

## Introduction

### Neal Spencer

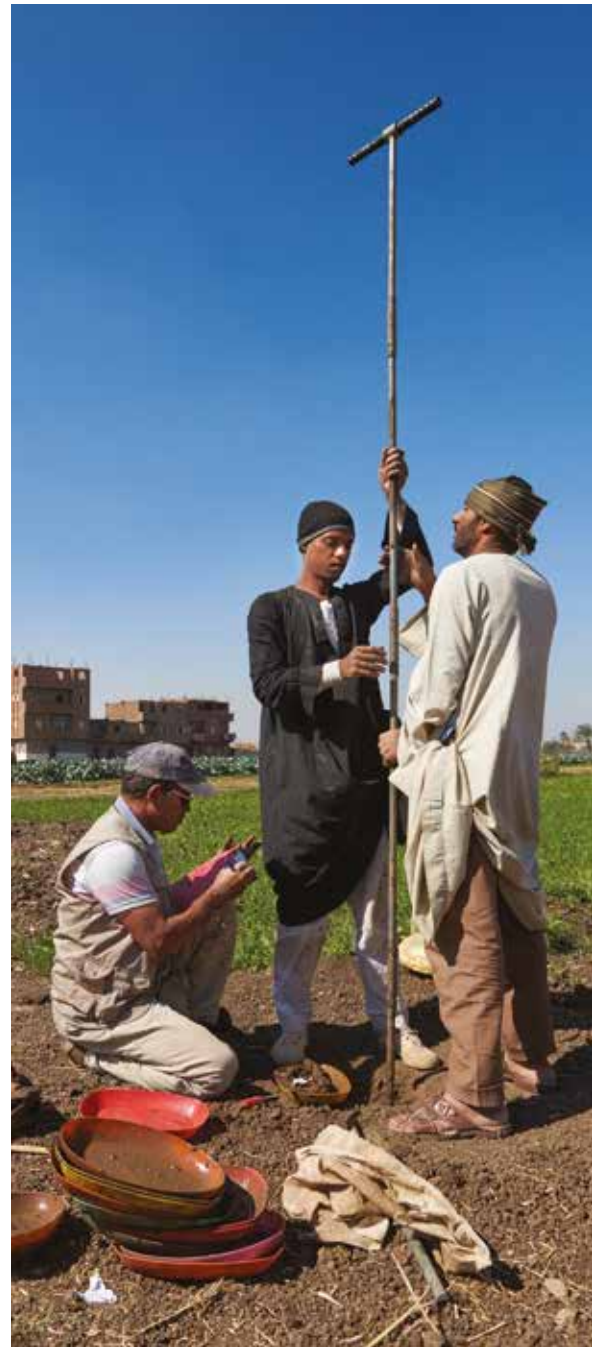
Keeper, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

In 1972, fifty years after the tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered, fifty objects from the king's burial were displayed at the British Museum in a special exhibition, attracting 1.7 million visitors over nine months. Such visitor numbers remain unheard of today, though a new record has just been set for a touring British Museum exhibition. The Hong Kong Science Museum welcomed over 850,000 visitors to *Egyptian mummies: exploring ancient lives* last summer. Such exhibitions take years of planning, and the last weeks have seen us send the latest group of Egyptian mummies to a London hospital for dual-energy CT-scanning. While the scanning will reveal new insights into the ancient individuals, some will undoubtedly become the stars of future exhibitions, whether in Bloomsbury or beyond.

Back at the British Museum, the Roxie Walker Galleries of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology (Rooms 62–63) were updated with new displays to reflect the fast-changing world of bioarchaeological research, while nearby a rare queen's diadem was put on display, a three-year loan from the al-Sabah collection. Other contributions in this newsletter highlight collections research and conservation, fieldwork and training programmes.

As 2017 drew to a close, the British Museum was awarded two major grants. The Cultural Protection Fund will support a project entitled *Circulating Artefacts: a cross-platform alliance against the looting of pharaonic antiquities*, working with colleagues in Egypt and Sudan to track objects circulating on the art market and in private collections – this will also be a fantastic research resource. The Andrew W Mellon Foundation has provided a generous grant for the next phase of ResearchSpace, which will result in a customisation of the semantic web research platform for Nile Valley archaeological data, including 3D environments. These projects complement the Egypt Documentation Project, supported by the Arcadia Fund, which is conserving, digitising and making available historic glass plate negatives housed in the Ministry of Antiquities, Cairo. These projects all contribute to the research, understanding and protection of Nile Valley archaeology.

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Exhibitions and galleries  
**Touring Egyptian mummies:  
 ongoing success and research**

**Marie Vandenbeusch**

Project Curator: Egyptian Touring Exhibitions, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

2017 has been a successful year for the touring exhibition *Egyptian mummies: exploring ancient lives*. After its display at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, the show was staged at the Hong Kong Science Museum, attracting more than 850,000 visitors over a four-month run, as part of the events celebrating the twenty-year anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to China. From there, it travelled to the National Palace Museum in Taipei, with Brisbane ahead.

Exciting as it is to share both collection and new research to people around the world, the visitor figures are only one way to translate the success of an exhibition. From a research perspective, the development stages of an exhibition cast light on specific aspects of the collection.

Consider, for example, the conservation of the coffin lid from the Roman period (EA 55022) led by Nicola Newman, a conservator specialised in organic material. In the shape of a standing man wearing a Greek mantle and holding a papyrus roll, this coffin lid has a foot case made in a very different style, depicting a *ba*-bird spreading its wings and surrounded by pseudo-hieroglyphs. Looking closely at this lid gave us a clearer idea of its manufacture: it was made of twenty pieces of wood; some of them possibly recycled, secured by four large joints and no less than 46 dowels! Paint, plaster and traces of gilding are still visible on various areas of the surface, including on

the side of the face, which may have been entirely gilded. Surprisingly, the ensemble conveys a contradictory notion of value: gilding used to enhance scraps of wood.

Unfortunately, as for many objects in the collection, we have no information about the provenance of the coffin lid. However, similar pieces have been identified in other collections, hinting that it may come from Abusir el-Meleq, an ancient cemetery at the entrance of the Fayum. These parallels also tell us that it might not have sealed a traditional coffin base, but could have been placed upright in a wooden cabinet. Here we see artists and craftsmen creatively experimenting with funerary traditions, possibly reflecting changing beliefs. It also raises many new questions on the cultural and social identity of the individual who ordered such a coffin that combines Egyptian and Hellenised features, in a land under Roman rule.

*Egyptian mummies: exploring ancient lives* is at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane from 16 March to 26 August 2018.



Coffin lid (EA 55022).

Detail showing the front of the foot base decorated with a *ba*-bird (EA 55022).

Visitors to *Egyptian mummies: exploring ancient lives* at the Science Museum in Hong Kong. © Hong Kong Science Museum.





**Catherine Boël**  
 Anne Christopherson Intern (2016)  
 Department of Prints and Drawings

Egypt, with its deserts and magnificent archaeological sites, has captivated the west and enthralled its artists for generations. The British Museum's collection holds many such works, two of which were recently displayed in *Places of the mind: British watercolour landscapes 1850–1950*, an exhibition curated by Kim Sloan from the Department of Prints and Drawings.

Henry Stanier (c. 1831–1894) drew Karnak in 1868 at a time when Egypt, with its unique architecture and customs, had become a favourite subject among British artists. So appreciated, in fact, that in his 1859 *Notes On Some Of The Principal Pictures Exhibited In The Rooms Of The Royal Academy*, Ruskin complained: 'are we never to get out of Egypt any more? Nor to perceive the existence of any living creatures but Arabs and camels?'

During the second half of the 19th century, colonialism and strengthened diplomatic and commercial ties with the Ottoman Empire had facilitated travel to the east. Western artists' imaginations were, understandably, captivated by these new landscapes flooded with light and colours and many left their dark European cities in search of these brighter horizons. Stanier, originating from the industrial city of Birmingham, was one such artist. Between 1863 and 1866, he went on a tour of Spain and North Africa and returned home with a wealth of sketches. Karnak is one of three of the artist's Egyptian subjects in the British Museum's collection and most probably derives from his stay in Egypt in 1866. It

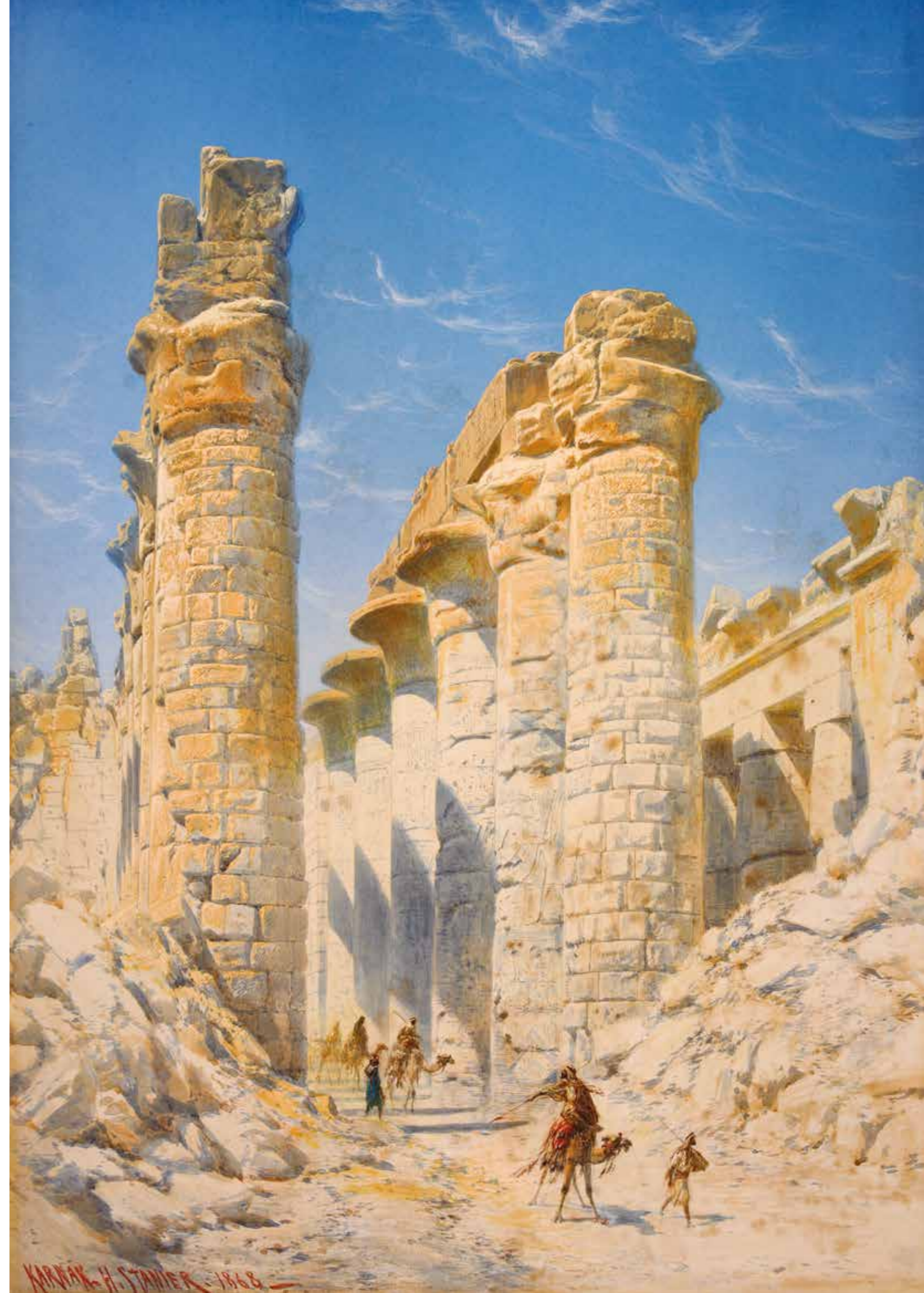
represents a stunning view of the Great Hypostyle Hall of the Karnak Temple, added around 1290–1224 BC by Seti I (19th Dynasty). The inclusion of tiny figures combined with the unusually large scale of the drawing (665 x 476mm) emphasises the size of the hall and offers the viewer a better understanding of the monumentality and timelessness of the ruins.

The second Egypt-related watercolour in the exhibition was drawn on 11 July 1917 by James McBey (1883–1959): *The Long Patrol in the Desert of Sinai*. Through this work, the viewer is faced with a much darker vision of the Egyptian desert, one that is far removed from the light ochre hues and deep blues of Karnak. This particular watercolour was drawn in situ by the artist as a record, not of a spectacular archaeological site, but of the First World War. McBey, an official War Artist posted on the Egyptian Front, was commissioned by the Government Propaganda Department to document the sights and events he came across and translate them into works of art. These productions were then shown to the British public, grown weary of war photography, through exhibitions and publications. This large watercolour (464 x 365mm) illustrates an Imperial Camel Corps Patrol setting off at dawn to scout the Sinai. Through it, McBey captured the spirit of the desert, displaying the 'intuitive understanding of the Eastern atmosphere' that Malcom Salaman had lauded in his 1914 *Catalogue of Drawings in Water Colour* by James McBey.

*Places of the mind: British watercolour landscapes 1850–1950* was on display in Room 90 from 23 February – 23 August 2017, supported in memory of Melvin R Seiden.

Above: James McBey (1883–1959), *The Long Patrol in the Desert of Sinai*. Pen, ink and watercolour, 1917 (1919.0412.25)

Right: Henry Stanier (c. 1831–1894), *Karnak*. Watercolour and bodycolour, 1868. (1994.U.10).



## Exhibitions and galleries

### A queen's diadem from the Second Intermediate Period

#### Marcel Marée

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Royal jewellery from ancient Egypt is exceedingly rare, and this is especially true of headgear. Visitors to the British Museum can now admire the silver diadem of a queen, thanks to a generous loan from Sheikh Hassan al-Sabah of Kuwait.

The headband, made of a single sheet of silver, is fronted by two cobras, a mark of queenly ownership. Attached to the back is a bow, comprising a disc, two lotus flowers, and four ribbons. A 'basket weave' pattern has been applied to the headband by chasing, but the details of the cobras and ribbons were, more unusually, engraved.

The diadem dates from the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650–1550 BC). The only known parallel, likewise of silver, is in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden but features only one cobra. It comes from Dra Abu el-Naga in Western Thebes and is thought to have been found in 1827, when local diggers entered the tomb of Antef Nubkheperre, a king of the 17th Dynasty. Where and when the present diadem was found is not clear, nor do we know when it came to Britain. At some point it was donated to the Yorkshire Museum in York, but in 1953 this institution sold it back into private hands. The diadem eventually resurfaced at a Christie's sale in 2015, when it was bought by the present owner.

It is generally assumed that the queen's diadem was found, like that of Antef, in Dra Abu el-Naga. Conceivably it originates from the burial of Queen Montuhotep, which, between 1822 and 1825, was also found intact by local diggers. Montuhotep was married to Djehuty, a king of the

16th Dynasty who preceded Antef by less than a century. The 16th and 17th Dynasties both ruled from Thebes but only controlled southern Egypt, as the north was dominated by the Asiatic 'Hyksos', who ruled from Avaris in the eastern Nile Delta. Queen Montuhotep was buried in a large painted coffin, which bore the earliest known examples of spells from the Book of the Dead. In 1832 its decoration was copied at Thebes by John Gardner Wilkinson, a pioneer of Egyptology. His copies are now in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library, Oxford, but the coffin and body are lost. It is tempting to speculate that, at the time of discovery, the mummy's head was adorned with our diadem.

However, a second queen's burial of the period, now all but forgotten, also survived undisturbed into modern times. In the 1890s, farmers at Edfu discovered the grave of Queen Sobekemsaf, who was the wife of the very King Antef who owned the Leiden diadem. Sobekemsaf was not buried near her husband in Thebes, but in the town where she was born, into a family of governors. Little is known of the burial's discovery, but it yielded costly finds, certainly placed mostly on Sobekemsaf's body. One was a gold finger-ring set with a scarab of lapis lazuli, the bezel inscribed with Antef's name. A gold pendant and two bracelets with gold spacers (bearing figures of cats) each displayed the names of both King Antef and his queen. In 1924, a private collector donated the ring and spacers to the British Museum. Might the diadem, with which they are now together in one display case, come from the very same burial?

*The diadem (2017,AESLoan.1), on loan from the al-Sabah Collection, is on display in the Roxie Walker Galleries of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology (Rooms 62–63).*



Exhibitions and galleries  
**The bioarchaeology of the Nile Valley:  
 updated displays**



**Daniel Antoine**  
 Curator of Physical Anthropology,  
 Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

The scientific study of human, plant and animal remains from archaeological sites (known as bioarchaeology) provides unique insights into ancient lives. The British Museum curates one of the most important collections of ancient human remains from the Nile Valley, and their analysis is revealing information about the people who inhabited these regions. Methods developed in physical anthropology and forensic sciences enable us to determine an individual's sex and estimate their age at death, but also insights into genetics, diet, disease, life expectancy, burial practices and the process of mummification. Much of the collection curated in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan was recovered during the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project, a rescue campaign prompted by construction of a new dam near Kareima, Sudan. The human remains excavated by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society were generously donated to the Museum by Sudan's National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums in 2007. This new display highlights some of the findings over the last decade of research, including how changes in the environment, culture, diet and living conditions have been affected by the area's inhabitants over the millennia.

affected by cancer, found in British Museum excavations at the site of Amara West in Sudan (20th Dynasty, 1187–1065 BC), is also on display. Multiple destructive lesions, identified by Michaela Binder, were found throughout this young man's skeleton. The lesions were probably caused by one of the earliest known examples of metastatic carcinoma, a cancer that has spread throughout his body from an undetermined soft tissue tumour.

A section on teeth also illustrates how their analysis can provide clues about past diet, disease, food preparation and daily life. Teeth with decay – a source of great discomfort – are commonly found in Nile Valley populations. Several dentitions in the display reveal how cavities are caused by acid-producing bacteria that live on the surfaces of teeth and thrive on diets rich in sugars, starches or other carbohydrates. Severe tooth decay, as well as rapid dental wear and trauma, can expose the inside of the tooth to bacteria in the mouth. As shown here, the resulting infection often leads to the formation of an abscess, granuloma or cyst at the end of the root, and ultimately the loss of the tooth.

*The new display, in Case 14 of the Roxie Walker Galleries of Egyptian Funerary Archaeology (Rooms 62–63), was made possible with the support of the Institute for Bioarchaeology.*

Paleopathology (the study of ancient diseases) can tell us about the living and environmental conditions that led to the emergence and spread of diseases – many of which are familiar to us today. Joint disease (osteoarthritis) appears to have been common, but we also find bones affected by infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and leprosy. Initially affecting soft tissues, these diseases can take several years before they affect the skeleton: many infected people probably died before this occurred, limiting the visibility of these conditions in the archaeological record. A rare example of a skeleton

Arranged from least to most affected, these bones (proximal phalanges) are all that remain of this person's fingers. They reveal the progressive bone and soft tissue loss often associated with leprosy. From skeleton 3265, site 3-J-11, 4th Nile Cataract, Sudan, medieval period, 4th–15th century AD (EA 88262).



Upper right first molar destroyed by tooth decay, with a dental abscess in the underlying bone. The infection probably led to the discharge of pus in the mouth. Skull from Grave 7, site 3-J-23, 4th Nile Cataract, Sudan, medieval period, 4th–15th century AD (EA 88261).

The collection  
**Statuettes in focus: photographing  
 the shabti collection**

**Kelly Accetta**  
 Rikki Broom Internship,  
 Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

A few months before beginning the Rikki Broom Internship at the Museum, I excavated my first shabti in a Middle Kingdom tomb in Luxor, spurring the beginning of a true affection for these small statuettes which are such a ubiquitous part of Egyptology. On my first day at the Museum, Curator John Taylor led me to the basement to see a selection of the shabtis I would be working with, and I realised that the breadth of styles, forms, sizes, and texts was greater than I expected!

Shabtis (also known as *shawabtis* or *ushabtis*) are funerary statuettes made of stone, wood, faience, or ceramic often found in tombs. They appear in the Middle Kingdom as a part of the standard burial equipment, serving as the tomb owner's double in the afterlife, performing tasks on his behalf. The number of shabtis which accompanied the deceased grew over time, until by the end of the New Kingdom a 'set' could consist of 401 shabtis: 365 mummiform statuettes – one for each day of the year – and 36 overseers. Due to the regularity with which shabtis appeared in tombs, many were acquired by travellers, scholars, archaeologists and, of course, museums.

The internship is dedicated to the documentation of the nearly 3,000 shabtis in the Museum's collection, as well as correcting any irregularities or omissions in the Museum's collection database. Only about one percent of the shabtis previously had photographs, creating difficulties for both our own curators and collections managers, but also hindering outside scholars. Many have not been properly studied, as much scholarship focuses on form – both physical and textual – which is not discernible from the database entry alone. The aim of the Internship is to use photographic documentation

of the shabtis to facilitate research, both in person and remotely via the collection online.

A small photo studio has been erected in the Study Room close to the large windows, enabling the camera to take advantage of the natural light. Each shabti is photographed from a minimum of four angles (front, back, left and right sides), with additional photos taken of the top of the head if there is a headpiece or the hair is modelled, and of the bottom of the foot if there is text or a maker's mark. At the same time, I note any conservation issues, take measurements and record evidence for previous mounting and display treatments of the shabtis.

The shabtis are documented in order of acquisition, starting with the founding collection of Sir Hans Sloane in 1753. Over time, the shabtis were prepared for display and storage in a variety of ways. Some were mounted on wooden or marble bases, with the owners name written for the benefit of the visitor, others were repaired with modern materials, and some were even pieced together based on their size, material, and texts. Recording these practices is the first step in a new avenue of research – the evolution of displaying Egyptian artefacts in the Museum.



Shabtis delivered from the storeroom for photography.

Kelly preparing a New Kingdom shabti for photography.

The collection  
**22nd and 23rd Dynasty coffins  
 under the spotlight**

**John Taylor**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Since February the Museum's photographers have devoted many hours to Egyptian coffins and cartonnage mummy-cases, as essential groundwork for the production of a definitive catalogue. This volume, the first of a projected series, will include all specimens dating from the 22nd–23rd Dynasties (c. 945–715 BC), a group which represents a distinct phase in coffin evolution and includes several unusual examples. Among these are three highly decorated coffins of priests who were connected with the use of incense in temple ritual (EA 6659, 6660, 6666) and the cartonnage case of a child who is depicted as a god, with crook and flail sceptres and a plumed headdress (EA 41603).

The accurate recording of these objects is a challenging process on account of the bulk, weight and fragility of many of the pieces. A conservation assessment first determines whether the coffins can safely be moved to the basement studio in the Museum's World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre. Most receive surface cleaning, while a few are put on a waiting list for more substantial treatment. Once in the studio, further challenges must be faced. Some of the cartonnage cases still contain a mummy and are heavy and fragile, making it difficult to manoeuvre them in order to photograph the rear surface. To achieve this, assistant collections manager Vikki Jessop devised a special perspex table, strong enough to support the cartonnage and high enough from the floor to enable the photographer to position cameras beneath and to light and shoot through the perspex. This has made it possible to capture painted details never before photographed – and possibly not even seen since the mummy was laid in its outer coffin. A related problem, yet to be tackled, is to remove two mummies from wooden coffins in which they are tightly wedged, so as to expose the highly decorated interior surfaces for scrutiny and imaging.

Coinciding with this programme of conservation and recording is the Egyptological study of the cases. As well as detailed individual descriptions focusing on the physical form, iconography, inscriptions and collection history of each specimen, a series of essays will set the coffins in a wider context. The examples from Thebes are some of the most visually attractive containers ever made for the human body, and their decoration is often surprisingly inventive, contributing significantly to an understanding of Egyptian concepts of the afterlife. Scientific techniques are also being applied – wood, pigments, textiles and other materials will be identified and analysed, and advantage will be taken of the recent CT scanning of mummies to examine the internal construction of their cases.

The project is linked to a major new analytical study, which aims to determine the composition and properties of organic residues on the surfaces of coffins and cartonnage cases. This will include not only intentional coatings such as yellow and black 'varnishes', but also what appear to be secondary deposits found inside coffins and on the surfaces of cartonnages, perhaps originating from ritual activity. This project brings together

the skills and experience of Rebecca Stacey and Margaret Serpico, who will work with Kate Fulcher, newly appointed to undertake analyses of samples. The aim is not only to gain insights into ancient workshop practices but also to reconstruct the 'life story' of the coffins between decoration and burial, a topic on which many questions still remain unanswered.

*Research on the coffins of the 22nd and 23rd Dynasties is generously supported by the Institute for Bioarchaeology.*



Figure of Isis on the cartonnage case of Pefthau[em]-awykhons, from Thebes (EA 6681).

Coffin on top of the perspex table, awaiting photography.

Osiris receiving the wedjat-eye, offered by a small kneeling royal figure. Painting on the coffin of the incense-bearer Denytenamun (EA 6660).

The collection  
**Thomas Phillipps' Coptic papyri in the British Museum**

**Adrienn Almásy**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

A documentation project on a group of 284 Coptic papyri was instigated this year. These Coptic papyri were mainly acquired after the separation of the British Library and the British Museum in 1973, when the Greek ostraca and papyri and Coptic papyri officially became part of the British Library. The majority of these Coptic texts were bought in the 1990s from auction houses and their provenance is unknown. Sarah Clackson published 29 fragments and established the provenance of these and many more to the Hermopolite region, but her premature death brought an end to the systematic study of the collection. Following a survey of the history of Greek and Coptic manuscripts (still) in the British Museum by Elisabeth O'Connell, the aim of the documentation project is to update the records in the Museum's database and to add photographs and metadata to make the collection accessible online for researchers. Conservation work is also part of the project: while most of the papyri were conserved over the past decades by conservator Bridget Leach, her successor Helen Sharp has continued this work, remounting two papyri this year and now working on reframing nine others, as well as remounting unframed fragments. Some papyri had been framed by the auction houses, but their backs had been covered and were therefore inaccessible, which made their removal essential.

Part of the collection comes from one acquisition in 1998 when the Museum bought 17 papyri from Charles Ede Ltd. The majority of these are letters from both the monastic and the secular milieu. They date to the 6th–8th centuries AD, and were thought to come from the famous library of Sir Thomas Phillipps, who was a passionate manuscript

collector in the 19th century. His extensive manuscript collection was sold over many decades and is now dispersed throughout the world.

19 Coptic papyri were listed in Phillipps' library catalogue (*Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca D. Thomae Phillipps*, p. 317, no. 16402), where it was stated that they had originally been purchased in 1862 from Guillaume Libri's manuscript collection. Indeed, in Sotheby's sale catalogue of Libri's manuscripts from 1862 we find 24 Coptic papyri listed (Sotheby's, *The Libri library 186'*, no. 431 and 433), suggesting that Phillipps did indeed acquire them there. In 1921 W E Crum published 15 texts from this collection when it still belonged to the Phillipps family but, in checking his edition, we find that only two of these correspond to the Museum's papyri (EA 74952 and 75179). We do not know the current location of the other 13 papyri edited by Crum. We can, consequently, only be certain that two of our 17 papyri actually come from the Phillipps Collection.

Twelve of these 17 papyrus fragments are letters, three are legal documents and two others are too fragmentary to reconstruct the original content. One well-known letter published by Crum belongs to the dossier of Bishop Pisentius, part of which was found at Thebes by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in their excavations in the so called Monastery of Epiphanius. Other texts from this dossier are dispersed in collections around the world and it may be that some pieces from the British Museum collection might belong to the same context. Papyrus EA 75177 bears a Coptic letter on one side, and was then reused for an Arabic letter on the other surface, a reminder of Egypt's layered history.



Papyrus with Coptic letter (EA 75177 verso).

Papyrus with Arabic letter (EA 75177 recto).

The collection  
**Scientific approaches to first millennium AD textiles from Egypt**

**Elisabeth R O'Connell**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan  
**Joanne Dyer**  
 Scientist, Department of Scientific Research

In the first millennium AD, colourful fabrics came into fashion with new dyeing techniques and access to materials. Dyed woollen garments and accessories dressed the individual, and soft furnishings, such as curtains, wall hangings and cushion covers clothed the home and public buildings. International trade – over land across Eurasia and by sea, linking Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean ports – flourished in this period with the relative stability of the Roman and Sassanian empires and, later, successive Muslim caliphates. Although materials and finished goods were produced far and wide, their survival is rare with metal objects such as buttons, belt fittings and brooches generally providing our best evidence for ancient and medieval dress outside of Egypt. Due to its arid climate, Egypt preserves the textiles themselves in the tens of thousands from the rubbish mounds of its cities and towns and especially from its cemeteries.

Until recently, the origin and date of textiles were largely determined by style and iconography. Increasingly, the application of scientific techniques is slowly overturning long-held assumptions concerning chronology, the sources of materials and availability of dye stuffs, and providing new insights into textile production, dyeing practices, trade and the economy in general.

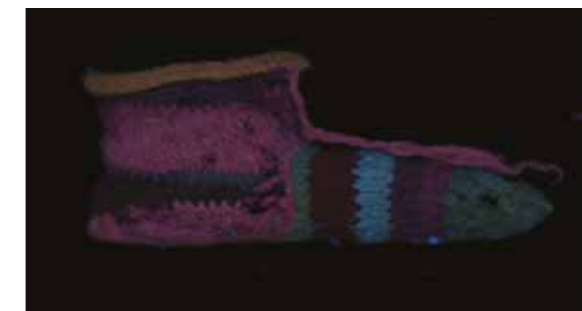


Building on knowledge gained from Frances Pritchard's analysis of textiles excavated at Antinoupolis and Wadi Sarga as part of British Museum research projects, the current work aims to explore how scientific analysis can further enhance the stories we can tell to the public about the British Museum's Egyptian textile collections, and how they can be displayed in the galleries effectively.

The first phase of this project explores how multispectral imaging (MSI), a non-invasive, relatively inexpensive and portable methodology, can be used to map the photoluminescence and reflective characteristics of textiles under different wavelengths of light, and to provide qualitative and holistic insights into the chemical nature of the dyes that compose them. The images produced afford preliminary indications of the colorants used and their spatial distribution, aid in planning more targeted and effective sampling strategies and facilitate comparisons between objects. The visual accessibility to the physical properties observed from these images can then be related to and underpinned by the more detailed information provided by complementary non-invasive techniques, such as fibre optic reflectance spectrophotometry (FORS), and micro invasive approaches, such as high-performance liquid chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry (HPLC-MS). The potential and limitations of establishing an empirical database relating multispectral data to chemical properties will also be explored.

The subtleties of the Late Antique dyers' craft, together with the potential and current limits of analysis were the subject of an interdisciplinary working group meeting of international curators and scientists held at the British Museum in March 2017. Further results of the study were presented at the *Textiles of the Nile Valley Group* meeting in Antwerp in October 2017.

For more information, visit the research section at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)



Three multispectral images of a child's stripy sock (Antinoupolis, Late Antiquity, AD 200–400) (from left); in visible light, showing UV-induced luminescence and in infrared-reflected false colour.

Visitors view Antinoupolis textiles on display in the British Museum exhibition *Rome: Power & People* at the MacManus Gallery in Dundee, 2015.

The collection  
The Robert Hay casts



**Patricia Usick**  
Visiting Academic, Department of Ancient Egypt  
and Sudan

Plaster casts of antiquities, once ubiquitous in museums, are today often relegated to storage. However the mid-19th century saw reproductions of important works of art from the classical world and the Renaissance avidly collected for private houses, study in art schools, and exchanged by European museums.

Copies and casts of the Rosetta Stone were made available from the time of its discovery in 1799 for the study of decipherment. Early travellers in Egypt recorded the monuments by making drawings, copying inscriptions, and sometimes taking 'squeezes' by pressing damp paper on to reliefs and texts. In 1818, the showman-archaeologist Giovanni Belzoni took wax moulds of the reliefs and hieroglyphs of a tomb in the Valley of the Kings to exhibit as plaster casts in Piccadilly. The more laborious task of moulding and casting in plaster was used by Robert Hay, a Scottish antiquarian and collector, who travelled in Egypt between 1824 and 1834 producing many topographical and archaeological drawings and notes which remain of great importance today, recording many monuments subsequently damaged. Hay employed an impoverished young sculptor, Joseph Bonomi, whom he met in Rome, to make a series of plaster casts from some of the most important tombs and temples. In 1842 Hay deposited his 'extensive collection of Casts from Antiquities in Egypt' in the British Museum, offering it to the Trustees for £1,001 7s 8d.

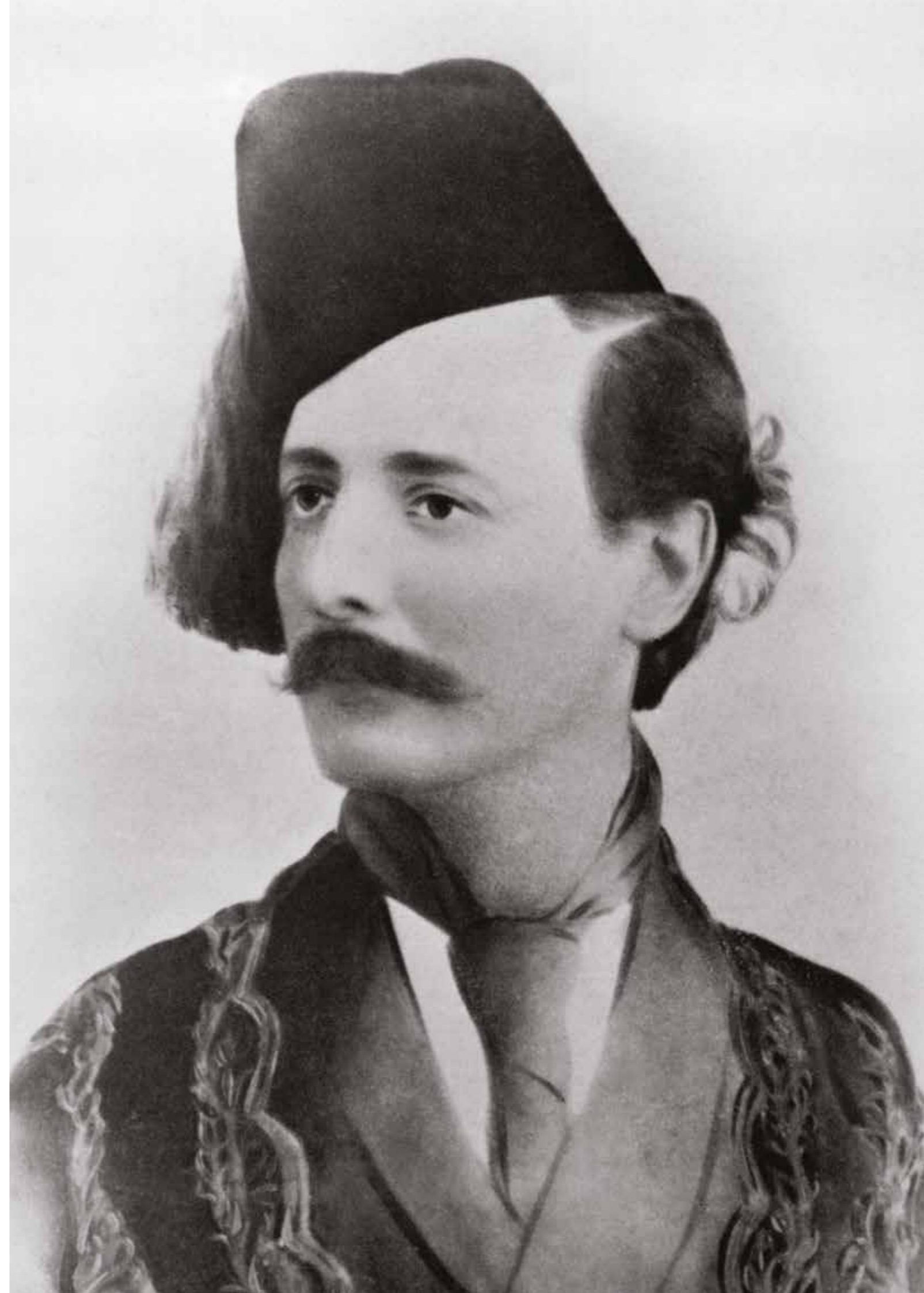
Despite general agreement on their value, there remained anxiety as to the expense of housing some of the larger pieces, including two colossal royal heads: one from the Temple of Abu Simbel, the other from a fallen statue of Ramesses II at Memphis. It was suggested that 'a sort of Temple of slight construction might be erected in the garden or Great Court', at least 50 feet high.

After prevaricating for two years, the Trustees, with the parsimony for which they would become renowned in the 19th century, finally offered £250 for part of the collection. Bonomi advised Hay to consider them as a gift, particularly as some were too large to move easily. Hay was adamant that he wished to keep his portraits and casts showing 'hunts, birds and beasts' so Bonomi packed these up and sent them to Hay's home in Scotland, enclosing a curt letter from Samuel Birch, in charge of Egyptian antiquities at the Museum, protesting against Hay retaining them. It is said that when they arrived, Hay pried open one case, peered briefly inside, and never touched them again.

Bonomi was instrumental in painting some of the casts, and a large relief cast from the Temple of Beit el-Wali now hangs in the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery of Egypt, Nubia and Sudan (Room 65), while two large relief casts from tombs in the Valley of Kings, Thebes, flank the entrance to the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan on the Museum's East stairs. The two colossal heads formed focal points in the old Sculpture Saloon for many years.

The strained relationship between Bonomi and Hay is evident in a letter, recently donated to the archive, from Bonomi to a friend J J Scoles.

*'... when you left Rome I got into all sorts of troubles became careless got robbed and became abandoned to all sorts of vices, out ran my income and was induced to accept Mr Hay's offer which I must now tell you is little enough (entre nous) £50 a year and he is to have all the original drawings... I soon found Hay to be a Scot and not one of those who have a belly full of learning and one of the most ignorant men I ever met excessively purse proud and extremely rich and avaro. I must now beg you to enquire among our friends in Rome, if you still dwell in the eterna citta, what you and they think I may make this said Mr Hay pay for some excellent casts I have made at Dendera and other places...'*



Photograph of the First Egyptian Room in 1875, showing the cast of the conquest of Nubia from the temple of Beit el-Wali, made by Joseph Bonomi for Robert Hay.

Portrait of Robert Hay.



## The collection

### Greco-Roman stone dishes with decoration in relief

#### Kata Endreffy

Curator, Collection of Classical Antiquities of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Stone dishes decorated with figures of Egyptian and Greek deities, and a common repertoire of motifs (rosettes, lotus flowers, wreaths), belong among a little known material group from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. The dishes, which are typically small and round, and made of dark, soft stone, such as steatite and serpentine, were probably used as votives or served the temple cult. Over a hundred pieces are known worldwide, a tenth of which are at the British Museum, displaying a rich selection of the decorative elements that characterise the genre.

Despite its diverse imagery, the corpus is united by a common theme: rebirth and the yearly cycle of renewal. In ancient Egypt, the New Year was marked by the arrival of the Nile flood. Vital for the agriculture, the event was also central to religion, and featured prominently in several myths that were seen as complementary by the ancient Egyptians. The yearly inundation was regarded as a re-enactment of the creation of the world: the emergence of the first mound from the primeval ocean. The flood was also identified with Osiris, who impregnated the soil, the body of Isis and was reborn through the growing seeds. The Nile marshes acted as a hiding place for the couple's son, Harpocrates. Another myth tied the New Year to the rage of the 'wandering goddess', variously identified with female deities such as Isis and Hathor. The raging goddess had to be pacified and lured back to Egypt from distant Nubia. Her arrival from the south, which evoked the Nile's course, culminated in a sacred marriage, which ensured the maintenance of the ordered world, and was celebrated with joyous festivals.

The dishes all date to the Greco-Roman period. By this time, the concepts so intrinsically tied to Egyptian religion were not restricted to the visual language typical of the pharaonic period. They also drew from the Greek tradition that Egyptian culture had been in contact with for centuries. Aphrodite wringing her wet hair after emerging from the sea evoked the concept of birth to Greek and Roman eyes. Through her Egyptian equivalent Hathor, she was also associated with creation and the celebrations at the start of the New Year. Dancing Eros-figures accompanied the returning goddess, and her consort could equally be represented as the Greco-Egyptian deity Serapis. The child Harpocrates sported attributes linking him to both cultures: his crown, side lock and gestures go back to millennia old Egyptian traditions, but his representation on the back of a goose only appeared in Hellenistic times. The multiple visual language witnessed by these images thus enriched traditional concepts with creative forms of an innovative character, and enhanced their power of expression in ways that made them relatable to Egyptians, Greeks and Romans alike.





The collection  
**Pottery type series from Sudan:**  
 an important research resource



**Derek Welsby**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Over the last three decades, the British Museum has been supporting fieldwork in Sudan, initially conducted by the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA) and the Sudan Archaeological Research Society (SARS), and more recently its own excavations. In collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums in Sudan the surveys and excavations have yielded a vast number of artefacts as well as bioarchaeological remains. While the most important, interesting and valuable material has entered the collections of the Sudan National Museum, much material has been donated via the BIEA and SARS to the British Museum and is now curated in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan. The importance of this material was instrumental in bringing about the decision, in 2001, to change the name of the department from the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, to better reflect the scope of the collection.

An important component of the donated material is type series of pottery sherds, comprising a sample of each different form, decoration type and fabric found during a particular project. As pottery is so important for our understanding of the sites investigated in the field, shedding light on a wide range of topics including art, technology, trade, domestic activities and in many cases providing chronological indicators, these type series form an invaluable resource for future researchers whether continuing work on those sites, or investigating other sites in the same area, of the same date or of the same type.

The type series currently in the collection are from four sites or areas: the Kerma Ancien cemetery H29 (excavated 2011–2012), the important medieval site of Soba south of Khartoum (excavated 1982–1986, 1989–1992), and multi-period survey and excavation in the Northern Dongola Reach (1993–1997) and the Fourth Cataract (east bank and islands between Amri and Kirbekan, 1999–2007).

The sherds represent handmade and wheel-made pottery, pottery fired in a bonfire or in a purpose built kiln. Some

of the pottery is very coarse utilitarian material, others are among the finest ceramic products ever produced in the Nile Valley. Among the latter must be singled out the pottery of the early phase of the Kerma culture, Kerma Ancien, dating to approximately 2400–2050 BC. This pottery can be extremely fine, handmade ware with glossy red and black surfaces and with very delicate incised decoration, usually just below the rim. Equally fine is the pottery produced at Soba East two and a half millennia later, between the 7th and the 9th centuries AD, which bears a wide range of polychromatic painted decoration, some utilising Christian motifs. While much of the pottery is of local manufacture some of it is from much further afield, mainly from Egypt but also, for example, from Turkey in the later Kushite period, from Syria in the 11th–13th centuries and even from China at a similar date.

Excavating the substantial mud-brick building in the centre of the town at Soba East during the 1985–1986 season.

Excavations in progress within the Kerma Ancien cemetery at site H29 in the Northern Dongola Reach.

A sherd from a Kerma Ancien bowl recovered from the cemetery at Site H29 with the typical fine decoration immediately below the rim.

Fine painted pottery from Soba East dating to the early medieval period.

A painted pottery sherd from Soba East decorated with a human face.



## In Egypt A deep history of Shutb, ancient Shashotep

### Ilona Regulski

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Today, Shutb is a small agricultural town 5km south of Asyut but studies of texts and the ancient landscape show that people have lived there for more than 4,000 years. The village perches on top of the remains of ancient Shashotep, a regional centre and capital of the 11th Upper Egyptian province.

Through augering, the British Museum's project at Shutb hopes to identify the periods at which the settlement of Shashotep was occupied, define the boundary of the city at different periods, and delineate the relationship between the city and the surrounding landscape. For example, inscriptions in the tombs of Asyut suggest that Shashotep was on the river during the First Intermediate period (around 2200 BC). Using an auger hand drill measuring 10cm in diameter, we recovered columns of 5–10cm soil samples in 29 different locations. As each core reached up to 7.3m below the ground, we had over 2,500 samples to analyse. The soil is studied for clay consistency, grain density and the present of organic and non-organic material – elements that can reveal the environment in which archaeological material was deposited and expose activities of local people. Combining this material with the different depths allows geologists to reconstruct the history of the landscape in a non-destructive manner. Many of the samples yielded diagnostic pottery sherds, which helps to fit this reconstruction into a chronological framework.

The cumulative results from the cores so far suggest that there were a number of channels around the area at different points and indicate that Tell Shutb was already elevated above the floodplain during the Old Kingdom. The prevalence of river-deposited sands around the flanks of the archaeological mound suggests that the ancient city may have been founded on an island. Pottery rich cores at AS001, AS004, AS007 and AS029 reveal a substantial Middle Kingdom presence to the west of the current tell.

For the next 2,000 years people continued to live and farm at Shutb although it seems that the river slowly moved away from the city leaving it as an island in the cultivation. As more houses were built, a mound of mud-brick and pottery accumulated until Roman times. Shutb became very important in Late Antiquity, especially for Christians, with their Bishop, Rufus, living in town. The city continued to grow as an important trading centre. A river channel passed to the south-west of the tell and people were busy with the production of glass and brick, and perhaps metal industry along the shores of Shutb's waterfront. By the 15th century AD the channel at Shutb had shrunk and the town gradually turned into a quiet agricultural village.

*The 2017 fieldwork seasons were carried out in collaboration with the Free University of Berlin and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Council Newton-Musharafa fund.*

Follow Ilona on Twitter @ilonareg



## In Sudan Providing protection, conservation and visitor facilities at Kawa



### Derek Welsby

Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Since 2013 excavations within the pharaonic and Kushite town at Kawa, and in the adjacent cemetery, have been part of the Qatar Sudan Archaeological Project (QSAP). The very welcome, and significant, financial assistance from QSAP has allowed excavations to continue but has also made it possible to address a number of pressing issues relating to the site.

The first of these was site protection. Prior to 2013 a single strand barbed wire fence had been constructed around the ancient town and concrete posts demarcated the cemetery and the two Kerma period rural settlements located nearby. Over the winter of 2013–2014 another strand of wire was added to the town's fence while the other sites were similarly protected by fencing. The now redundant concrete posts were repurposed to define the limits of the buffer zone, demarcating the archaeological zone from the encroaching farm land. To police these boundaries a small post was built to house the tourist police on the edge of the archaeological zone close to the tarmac road from Dongola to Kareima.

In Phase 2 steps were taken to preserve the remains of Kawa's most iconic building, the temple built by the Kushite king Taharqo between 684 and 680 BC. The very soft Nubian sandstone walls of the temple were capped with modern brickwork to protect the wall tops, the modern brickwork also serving to trap the windblown sand burying the original walls and their very fine reliefs. This protects the monuments against wind erosion but also

from the unwelcome and destructive attention of visitors. Although almost all traces of the original temple structure are now invisible, the layout of the building is clearly visible on the surface in the modern brickwork.

Kawa is an extremely interesting site but very little survives above ground level. To enhance the visitor experience a Visitors' Centre was constructed and completed in February 2017. Two of the rooms contain display panels with text in Arabic and English setting the site in its regional context, describing the buildings within it and the objects used by its inhabitants, and presenting results from the cemetery. Four large objects have been included in the display, two relief blocks from Taharqo's temple which had been left by the building following on from the excavations of the Oxford Excavation Committee in 1929–1931, and two lintels from tombs beneath pyramids excavated over the last several years. A third room is designed as a life-size replica of the central room of the painted shrine, Building A1, excavated over a decade ago by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society mission. This three roomed building, containing a barque stand bearing painted cartouches of Taharqo now in the Jebel Barkal Museum, had elaborately painted walls. Facsimiles of the painted decoration, by Claire Thorne, have been inserted into the room and the upper parts of the scene reconstructed to give an impression of what the original building may have looked like.

*The project would like to thank QSAP for providing the opportunity to protect and manage the site and also the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums for its continuing support.*



Constructing the  
barbed-wire fence.

The temple  
following the  
conservation  
works.

The Visitors'  
Centre.

In Sudan  
**Investigating the historic banners  
of Sudan**

**Julie Anderson**  
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Recently, a project undertaken in collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, was initiated to document Mahdist banners and other related objects housed in the collection of the Khalifa House Museum, Khartoum and in the British Museum's collection. The research is focused on the material properties of these textiles and the manufacturing techniques used to create them. The Mahdiya (1881–1898) was a Sudanese nationalist movement led by Muhammed Ahmad bin Abd Allah, an Islamic religious leader and self-proclaimed Mahdi. Their capture of Khartoum in January 1885 and creation of the Mahdist state led to Anglo-Egyptian involvement in Sudan and to the birth of the present Republic of Sudan. Flags (rayya) provided organization and structure for the Mahdist army, and confirmed the position, status and commitment of the Mahdi's Amirs to the nationalist movement.

Artefacts from the Mahdiya are curated in different departments within the British Museum with approximately 200 objects, including flags, tunics, leather goods, amulets and swords, housed in the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, and the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. Over 200 coins and associated material are housed in the Department of Coins and Medals. Mahdist artefacts and associated material may also be found in collections and regimental museums around the UK, such as those for example, in Blair Atholl, Sunderland Museum, Durham University, and Osborne House, and in other collections in Sudan, for example Shaykan Museum in el-Obeid and Sultan Ali Dinar Museum in el-Fasher. It is hoped that this pilot study will make the Khalifa House and British Museum collections more accessible to a wider audience, improve the presentation, understanding and interpretation of these and similar contemporary items in the collections

and provide a foundation enabling further conservation and study of these artefacts, particularly those in the Khalifa House and elsewhere in Sudan.

Thus far, 19 flags have been examined in the Khalifa House, with the assistance of curators Neimat Mohammed el-Hassan and Gamal Mohammed Zain, and eight identified in the British Museum.

Many banners follow a general pattern as exemplified by British Museum flag Af1956,23.13. It is rectangular, in landscape orientation (1.57x1.20m), bears four lines of a formulaic Arabic text enclosed within oval text boxes on the obverse side, and has a white cotton sheath attached on the right side. The fabrics are normally plain weave cotton while the letters and decorative ornaments are appliqué, usually sewn with running stitch. The colours used vary between blue, red, white, black, green and yellow, and were related to various commanders and/or military divisions.

The inscription reads:  
O God, O Merciful One, O Compassionate One, O Living One, O Subsisting One, O Lord of Majesty and Honour.  
There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God. Muhammad al-Mahdi is the Successor (Khalifa) to the Prophet of God.

Flag Af1956,23.13 was presented to the British Museum by His Excellency Awad Satti, the first Sudanese ambassador to the UK who assumed office in June 1956, shortly after Sudanese independence. Another example in the Khalifa House (KH169), like many Mahdist banners, was captured at the Battle of Omdurman (Kerrari) in 1898. In August 1938, it was given to the Khalifa House Museum by Lieutenant Colonel E B North. Both presentations allude to the complex history of Sudan and its relationship with the British Empire.



The courtyard of Khalifa House Museum, in Omdurman near Khartoum.



Flag presented to the British Museum shortly after Sudanese Independence by H.E. Sayed Awad Satti, the first Sudanese Ambassador to the United Kingdom (Af1956,23.13).

Curator Ikhlass Alyas Ali Alkrm looking at mounted flags in the Khalifa House Museum.

In Sudan  
**From amulets to wooden bed fragments:  
drawing at Amara West**



**Elisabeth Sawerthal**  
Adrian Condie Fellow

The January–March 2017 season at Amara West was different to all before it, as no excavations took place. Instead, we remained in the expedition house on nearby Ernetta Island. There, in the store rooms, a small group of specialists worked on the material unearthed over the previous years, analysing and preparing the excavated material for further study and publication. I joined the team as a finds illustrator, and in this role I spent two months drawing accurate images of objects in order to highlight their most important features for publication and future analysis, complementary to photographs.

Having previously supported the Amara West project as a post-excavation volunteer at the British Museum, this was an exciting opportunity for me to further engage with the site and the expedition. In particular, my role as an illustrator enabled me to explore the vast number of objects and, especially, the wide range of different types of material culture unearthed in settlement and funerary contexts of the site throughout the excavations of 2009 to 2016. The variety of objects and different materials I was working with ranged from amulets and beads, bone and ivory, to potsherds and stone vessels, pieces of wooden furniture legs, coffin parts as well as fragments of painted wall plaster. My work involved close collaboration with the project's find specialists, with whom I would discuss finds and their important features, in order to produce drawings helpful for future study.

A highlight of the season was to work on a specific group of objects, the coffin fragments from tomb G322 in Cemetery D. The coffin was decorated, as visible through some faint traces of black, white, red and yellow paint. In my drawings, I highlighted these traces of paint in order to facilitate a reconstruction of the original decoration. In order to identify traces in Egyptian blue more clearly, we used Visibly Induced Luminescence photography, a method developed



by Giovanni Verri, formerly of the British Museum, through which Egyptian blue traces invisible to the naked eye can be detected. Unexpectedly, we discovered a column of hieroglyphs on one of the coffin fragments, stating 'words spoken by Osiris'. Further VIL photography of other coffin fragments from tomb G322 also revealed hieroglyphs as well as an image of a bird with spread wings.

My stay in Sudan enabled me to meet other international research teams, visit sites such as Sai, Tombos and Old Dongola, Sesebi, Kerma, Meroë and El Khandaq, and collaborate with our Sudanese colleagues. Embedded in the local community at Ernetta, it was a wonderful opportunity to learn about Sudan and Nubia, past and present.

*The Adrian Condie Fellowship generously supports the participation of a PhD student in fieldwork in Egypt or Sudan.*

Elisabeth drawing painted shrine fragments on a cold morning in the Amara West dig house.

VIL photograph of a painted coffin, showing Egyptian blue hieroglyphs referring to the god Osiris.

In Sudan  
**Urgent anthropology research in the  
area of Kerma**

**Enrico Ille**  
Urgent Anthropology Fellowship, British Museum  
LOST Research Network, Institute of Social and Cultural  
Anthropology, University of Halle

Kerma has recently become one of the most productive excavation sites, specifically through the ongoing work of Charles Bonnet. It is also host to a historical museum on the findings and well established as part of the tourist itineraries leading through northern Sudan. At the same time, there has been almost no social research on this area, which is the more surprising considering it being the odd border area between Danagla, the people of Dongola to the south, and Mahas, around the Third Cataract and northwards. The arable land starts here to extend much wider from the Nile, and one of the earliest, albeit comparatively small irrigation schemes was founded next to Kerma, during the Second World War, named the Borgaig Project. Among the oldest Sudanese cooperatives around motorised irrigation pumps can be found here as well. Further back in history, in the post-medieval period, the area around Kerma represented a boundary between areas belonging to the Funj Kingdom of Sennar and the northern areas that had already come under Ottoman influence.

I spent several months between September 2016 and 2017 in this area in order to lay some ethnographic groundwork for future studies. My interest lies in the details of changing human nature, or socioecological relationships, as seen through agricultural practices towards specific plants, such as the ubiquitous date palm, and towards specific life-forms, such as the destructive termites.

For instance, the successive, but never complete shift, of date palm cultivation from riparian strips to irrigated plantations in the arid plains reflects a multitude of changes during the 20th century: the construction of a railroad, the Aswan High Dam, and recently a tarmac road to Wadi Halfa both diverged from, and followed, the relocation of settlement and mobility away from the river Nile. Boat-making islanders and riverside residents became urbanised and, to some degree housebound. Karin Willemse has also used the term 'housewifisation'. Where regular floods and the occasional gourd filled with water had irrigated family trees, an infrastructure of engines, irrigation channel networks and nurseries are now slowly taking over. While land property remains central to social identification, less and less family members are actively involved in agriculture, and prolonged labour migration, especially abroad, can hinder



intergenerational accumulation and transfer of experience and knowledge. This is also aggravated by the prevalence of other economic strategies, such as permanent jobs in the service sector or short-term opportunities, for example in the current gold rush.

It is, however, an ambiguous process, as can be shown concerning pesticide usage. On the one hand, a combination of strange, new infestations and a low level of connection with research networks on agrochemicals lead to many irritations among farmers, more often than not resulting in random pesticide usage. While this feeds into resentments over perceived negligence by the government, it can also nurture culturally defined accusations against temporary workers from other areas, who supposedly don't share the same concerns with preservation.

On the other hand, specialisation and concentration of commitment seems to take place also: date palms are constantly planted, and I met considerate and focused farmers, who attempt to stay updated on the best way to cultivate, also through translocal exchange. Not all spray chemicals in a random way, and biopesticides, such as ashes from dung and parts of the neem tree, are not invariably left out of consideration. Recent widespread observation of cancerous diseases and low soil productivity were channelled by concerns about cyanide used in gold mining and pesticide usage in local and imported produce: not only had the fast death of the area through the threat of dam construction become an issue, but also the landscapes' slow death through poisoning.

*The Urgent Anthropology Fellowship is jointly funded by the British Museum and the Royal Anthropological Institute. Thanks are due to the National Corporation of Antiquities & Museums for facilitating fieldwork in Sudan.*



A house courtyard on Simit Island with remains of previous date harvest in background (March 2017)

A farmer in Kerma Balad looks at bagged date palm seedlings (September 2016).

In the UK  
**The annual Egyptological colloquium  
 2017: Asyut through time**



**Ilona Regulski**  
 Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Asyut in Middle Egypt is one of the country's major cities. Over centuries, traders, nomads, travellers, and others passed through the area on their way to the Delta or the southern Nile valley, bringing their art, literature, science, and other cultural attributes with them. The city served as a crossroads because of the difficult passage in this part of the Nile and the arrival of the Forty Days desert trade road (*Darb el-Arbain*) from Darfur in present day Sudan. This cosmopolitan status transformed the Asyut region into a cultural hub where works of art were copied and recycled for thousands of years.

Recent research has focused on Asyut's necropolis as well as the city and the relationship with its suburbs and smaller settlements in the vicinity. The 2017 colloquium *Asyut through time: conflict and culture in Middle Egypt*, held in the British Museum on 20–21 July, discussed the region's deep history from 2500 BC up until the present. The two-day conference was crowned by the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology, delivered by Jochem Kahl from the Free University Berlin. His keynote lecture introduced the work of the German-Egyptian expedition in the necropolis, and historical sources, to characterise the ancient city. Their long-term presence, which now exceeds a decade, cannot be summarised in a one hour lecture. Rather, the speaker focused on the tomb of the Middle Kingdom governor Djefaihapi, which, despite its fame, has never been fully recorded or excavated.

The German-Egyptian expedition was represented by four more papers in the colloquium yielding new insights into pottery production (by Andrea Killian and Teodozja Rzeuska) and other interesting practices such as animal cult (by Chiori Kitagawa) and scribal training (by Ursula Verhoeven). Two other fieldwork projects were presented – the Italian Egyptian project at Manqabad (by Rosanna Pirelli) and the British Museum project in Shutb, ancient Shashotep (see p.20).

Results of recent fieldwork were complemented by discussions of material culture and archives that ended up in international museum collections. The largest collection of Asyut objects outside Egypt is housed in the Museo Egizio in Turin. Paolo Del Vesco demonstrated how museum archive documentation can be used to reconstruct work that was done in the early 20th century (see p.29). Using objects that survived from the necropolises of Asyut and Deir Rifa, the importance of the region's artistic workshops was demonstrated by Gersande Eschenbrenner-Diemer, Marcel Marée and Wolfram Grajetzki. More than 2,000 years later, it is even possible to reconstruct legal (and illegal!) practices from papyrus archives, as was shown by Bahar Landsberger and Jannik Korte.

The relationship between Asyut and the surrounding region was highlighted by Ann-Cathrin Gabel, who is researching the role of the southern 11th Upper Egyptian nome, and Philip Booth, who explored the impact of rural saints' shrines. But the legacy of Asyut lives on beyond the pharaonic and Late Antique period. The reputation of the Asyut dyke is well documented in Mamluk chronicles and administrative documents from the Ottoman and modern period (as shown by Nicolas Michel) and the city again prospered in the 19th century in tandem with the Sudan trade (see Terry Walz, p. 28).

In the UK  
**The rise of Asyut as regional capital in  
 the 18th and 19th centuries AD**

**Terence Walz**

At the end of the 17th century AD, the fortunes of Asyut were changing. Leaders of new kingdoms in the Sudanic regions to the south of Egypt were consolidating their powers and seeking more extensive trade with Egypt and world markets. Caravans laden with slaves, ivory, feathers, and other Sudanic goods made their way across the desert along the ancient Forty Days Road (*Darb al-Arba'in*) which ended in the Nile Valley in the vicinity of Asyut. At the beginning of the 18th century the city had a population of about 15,000 people – about a quarter Christian – and became known as the nexus for the African trade. Many Asyuti families entered the Sudan trade and began to go to the Sudan to seek commercial opportunities and fortune.

At the time the city was governed by a *kashif* (district chief) on behalf of the governor of Upper Egypt who resided in Jirja. He was responsible for collecting taxes from peasants working the rich agricultural lands that lie in the Asyut region and from the caravans coming from Sudanic Africa. The city's increasing wealth in the course of the 18th century may be measured by the number of new mosques and markets. However, its political fortunes changed depending on the power of the Ottoman governors in Cairo and the independent-minded Bedouin tribes in Upper Egypt. It frequently provided refuge for Mamluk factions which fell out of favour in Cairo and sought safety in Upper Egypt. Thus it remained on the border between the Ottoman north and the independent south.

When Muhammad Ali emerged as the ruler of Egypt in the 19th century he brought Upper Egypt under the control of the central government. His son Ibrahim Pasha was sent to subdue the region, settling in Asyut in 1809. From that point the city became the residence of the governors of Upper Egypt – replacing Jirja – although it did not become de facto capital until 1826. The city assumed the trappings of a capital city: new administrative buildings were constructed, a barracks was raised in a nearby village, and a cadre of Turkish speaking emigres came down from Cairo to fill the top bureaucratic offices. Trade was centralised in the beginning, but in due course merchants found ways to evade regulations and establish their own commercial networks. By the middle of the 19th century, Asyut merchants dominated the Upper Egyptian trade in grains (wheat, beans, lentils and barley) with Cairo and Alexandria and grew rich by importing from the north textiles and manufactured goods of Egyptian, European and Syrian origin. Of great importance was the development of the textile trade, especially cotton calicoes brought from England and other countries. Both Christian and Muslim families prospered, constructing new *wikalas* or caravanserais to store their goods – some of which remain in the heart of the old city.



Francis Frith, photographic print of Siout taken in 1857 (reproduced in 1907).

Lady Louisa Tenson, view of Siout. Drawing from her *Sketches of the East*, published in 1846.

\*Wepwawet, lord of Asyut, painted decoration in the tomb of Djefaihapi (12th Dynasty). Photo: Fritz Barthel. © The Asyut Project.

In the UK

## Schiaparelli and the Museo Egizio in Asyut: excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission (1906–1913)

**Paolo Del Vesco**

Curator, Museo Egizio Turin

In 1903 Ernesto Schiaparelli (1856–1928), director of the Turin Egyptian collection (the Museo Egizio) between 1894 and 1928, started his archaeological activities in Egypt under the aegis of the newly founded Italian Archaeological Mission. After his 1901 trip, when he bought and transferred some 1,500 objects to Italy, Schiaparelli realised that it would be better to excavate in Egypt, because purchased objects lacked any sure information about their provenance and dating. According to the antiquity law of the time, more than half of the objects found during regular excavations could be assigned to the foreign mission by the Egyptian Antiquities Service.

The Italian Archaeological Mission began working in three different locations: at the great pyramid of Giza, in the site of Heliopolis, close to Cairo, and on the west bank at Luxor, in the famous Valley of the Queens. Until the start of the First World War, the Italian Mission excavated eleven sites, including Ashmunein, Asyut, Qau el-Khebir, Deir el-Medina and Gebelein. The necropolis of Asyut, in particular, was explored by the Museo Egizio mission in seven fieldwork seasons (1906 to 1913), and yielded over 3,000 artefacts that greatly enriched the Turin collection. Unfortunately, Schiaparelli did not publish his research – our only chance to reconstruct the results of these campaigns rests on careful analysis and study of the available archive material.

Thanks to Alice Sbriglio's study of the documents kept at the Turin National Archive and collaboration between the

Museo Egizio and the joint German-Egyptian project in Asyut, it has been possible to identify the areas excavated by Schiaparelli and recontextualise many of the objects in the Turin collection. A new publication will present the transcribed notebooks of the Italian mission, the archive photographs and the first results of this collaborative research.

During the seven seasons at Asyut, the Italian mission uncovered a large number of burials. Various simple burials, probably dating to the First Intermediate Period (around 2100 BC) consisted of small wooden boxes or rectangular baskets containing bodies laid on the left side and in contracted position, a few terracotta vessels and a wooden headrest. Some female burials had linen tunics with very fine pleats. Many other burials of this period contained wooden coffins decorated with *wedjat*-eyes, the protective eyes of Horus, or sometimes bearing an inscription with a funerary formula.

In the 1908 season a number of tombs dating to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (around 1900 BC) were discovered and coffins of a different type were found: on the exterior the *wedjat*-eyes were painted on a yellow square and the long sides had single, double or even triple columns of inscriptions. Various funerary goods completed these burials among which the intact tomb of Shemes and his wife was found. It contained two coffins, three boat models complete with their crew, two wooden statuettes both representing the tomb owner, a long wooden stick, six pot stands and more than 120 cups and jars, symbolically representing funerary offerings.



Workmen of the Italian Archaeological Mission carrying a crate containing antiquities down the slope in front of Tomb V. One of the tents used by the Italian mission is visible on the left. Asyut 1906–1913, © Archivio Museo Egizio, B146.

In the UK

## International Training Programme 2017

**Claire Messenger**

Manager, International Training Programme

Five colleagues from Egypt and Sudan joined the annual International Training Programme (ITP) at the British Museum, between 1 July and 12 August 2017. The fellows participated in sessions, workshops, working groups, behind the scenes tours and study visits to give them as wide as possible overview of museums and culture in the UK. They also worked in smaller groups to explore projects related to Egypt and Sudan.



*The most effective skill that I gained from the ITP was in writing text and labels for the museum objects. We had three sessions related to label writing for museum displays, exploring the influence of text and images on the visitor experience, where to place museum text to benefit visitors with physical accessibility issues, and how to structure the text to make a hook for visitors by putting important information and key messages first.*

Mariem Danial Ibrahim, Curator, Coptic Museum, Egypt

*The sessions on documentation and storage, collections management and exhibitions were very useful because I could see the process of looking after an object through all stages. In particular, looking in the store rooms and learning how best to store and conserve museum pieces will be most beneficial to my work at Khalifa House Museum.*

Elnzeer Tirab Abaker, Curator, Khalifa House Museum, Khartoum, Sudan

*I have almost 10 years' experience of museum work, yet I was eager to learn from British Museum professionals about aspects of museum practices, to learn, collaborate and discuss with museum colleagues, and to enrich my knowledge and experience with new skills. This has led to increased confidence in myself and my museum and raised my ambitions for my work within the Grand Egyptian Museum – to serve it and make it one of the best museums in the world.*

Heba Khairy, Curator, Grand Egyptian Museum, Egypt

*I improved my own skills and acquired new ones such as brainstorming in a few minutes, presenting in English in public, working in a team and sharing thoughts with a group, accepting other opinions and respecting the difference and the diversity of cultures.*

Norhan Hassan, Curator, Egyptian Museum, Egypt

*I learnt a lot about modern techniques used in excavations and surveys, the latest archaeological discoveries and the laws to protect archaeological sites. The ITP has much increased my skill set on many subjects and has changed my working life. Before, I had a limited view and lacked ideas about many things but now I have increased my knowledge, experiences and skills.*

Haitham Eliman, Curator, Sudan National Museum, Sudan

*The programme would not be possible without the generous support of many institutions and individuals. A full list of those who have sponsored the ITP since its inception in 2006 is available at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org) and in each year's report. For further information on sponsors or how to support the ITP, email [development@britishmuseum.org](mailto:development@britishmuseum.org)*



The mudbrick remains of the Monastery of the Martyr St. Phoibammon, AD 600–800, installed in and around the earlier temple of Hatshepsut (c. 1550 BC) at Deir el-Bahri. Image courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

Soft-furnishing from the Monastery of St. Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahri, AD 600–800 (EA 43368), after conservation.

## In the UK Archaeological textiles and conservation training opportunities

### **Anna Harrison**

Senior Conservator: Organics, Department of Conservation

### **Staphany Cheng**

Textile Conservation MPhil, University of Glasgow

### **Elisabeth R O'Connell and Julie Anderson**

Curators, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Since 2007, conservation students have worked on textiles from Sudan and Egypt, under the supervision of the Museum's organic conservators. Textiles or groups of textiles are prioritised by curatorial and conservation staff in accordance with current programmes of research and publication, display and storage. In this way, students assist with the ongoing programme of work and are also able to undertake projects that would not otherwise be possible. The placements provide students with a valuable opportunity to work with experienced conservators within the context of the Museum, to liaise with curators and to expand their conservation knowledge and skills.

Up to four students can undertake placements within the Organic Artefacts Conservation Section each year, their schedule organised to enable work with different specialist conservators according to their experience and interests. Over 130 textile fragments from the Nile Valley have been treated by conservation students, with 78 conserved since 2013 as part of a collaboration with the University of Glasgow to conserve textiles excavated in Sudan by William Y Adams. The remaining 52 textiles have been treated, since 2007, during placements for British and overseas students on conservation courses at UCL and the University of Glasgow, as well as others based in Austria, France and Sweden.

This provides an opportunity for them to experience the challenges of assessing, documenting and conserving fragile, fragmentary archaeological textiles from the first millennium AD which include clothing, accessories and furnishing fabrics. Guided by a supervising conservator, students have the opportunity to study, at close hand, original evidence of use, such as wear patterns and original repairs, and to interpret evidence in the form of soiling and creasing in order to make informed and ethical conservation decisions.

Staphany Cheng from the Textile Conservation programme at Glasgow completed a placement in 2017, liaising with Julie Anderson to understand the crucial role of the conservator in planning for long-term storage while enabling safe access to the Sudanese textiles, and with Elisabeth O'Connell on a furnishing textile excavated at the Monastery of St Phoibammon (c. AD 600–800). With the latter piece, she began by studying the looped weave structure of the textile, the differential condition of the dyed linen and wool wefts, and the soiling and creasing. Staphany saw the projects as opportunities to liaise and work with textile conservators and curators on contextually different textile fragments in order to develop her skills and confidence in research, examination, documentation and practical conservation work. In so doing, it broadened her experience of the complexities of archaeological textile conservation and her understanding of a conservator's role within a large institution such as the British Museum.



*Staphany's summer placement was funded by a James McNeil Whistler and Beatrix Whistler Scholarship and her second year at the University of Glasgow is funded by the Textile Conservation Foundation.*



In the UK  
Monitoring the art market



**Marcel Marée**  
Curator, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan

Recent years have seen a dramatic rise in looting activity in Egypt and Sudan, which is having a disastrous effect on archaeological sites, museums and magazines. Alarming numbers of illicit artefacts enter the international art market, with provenances lost, suppressed or falsified. At present dealers are hardly required to research the history and provenance of objects consigned, nor do they have the expertise or tools to do this adequately, with the result that looted antiquities are often handled unknowingly. It is therefore vital that subject specialists – Egyptologists – take the initiative and make it easier for everyone to examine object histories.

Over recent years the British Museum has assumed a leading role in monitoring the international art market for looted antiquities. Few other institutions are as well placed to keep an eye on the trade, research suspicious pieces, and engage all relevant parties in counteracting illegal practices. The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan has a long record of identifying problematic pieces on the market and facilitating repatriations to both countries. Suspicious pieces are investigated in close communication with archaeologists working at the sites of known or suspected origin, and any identified loot is then pointed out to the current owner, who will usually cooperate to enable repatriation. All necessary arrangements are made with the antiquities authorities in Cairo and Khartoum, and with the relevant embassies in London. Coordinated action between the British Museum and the Repatriation Office of the Ministry of Antiquities in Cairo has proven particularly fruitful, and often enables progress with criminal cases that would otherwise remain unresolved. Our efforts have led to dozens of object recoveries, involving loot from sites as diverse as Saqqara, Dahshur, Abusir el-Meleq, Asyut, Karnak, the tombs and mortuary temples of Western Thebes, and Aswan.

The Department's push for greater transparency of the trade has now received a major boost thanks to a grant through the Cultural Protection Fund, managed by the British Council in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The grant will enable the creation of an open access database of artefacts on the international market and in private collections. The database will make poorly accessible objects widely available for scholarship, flag pieces of problematic origin, and make provenance research much easier. Our priority goes to objects sold after 1970, the year of the UNESCO convention on illegal trade in cultural goods. In the long term we will also record pieces sold as long ago as the early 19th century. Images and metadata will be scanned from publications or provided by project partners and other contributors. The website will be in English and Arabic, and there will be a search-by-image option. The grant also provides for traineeships for Egyptian and Sudanese scholars, and we will support their ongoing involvement in building the database. The project starts in April 2018. Anyone with information on artefacts circulating outside Egypt and Sudan, be they legal or illicit, is invited to inform us!

[britishmuseum.org/circulatingartefacts](http://britishmuseum.org/circulatingartefacts)

This relief appeared on the London art market in 2014. The inscriptions revealed that it comes from an unknown temple in the vicinity of Asyut, discovered by clandestine diggers. The British Museum recognised the provenance and enabled repatriation to Egypt.

In the UK  
Respiratory Disease in Fourth Cataract populations

**Anna Davies-Barrett**  
Collaborative Doctoral Award Student, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan and Durham University

As part of the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project in Sudan, a large region upstream of the Fourth Nile Cataract was surveyed and excavated by the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, in conjunction with the British Museum. The Museum now houses a large number of the human skeletons from these excavations. Given the geographical proximity of these sites, spanning different time periods, the collection provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the biology and the state of health of the past inhabitants of this region.

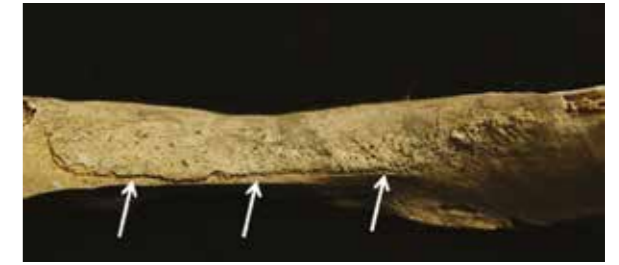
Inflammation of soft tissue caused by disease can stimulate changes to the bone underlying the infected area. Although primarily a disease of soft tissue, observing changes to the skeleton in the vicinity of the respiratory tract, in particular on the inner bony surfaces of the sinuses and the ribs, can help to identify individuals suffering from respiratory disease. This doctoral research seeks to investigate changes in the prevalence rate of respiratory disease within the Fourth Cataract over time, looking at skeletal assemblages dating to the Kerma, Meroitic, post-Meroitic, and Christian periods.

Poor air quality, caused by particulate pollution, has been linked to increased susceptibility to respiratory disease by irritating and inflaming the respiratory tract. Differences in the prevalence of respiratory disease could be linked to changes in air quality due to increased aridity and dust, occupational practices that produce particulate pollution such as agricultural ploughing, metalworking, and pottery, and exposure to smoke from cooking fires. In addition to changes through time, it is possible to investigate the potential for different social groups, such as women, men, young or old individuals, to display different rates of these diseases. Significant differences could indicate that certain groups were exposed to higher levels of particulate pollution due to specific activities and were, thus, more susceptible to respiratory disease.

Skeletal assemblages from other sites in the Middle Nile Valley – with different environments and socioeconomic practices – are also being investigated, to further contextualise evidence for respiratory disease within the Fourth Cataract. This research employs new methods and scientific techniques in order to accurately record respiratory disease in the British Museum's skeletal assemblages, including the use of endoscopy to access the maxillary sinuses of intact skulls without causing damage.

In many modern societies, a rise in the number of people suffering from respiratory disease has been associated with an increase in air pollution and poor air quality. Not only does this study aim to produce a greater understanding of respiratory disease through time in Sudan, but will also provide a historical perspective on a modern problem.

*This doctoral project is funded by the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme.*



A new layer of bone on top of the original surface of the inner rib, caused by underlying inflammation.

Disorganised new bone formation within the maxillary sinus, caused by sinusitis.

Anna in the Museum's bioarchaeology laboratory.



## Further information

### Further resources

To search the collection database and download free high-resolution images for non-commercial use, visit [britishmuseum.org/collection](http://britishmuseum.org/collection)

For information on visiting the Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan's collection, library and archive, or objects curated by other departments, find out more at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

For *British Museums Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan*, the free online journal presenting the latest research including fieldwork, click on 'Publications' at [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

For membership of the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, and free online access to the Sudan & Nubia journal, visit [sudarchrs.org.uk](http://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](http://peeters.be)

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### New publications

Spencer, N, Stevens, A, and Binder, M (eds.), *Nubia in the New Kingdom. Lived experience, pharaonic control and indigenous traditions*. British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 3. Leuven, Paris and Bristol CT, 2017.

Antoine, D and Vandenbeusch, M, *Eternal life. Exploring ancient Egypt*. Hong Kong, 2017.

Antoine, D, and Vandenbeusch, M, *Egyptian mummies from the British Museum. Exploring ancient lives*. Taipei, 2017.

### Dates for your diary

Sudan Archaeological Research Society Colloquium  
**Recent archaeological fieldwork in Sudan**  
10 May 2018

The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology  
**The most ordinary of things: Victorian artists and the allure of the ancient Egyptian collections at the British Museum**  
Stephanie Moser  
19 July 2018

The Annual Egyptological Colloquium  
**Displaying Egypt**  
19–20 July 2018

The Kirwan Memorial Lecture (Sudan Archaeological Research Society)  
**Excavations at Sedeinga**  
Claude Rilly  
27 September 2018

### British Museum exhibitions

**Egyptian mummies: exploring ancient lives**  
Queensland Museum, Brisbane, Australia  
16 March – 26 August 2018

**Faraón: rey de Egipto/Faraó: rei d'Egipte**  
CaixaForum: Barcelona  
7 June – 16 September 2018

CaixaForum: Madrid  
16 October 2018 – 20 January 2019

CaixaForum: Girona  
19 February – 18 August 2019

CaixaForum: Lleida  
18 September 2019 – 16 February 2020



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