



The Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology

NEWSLETTER NO. 73

July 2000



THE QIFT TEMPLE AREA WITH MODERN BUILDINGS IN BACKGROUND

CHASING MIN FROM AKHMIM TO KOPTOS **The Qift Regional Expedition** **Initial Archaeological Survey – April 2000**

The work of the Australian Centre for Egyptology in el-Hawawish, the cemetery of the nobles of ancient Akhmim, is well known to members and the god Min has become familiar to most Australians interested in Egyptology. Now preliminary feelers have been directed towards the second centre for the cult of Min in Upper Egypt, Qift. Qift, (known to the Greeks as Koptos and to the ancient Egyptians as Gebtu), was the capital of the 5th Upper Egyptian nome; the 'double hawk' nome. It lies on the eastern bank directly opposite the ancient sites of el Zawayda and Naqada, where the Wadi Hammamat meets with the Nile Valley. Qift, thus located in a position linking the Nile with the Eastern Desert and the Red Sea, operated as a major centre for administration, religion and trade from prehistoric to early modern times. The central Qift temple area has been partly excavated by G. Maspero (1882-4), W.M.F. Petrie (1893-4) and by A. Reinach and R. Weill (1910-11). More recently the later period temples have been recorded by a French

team, a small part of the neighbouring settlement has been excavated by an American team and an exhibition of the major Pharaonic artefacts from Qift has been held in Lyon, France. Without the wealth associated with a Pharaonic capital, lacking monumental stone architecture and being situated in the middle of the Nile flood plain, the Qift region has tended to be overshadowed by its neighbours, especially Luxor. For the modern Egyptian archaeologist, however, the region still contains an overwhelming abundance of cultural remains which may, if sifted through using the latest scientific methods, answer many questions on regional administration, religion, trade, as well as contribute to our understanding of the life ways of the average man in the street.

Gregory Gilbert (currently a Ph.D. student at Macquarie University) and a small team conducted a two week surface survey of the region in the vicinity of Qift on the east bank of the Nile to record existing and potential archaeological sites. The initial surface survey aimed to walk over an area from the lower reaches of the Eastern Desert, through the Qift temple area to the Nile River. Only potential sites within 7 km. of the centre of Qift were considered. The survey was conducted with the aid of Egyptian General Survey Authority maps, as well as a hand held Global Positioning System. Local advice was often sought regarding the age of certain features, especially recent agricultural works and modern buildings, and although the work was conducted wholly within a high security zone, (team members being escorted by two police officers throughout), all the locals welcomed the team members whole-heartedly. The only conceivable danger was due to the excessive Qifti tea drinking! As with most other parts of regional Egypt, farmland and villages are gradually being swallowed up to become suburbs of neighbouring towns while land reclamation is constantly converting the desert edges into productive fields. The existing Antiquities sites at the Qift temple area, el Qal'a and Kom el Mummien were examined. The Eastern Desert edge was surveyed revealing scattered evidence of past occupation, however the area was very disturbed by recent development activities, and hence unlikely to reveal anything of cultural significance. The extent of the old town of Qift was recorded, this area of raised ground (referred to here as a kom) was most probably built up by the frequent levelling of mud-brick buildings in the town on top of an earlier yellow clay hill. The extent of the old towns and koms in the neighbouring villages were also recorded. Agricultural canals and recent cuttings were examined for evidence of occupation, as were many ploughed fields. Pottery sherds were mainly found on the koms or in the neighbouring fields. A selection of surface pottery sherds from just outside the Qift temple area were examined and recorded to gain a better understanding of the pottery sherds found in the neighbouring areas. Also, for purposes of comparison and to improve our knowledge of the nome, the team visited the Wadi Hammamat, Qus, Shanhur, el Zawayda and Naqada. Notes were taken of the modern settlement landscape and environment to allow comparison with the ancient landscape. A regional map is being prepared to identify the sites of potential archaeological significance. A further survey season will be necessary utilising core sampling and test trenches to better understand temporal changes in the Qift settlement pattern.

For the 2001 season, the Qift Regional Expedition plans to re-excavate and record an Old Kingdom mastaba tomb at Kom el Mummien and an outlying village approximately one kilometre south of Qift. Kom el Mummien, previously named Kom el Koffar, is generally considered to have been the major cemetery for Koptos during the late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom periods. Although most of the kom itself is now covered by the houses of the village, a small area containing a mastaba which was excavated from 1979-81 by the

Egyptian Antiquities Organisation has been set aside as an antiquities site. The Australian team will assist the Egyptians to conserve, record and publish this mastaba.

The work in the Qift region will not end with these projects, as there is much potential for future research to be done at home as well as in the field.

Gregory Gilbert.

COURSES

INTRODUCTION TO EGYPTIAN ARABIC: Prof. Kanawati will conduct a course over 10 weeks to introduce students to Egyptian spoken Arabic and Arabic script, to enable them to read simple signs and express basic needs. The course would also be of benefit to anyone planning to travel in Egypt. The course will run on Thursday evenings from 7-9pm. **PLEASE NOTE NEW STARTING DATE: 3rd August.** Those interested should mail their details, plus a cheque made out to the **Rundle Foundation, Macquarie University.**

Cost: \$80 (inclusive of GST)

PUBLIC LECTURES

Two public lectures will be held in the second semester giving details of current excavations in Egypt.

EXCAVATIONS AT LUXOR:

Dr Boyo Ockinga will speak about the latest discoveries in Luxor

THURSDAY July 27th **Cost: \$10 (inclusive of GST)**

EXCAVATIONS AT SAQQARA:

Details of the recent findings at this site will be given by Professor Naguib Kanawati.

THURSDAY October 12th **Cost: \$10 (inclusive of GST)**

TOUR OF EGYPT - JANUARY 2001

This tour, which will be led by Dr. Boyo Ockinga, is now fully booked.

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

2000 Mug – Cost: \$8 per mug or two for \$15, (both inclusive of GST) plus postage and packing.

1999 and 1998 Mugs – Cost \$5 (inclusive of GST)

Slide Sets – Cost \$27.50 (inclusive of GST) plus postage.

The sets cover topics from previous Macquarie Digs on Old and New Kingdom sites.

CD-Rom - Cost: \$22 (inclusive of GST) plus postage)

This CD-Rom, prepared by Sue Angelo and Derek Janderko, covers in pictures and captions the various projects undertaken by the Centre over the past 10 years.

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are currently in press and will be available late 2000

Reports

No. 14: N. Kanawati & M. Abder-Raziq, *The Teti Cemetery at Saqqara, Vol 6 The Tomb of Nikauisesi*

No. 15: A. McFarlane, *The Unis Cemetery at Saqqara, Vol 1 The Tomb of Irukaptah*

Publications will be subject to 10% GST and a full list of publication prices is available from the A.C.E. office.

***All postage & packing costs are subject to GST but the full effect is not known at this time.**

MEMBERSHIP

The Rundle Foundation has agreed to absorb the effect of the GST for the year ended 30/6/2001 and the membership fees will remain at the 1999 level. However, it will be necessary to increase the fees for the year ended 30/6/2002 to take account of the GST.

DONATIONS TO RUNDLE FOUNDATION

Donations should be made payable to Rundle Foundation, Macquarie University on a separate cheque. These donations are GST free and are tax deductible to the donor.

CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES

The following courses of possible interest to members are available through the university. *1. Methods and Techniques of Egyptian Archaeology; and 2. Egypt in the Old Kingdom.* This course requires a knowledge of the Egyptian language to at least an introductory level. For further information please contact Mrs. Victoria Brownless (02) 9850 8762.

WEB SITE

Please continue to check the web site for last minute information regarding our activities. Make sure you are looking at the current website, though – the address is:

www.egyptology.mq.edu.au

All mail should be addressed to:

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9am-3pm Monday and Wednesday

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**NB. ALL CHEQUES MUST NOW BE MADE PAYABLE TO
THE RUNDLE FOUNDATION –MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY**