority of statues: sistrophores and intermediaries

Eleanor Simmance, *University of Birmingham*

Statues which profess to bear a mediating function between human and god are known primarily from the New Kingdom, and in particular the reign of Amenhotep III and during the Ramesside period, though a small number of examples is also known from the 25th and 26th Dynasty (with another perhaps dating to the 27th). The majority of these take the form of what is commonly dubbed a 'sistrophore', in which a prominent, sistrum-type emblem is the primary element, a form which seems to have been an innovation of Hatshepsut's favoured official Senenmut. While to some extent the statuary of the elite follow and reflect the ideology of the pharaoh, the very purpose of the intermediary statues seem to indicate an assumption of royal authority, and this purpose is laid out very clearly in their inscriptions. The paper will explore the statue forms, provenances and the

phraseology used in their inscriptions and will ask the questions: from where did these individuals derive this authority and why, at these particular times, were they able to exhibit what had hitherto been displayed as a royal prerogative? The ideology of contemporary pharaohs will also be considered in brief, as well as the features of particular religious cults with which these statues were associated.

This will be a free event taking place on the University of Birmingham Edgbaston campus, in the Digital Humanities Hub in the European Research Institute (Building G3 on the [campus map](#)).

For registration and further information please email the organisational committee at symposium@birminghamegyptology.co.uk. Spaces at the symposium are limited so email us soon to book your place.