

PREFACE BY THE EDITORS

In 1993 the the Austrian Accademy of Sciences published the volume “House and Palace in Ancient Egypt”, which included the acts of a symposium organised for the 30-years jubilee of Austrian archaeological activities at settlement sites in Egypt and Nubia. This still essential book provided a more or less complete overview of the activities in settlement archaeology in Egypt of those days. However, settlement research had only started by then to be regarded as an equally valuable aspect of Egyptian archaeology besides the traditional research in sacred or funerary spheres. The articles of the volume were mostly concerned with the basic elements of any settlement: houses and palaces.

In November 2006, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Austrian Archaeological Institute’s excavations at the large urban site of Tell el-Dab^{ca}, and triggered by the research project “Stadtentwicklung im Nildelta”, project number P 21074-G08 financed by the Austrian Science Fund, another symposium was held. Again, an overall survey of settlement archaeology in Egypt should be provided, but this time, not houses, but settlements as such and their respective structures should mainly be considered.

Most of the given papers are to be found in the present volume, which, thus, might again be considered a synopsis of ongoing settlement-research in Egypt. Moreover, it becomes obvious which progress has been achieved since the previous publication, and which topics and questions are in the focus of current research.

Most of the papers of the 2006 – conference are to be found in the present volume, which, thus, might again be considered a synopsis of ongoing settlement-research in Egypt. Therefore they focus mainly on site evidence. Only two contributions (M. Lehner and W. Müller) deal also with urban theories and models – a subject which will be addressed in a future symposium of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

The site of Tell el-Dab^{ca}, having been thoroughly studied for four decades, can justly be considered

one of the backbones of any urban research in Egypt. Therefore, it appears in the present volume with three articles, all written by the editors of the volume, respectively. Both the study by M. Bietak and by I. Forstner-Müller cover the overall area of the site in discussing structural problems. Bietak’s article focuses on differentiations and hierarchy in the developing structures, whereas Forstner-Müller’s paper is more concerned with the different urbanistic concepts applied through different phases in the history of the town-site. Finally, E. Czerny’s paper provides a detailed insight into the structure of the 12th dynasty settlement at ‘Ezbet Rushdi, at the north-eastern edge of the Tell el-Dab^{ca} site.

However, whenever Middle Kingdom settlements are discussed, the site of Lahun, excavated already in the 19th century, must be considered. It seems to be an inexhaustable resource for all kind of questions concerning urbanistic research. Only recently, a new survey started at the site by a Hungarian-Egyptian team with the aim to continue previous Canadian activities. The available plan of the site, originally published by W.M.F. Petrie in 1890, has often been considered as confusing with little reliability, and only the 10 large mansions at the northern side of the town repeatedly attracted scholarly attention. However, in the last years several important studies appeared on the architecture of Kahun (Lahun), among them an article by F. Arnold (Baukonstruktion in der Stadt Kahun. Zu den Aufzeichnungen Ludwig Borchardts)¹ and one by R. Frey and E. Knudstad (The Re-examination of Selected Architectural Remains at El-Lahun).² In the present volume, F. Doyen presents a thorough analyses of the structure of different types of houses, making clear, by the way, that Petrie’s plan is perfectly workable for detailed studies. She concluded that the size of the large mansions was used as a kind of “modul”, from which all other formats in the town can be deduced, what can be shown to be also the case at the town-site of Abydos-south.

¹ In P. JÁNOSI (ed), *Structure and Significance*, UZK 25, Wien 2005, 77–104.

² *JSSEA* 34 (2007) 24–65.

Similar to Lahun, also the famous town site of Amarna has been excavated since the 19th century, and continues to be in the focus of archaeological research. K. Spence in the present volume also provided an analysis of structure and interpreted the “Amarna-house” as an entity reflective of hierarchy and social control.

That typical Egyptian architectural structures are consistent with the highly hierarchical society of Ancient Egypt can already be seen in the Old Kingdom. M. Lehner and Ana Tavares, in a detailed study of the “Pyramid-construction-town” at Giza and its satellites, present a most impressive insight into the living conditions of those concerned with the building of a pyramid. The barracks for the workmen’s dwellings could clearly be distinguished from a quarter of those in charge of food-preparation, storage facilities for animals and cereals for food supply, and finally a quarter for the administration, where high-ranking officials were housed. The architecture of the complex is perfectly adapted to the purpose of entertaining a large construction site and shows a very high degree of analytical planning. Numerous elements providing for social control might be considered an essential element of the architectural layout.

Excavations at the town of Elephantine at the 1st cataract provide a unique sequence of urban stages from a First Dynasty-fortress through the flourishing town of the Late Period and even later. In C. v. Pilgrim’s paper a strong focus lies on the diachronic aspect of settlement development. On the opposite riverbank of the Nile, modern Assuan covers the remains of ancient Syene. Important ongoing excavations currently produce new information on the town of the Graeco-Roman period. W. Müller presents these up-to-date results in the frame of a thorough study of the urbanism in Egypt during Greek

and Roman times, beginning with the first Greek settlements already in the 26th dynasty.

Further papers are more concerned with special problems, such as S. Hendrickx’s *et al.* study of the enigmatic and much discussed walls of El-Kab, or K. Vogel’s paper on the gates and defensive features of the Middle Kingdom fortresses in Nubia.

Far away from the Nile valley, west of Mersa Matruh, lies the New Kingdom fortress of Zawiet Umm el-Rakham. It was built in Ramesside times against the growing immigration pressure of Libyan tribes. S. Snape concentrates in his article on the problems of provisioning versus self-supply of this westernmost military outpost of the Egyptian Empire.

A completely different research was done by A. Graham, who studied the geomorphological conditions of island-formation in the Nile at Luxor. By auger drilling he was able to demonstrate that the primal Karnak temple was founded on an island, which only later accreted to the eastern border of the Nile. It is intriguing to imagine that the site of the present Sacred Lake once was a natural depression filled with water, typical for recently emerged islands.

The only non-archaeological article in the volume is an essay of J. Kahl’s on the “Anthropology of the Town”. He collected evidence in many texts that towns were allegorised as women, having human properties such as feelings or memory.

The editors hope that the present volume will be acclaimed for its fresh and stimulating approaches to both newly evolved and since long discussed questions of settlement archaeology and urbanistic studies in Egypt.

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