



The Asyut Project 18

Harrassowitz Verlag

Edited by Jochem Kahl and Andrea Kilian

Asyut – The Capital That Never Was



The Asyut Project

Edited by
Jochem Kahl, Ursula Verhoeven,
Mahmoud El-Khadragy and Andrea Kilian

Volume 18



2022

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Jochem Kahl and Andrea Kilian (Eds.)

Asyut - The Capital That Never Was

2022

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Umschlagabbildung: Asyut in the year 2012; view from Gebel Asyut al-gharbi; photo: Fritz Barthel 2012, © The Asyut Project

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <https://dnb.de/> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <https://dnb.de/>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our website <https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/>

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2022

This work, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.

Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen

Printed in Germany

ISSN 1865-6250
ISBN 978-3-447-11909-2

eISSN 2701-5610
eISBN 978-3-447-39323-2

Contents

Preface	vii
JOCHEM KAHL & ANDREA KILIAN	
Asyut – The Capital That Never Was	1
JOCHEM KAHL	
The Desert Route of Darb el Arba'in at Asyut	37
MOHAMED OSMAN & JOCHEM KAHL	
Der verschollene Tempel des Upuaut, des Herrn von Assiut	59
JOCHEM KAHL & MOHAMED ABDELRAHIEM	
The Fragmentary Wall Paintings in Tomb I10.1 at Asyut	67
URSULA VERHOEVEN	
The Head of a Female Statuette from Asyut	89
MOHAMED ABDELRAHIEM	
Augen aus Assiut – Zu einem Stilmerkmal der Darstellungsweise von Augen auf funerären Objekten aus Assiut	97
NADINE GRÄSSLER	
The Coffin of Nakhti (S1Shu) at the Shutb Storage Museum in Asyut	115
MOHAMED ABDELRAHIEM	
Die Torpassagen des Zweiwegebuchs in Assiut	145
JOCHEM KAHL & JOHN MOUSSA ISKANDER	
Correlations of Wooden Model Equipment and Wall Decorations in Asyut	155
MONIKA ZÖLLER-ENGELHARDT	
Pottery Offering Trays from Asyut	199
ANDREA KILIAN	
The Asyuti Offering Tables: an attempt at reconstructing funerary ritual in the ancient necropolis of Asyut	253
ESMERALDA LUNDIUS	
Additional Remarks on Ushebtis from Early Excavations in the Necropolis of Asyut	283
JAN MOJE	
Fragmente reliefierter lotusförmiger Fayencekelche aus Assiut	291
ANA SOFIA DE CARVALHO GOMES	
Totenbuch Spruch 72 des <i>P(β)–tj–imn(.w)</i> auf der Mumienkartonage S05/71 aus Assiut	303
MAHMOUD EL-HAMRAWI	
Christliche Grabstelen aus Assiut	335
PHILIPP SCHARFENBERGER	
Plates	1–40

Preface

The present volume of *The Asyut Project* series contains a collection of articles on ancient Asyut, which offer insight into latest research on topical issues. Although, or perhaps precisely because, four major officially sanctioned excavations took place at Asyut between 1903 and 1914, this book would never have been written twenty years ago – simply due to the fact that there would not have been enough available data about Asyut. It is only thanks to the enthusiasm, the high level of commitment and the constant support of the international team of *The Asyut Project* that so much new knowledge on ancient Asyut could be accumulated and that this volume can be published. Covering a time span of several millennia, dealing with evidence from Pharaonic and Coptic culture, with texts, objects, history and material culture from the third millennium BCE to the first millennium CE, the present volume is a current snapshot of the variety of ongoing research on Asyut.

Several research activities have been carried out since 2003 under the name *The Asyut Project*. After a first survey on the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in 2003, conducted by Jochem Kahl and Mahmoud El-Khadragy, it became clear that by resuming archaeological fieldwork on this mountain, many new insights into the regional history of Asyut as well as the history of Egypt in general would be gained. Supported by the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz in 2004, the fieldwork project *The ancient Egyptian necropolis of Asyut: documentation and interpretation* was funded by the DFG (German Research Foundation) from mid-2005 until the end of 2019. Directed by Ursula Verhoeven (Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz; project director since 2004) and Jochem Kahl (Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz and Freie Universität Berlin; field director since 2004 and project director since 2010), this project focused on mapping the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, recording inscriptions, paintings and reliefs associated with the nomarchs' tombs of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, retrieving an animal tomb, studying pottery, tracing the reuse and recontextualization of tombs during Pharaonic, Byzantine and Islamic history and identifying the various functions of the Gebel Asyut al-gharbi. Based on this previous research, beginning in 2020, the German-Polish project *Asyut – centre of ancient trade* (directed by Jochem Kahl, Freie Universität Berlin, and Teodozja Rzeuska, Polish Academy of Sciences) followed suite in order to define the role of Asyut as a centre of merchandise during the Pharaonic Period and Late Antiquity. Both projects have been supported by colleagues from Sohag University, in particular Mahmoud El-Khadragy, Mohamed Abdelrahiem, Ahmed Alansary and Mahmoud El-Hamrawi, as well as the State Ministry of Antiquities in Egypt, represented by Zahi Hawass, Mamdouh Eldamaty and Khaled El-Anani over the years. Another project which has been running since 2016 is the study of objects from both early and illicit excavations in Asyut city and on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi, which are now stored at the Antiquities magazine at Shutb. This project is financed by the Egyptological Seminar of the Freie Universität Berlin and directed by Jochem Kahl and Mohamed Abdelrahiem. We are grateful to Paul-Michael Spielhagen for additional funding. For their constant support with publishing, we thank Harrassowitz Verlag and its former and current directors Michael Langfeld, Barbara Krauss, and Stephan Specht. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Museo Egizio, Turin, and the British Museum, London, for their support and the access to the objects provided by them. Special thanks further go to the General Directors of Asyut Antiquities, Hany Sadek Metri, Abdel-Satar Ahmed Mohamed and Mahmoud El-Sayed Mahdy. We are also grateful to the former and current General Directors of Foreign Missions Affairs & P. Committees Nashwa Gaber, Hany Abo El-Azam and Mohamed Ismail.

Fifteen seasons of fieldwork reduced the statements of early travellers (e.g. Anton, Graf Prokesch-Osten, Sohn, in 1874) and archaeologists (e.g. Nestor L'Hôte in 1839; David George Hogarth after his own excavations in 1907) to absurdity, who wrote that the site was nearly exhausted. Today, after twenty years of constant research in the field, in libraries and museums, we can say: the work will go on. Nineteen published books and nearly sixty articles bear witness that we have set our knowledge about Asyut on a new foundation. A foundation, which enables us to add substantial information to the history of one of the regional centres of ancient Egypt. We extend special gratitude to all the scholars and students who participated in fieldwork or contributed with research on libraries and museums to *The Asyut Project*. It is a pleasure to mention them here below:

List of participants in fieldwork in chronological order:

Jochem Kahl, Egyptologist (2003–2012, 2014, 2016–2019)
 Mahmoud El-Khadragy, Egyptologist (2003–2012, 2014)
 Mahmoud El-Hamrawi, Egyptologist (2003, 2016–2019)
 Eva-Maria Engel, Egyptologist (2003–2005)
 Sameh Shafik, Epigrapher (2003–2009, 2011, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Ahmed Atitou, Archaeologist, “Qufti” (2003–2019, 2021)
 Ursula Verhoeven, Egyptologist (2004–2012, 2014, 2016)
 Ulrike Fauerbach, Surveyor (2004–2006, 2012)
 Monika Zöller-Engelhardt, Egyptologist (2004–2008, 2010–2012, 2014, 2017–2018)
 Yasser Mahmoud Hussein, Egyptologist (2004–2008, 2010)
 Omar Nour el-Din, Egyptologist (2004, 2014)
 Meike Becker, Egyptologist (2005–2008, 2014, 2017)
 Dietrich Klemm, Geologist (2005)
 Rosemarie Klemm, Egyptologist (2005)
 Christiane Dorstewitz, Egyptologist (2005)
 Diana Kleiber, Egyptologist (2005)
 John Moussa Iskander, Egyptologist (2005, 2007)
 Ilona Regulski, Epigrapher (2006–2007, 2014, 2016, 2018)
 Ammar Abu Bakr, Draughtsman (2006–2011)
 Fritz Barthel, Photographer (2006–2007, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016–2018, 2021)
 Hazim Saleh Abdallah, Egyptologist (2006–2007)
 Eva Gervers, Egyptologist (2006–2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Andrea Kilian, Egyptologist (2006–2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Mohamed Naguib Reda, Egyptologist (2006–2007)
 Laura Sanhueza-Pino, Egyptologist (2006–2008, 2010–2011)
 Abd el-Naser Yasin, Scholar of Islamic Studies (2007–2009, 2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Jan Moje, Egyptologist (2007)
 Manja Maschke, Architect (2007–2008)
 Magdalena Patolla, Anthropologist (2007–2009)
 Ibrahim Kedeas, Egyptologist (2007–2008)
 Hytham Aly Madkour, Egyptologist (2007–2008)
 Ahmed Ali El-Khatib, Botanist (2008–2009)
 Hesham Faheed Ahmed, Egyptologist (2008–2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Nadine Deppe, Archaeologist (2008, 2011)
 Chiori Kitagawa, Zoo-Archaeologist (2008, 2010–2011, 2014, 2016–2017)
 Mohamed Al-Shafey, Egyptologist (2008–2012, 2014, 2016–2019, 2021)
 Mohamed Helmi, Egyptologist (2008–2012, 2014)

Veronika Wagner, Egyptologist (2008)
 Mohamed Abdelrahim, Egyptologist (2009–2012, 2014, 2016–2019, 2021)
 Ina Eichner, Byzantine Archaeologist (2009)
 Thomas Beckh, Egyptologist (2009)
 Silvia Prell, Egyptologist (2009–2010)
 Corinna Garbert, Egyptologist (2009)
 Josephine Malur, Egyptologist (2009–2012)
 Josuah Pinke, Egyptologist (2009)
 Cornelia Lehrle (née Goerlich), Architect (2009–2012, 2014)
 Barbara Reichenbächer, Egyptologist (2009–2010, 2012)
 Teodozja Rzeuska, Egyptologist (2010–2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Edyta Klimaszevska-Drabot, Byzantine Archaeologist (2010)
 Michael van Elsbergen, Egyptologist (2010–2012, 2014)
 Svenja A. Gülden, Egyptologist (2010, 2012, 2014)
 Mohamed Farag, Egyptologist (2010–2012, 2014)
 Agatha Wiek, Illustrator (2010)
 Aid Abu Hamid, Archaeologist, “Qufti” (2011–2018)
 Aneta Cedro, Archaeologist (2011–2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Tina Beck, Egyptologist and Social and Cultural Anthropologist (2011–2012, 2014, 2016, 2018–2019)
 Anne Herzberg, Egyptologist (2012)
 Ann-Cathrin Gabel, Egyptologist (2012)
 Rudaina Bayoumi Hasan, Egyptologist (2012)
 Dana Jacoby, Egyptologist (2012)
 Alexandra Winkels, Conservator (2012)
 Ewa Czyżewska-Zalewska, Byzantine Archaeologist (2012, 2014, 2016–2018)
 Günter Vittmann, Egyptologist (2014)
 Stephan Hartlepp, Egyptologist (2014, 2016)
 Rebekka Pabst, Egyptologist (2014)
 Marcus Stecher, Anthropologist (2014)
 Metoda Peršin, Archaeologist (2014)
 Philipp Jansen, Architect (2014, 2016–2018)
 Adel Refat, Egyptologist (2014, 2016–2018, 2021)
 Ahmed Alansary, Egyptologist (2016–2018)
 Ana Sofia de Carvalho Gomes, Egyptologist (2016–2018)
 Katarzyna Molga, Archaeologist (2016–2018)
 Alice Sbriglio, Egyptologist (2016)
 Ulrike Dubiel, Egyptologist (2017–2018)
 Judit Garzón Rodríguez, Egyptologist (2017–2018)
 Walid Azab, Veterinarian (2017)
 Anja Buhlke, Architect (2018)
 Esmeralda Lundius, Egyptologist (2018)

List of accompanying inspectors and conservators in fieldwork and in the Magazine of Antiquities at Shuth:

Ahmed Abdeldayem
 Islam Mohamed Al-Amir Abdelhamid
 Ahmed Abdelrahim Abdelmageed
 Rafat Fakher Karas Abdelmeseeh

Mohamed Farghali Abdelrahiem
Mohamed Abdollah Mohamed Ahmed
Hussein Hashim Sayed Ali
Mohamed Mustafa Alshafey
Mohamed Abou Daif Amer
Emad Bostan Ata
Helal Qeli Attalan
Abdrabuh Sayed Atyah
Kamil Ezzat Awadallah
Heba Ramadan Mohamed Badawy
Abou Bakr
Mustafa Bekhit Mohamed Bekhit
Lisa Khalil Bishay
Michel Nabil Gendi
Osama Samir Ghaly
Mohamed Ismail Mahmoud Ghanim
Samy Kamal Hamdy
Enas Mohamed Hassan
Tarek Hassan
Sameh Khalaf Hemdan
Hussein Mustafa Hussein
Rageh Darwish Khalaf
Taher Ahmed Madkur
Howaida Mahar
Niazy Mustafa Mohamed Mahmoud
Ghada Ali Maray
Suzy Hosny Youssef Masaoud
Adly Garas Matta
Dalia Mohamed
Esraa Saber Mohamed
Mohamed Khalifa Mohamed
Mohamed Refaat Mohamed
Rehab Mohamed Abuserir Mohamed
Tarik Mahmoud Mohamed
Manar Mohamed Naguib
Nadja Naguib
Khaled Omar
Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed Omran
Hassan Saad Hassan Osman
Hamada Rifat
Ayman Ahmed Salam
Khaled Gomaa Sayed
Magdy Shaker
Medhat Fayez Tadros
Kabil Kamil Girgis Tanious
Khaled Abdelmalek Abu Zed

List of contributors to *The Asyut Project* by translation work, graphic work or studies in libraries or museums:

Anna Arpaia
Youssef Ahmed-Mohamed
Sabrina Mercedes Benz
Martin Bleisteiner
Dieter Blohm
Hannah Jade Cope
Rebecca Diewitz
Anke Ebel
Douglas Fear
Dora Goldsmith
Nadine Gräßler
Oliver Hasselbach
Janine Höhne
Jessica Jancziak
Elisabeth Kruck
Claire Malleson
Antonio Morales
Mohamed Abdollah Osman
Iris Rodenbüsch
Philipp Scharfenberger
Nora Abdelhamid Shalaby
Jeff Simpson
Rebecca Van Es
Madita Voß
Petra Weschenfelder
Benjamin Wortmann
Anissa Zoubir

Last but not least, our thanks go to our driver Sobhi and the numerous local workmen without whom the project would never have been possible.

Berlin, May 2022

Jochem Kahl and Andrea Kilian

Asyut – The Capital That Never Was¹

Jochem Kahl

1. Asyut: The “Capital of Dreamland”?

In 1873, the English writer and Egyptologist Amelia Blandford Edwards described how she approached the city of Asyut by boat from the north; how, time and again, the seemingly endless bends of the Nile delayed her arrival (Fig. 1); how beautiful the city appeared to her, as its minarets kept re-emerging like a mirage, sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right of the river; how the mountains looked as transparent as the sunshine, and how every last detail of the panorama seemed to belong in a painting.

What she also described, however, is how this romantic idea of Asyut was shattered and replaced by disenchantment the minute she stepped off the boat:

So our mirage turns to sordid reality, and Siût, which from afar off looked like the capital of Dreamland, resolves itself into a big mud town as ugly and ordinary as its fellows.

(EDWARDS 1877: 101)

Asyut, the object of Amelia Edwards’ unrealised vision, has a chequered history that reaches back more than 5,000 years – a history so rich that it is rarely matched in Egypt, and indeed anywhere in the world; a history, moreover, that continues to be written even today. In fact, this episode of the “capital of dreamland” that failed to materialise is but one of many stories the city can tell – there is Asyut, the capital of the 13th Upper Egyptian nome throughout the Pharaonic Period, where the city’s chief deity Wepwawet and the god Anubis were worshipped; there is the Asyut to which pilgrims flocked in the 4th century CE; there is the Asyut which is right in the geographical centre of Egypt, but nevertheless a border city – a *wounded* city, ravaged by wars and crises, but also a *creative* city, whose writings, images, statues and architecture – whose whole cultural life, in fact – were often ground-breaking and highly influential. The following is intended to present a number of small snippets from the densely written pages of the incredibly diverse histories of this fascinating city.

2. Asyut: The Lost City

Today, Asyut is home to about 400,000 people. The airy vista from the mountain Gebel Asyut al-gharbi that presented itself to the traveller still in the 19th century² has given way to quite a different sight: what the modern visitor observes from the same spot is basically a sea of houses (Fig. 2). The modern city (Fig. 3) stretches from the western banks of the Nile all the way to the mountain range on the fringes of the Libyan Desert, which begins with Gebel Asyut al-gharbi right on the city’s outskirts. This sprawling concrete jungle has swallowed Early Modern gardens and palaces along with the last traces of the ancient city. Closely packed buildings cover Old Asyut completely; the alluvial deposits left by the annual

1 Lecture given on the 20th July 2017 at The British Museum, London (The Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology). I would like to thank Martin Bleisteiner for correcting my English.

2 Cf. for example KAHL 2013: 360, Fig. 20; 411–412, pls. 1–2.

flooding of the Nile over millennia have done their part as well. As a result, what remains of the ancient settlement is, quite literally, buried metres deep – the ruins from Late Antiquity can be found at a depth of about 5 metres, those from the New Kingdom at about 8 metres below ground level.³

The growth of modern Asyut is nothing short of rampant – slowly but surely, its grey-on-grey urban landscape is about to devour even the last remains of open farmland. Whereas the city kept a respectful distance to Gebel Asyut al-gharbi and its burial sites as late as 2012 (Fig. 2), both legal and *illegal* construction work has since covered the remaining open areas (Fig. 4). The modern cemetery, too, is intruding ever more deeply into the mountain, and thus into the ancient necropoleis (Fig. 5). A large number of modern tombs have been erected on top of the ancient burial sites, in many cases making use of existing shafts and openings.

If we are to attempt the writing of Asyut's history – or rather, one of Asyut's many histories – we will have to rely mostly on evidence from outside the city's perimeter. This evidence could, for example, consist of textual sources. In addition to that, we could also focus our attention on the numerous objects and monuments – excavated legally and *illegally* on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi during the 19th and 20th centuries – that lend an air of splendour and mystique to the collections of modern western museums in Paris, Turin, Berlin, New York and London; these items are universally regarded as priceless masterpieces, but sadly they were not adequately documented on site. Here are a number of particularly striking examples:

1. Two wooden statues depicting a Dynasty 12 nomarch called Djefai-Hapi; today, the statues are located at the Louvre in Paris⁴ and at the Egyptian Museum in Turin.⁵ These statues are unique for the Middle Kingdom because of their considerable size. They are both over 2 metres tall and bear eloquent witness to the impressive standard of workmanship at that time.
2. Asyuti statues from the New Kingdom also display a high craftsmanship, as do a statue group of Isis-Hathor and Wepwawet (Fig. 6)⁶ and the double statue of Iuny and his wife Renenut (Figs. 7–8),⁷ both from the Ramesside Period.
3. Museums in Japan house also statues from Asyut as, for example, the well-preserved wooden statue of Nakht in the Miho Museum.⁸
4. A final example is a remarkable statue of a dog from the Ptolemaic or Roman Period, today at the Louvre.⁹

3. Asyut – Retracing the City

Since 2003, a joint German-Egyptian mission has been carrying out research on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi – the objectives being to remedy the shortage of source material, to shed light on Asyut's identity and individual character, and ultimately to allow the city to assume – at long last – its rightful place in Egyptian history.¹⁰

The tasks we set ourselves include the following:

3 KAHL 2007: 3, 44.

4 Paris, Louvre E 26915, h: 205 cm (DELANGE 1987: 76–77; KAHL 2007: 130, Fig. 104).

5 Turin S.08650, h: 207 cm (DEL VESCO 2015: 78, no. 73).

6 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.2.5, limestone, h: 129 cm (HAYES 1959: 348–350).

7 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.2.1, limestone, h: 84,5 cm (WINLOCK 1919).

8 Miho Museum, h: 168 cm. Style and workmanship point to Asyut as origin of this statue (INAGAKI 2007: 50–51).

9 Paris, Louvre E 11657, h: 101,5 cm (BÉNÉDITE 1923: 129–136; KAHL 2007: 153, Fig. 111; DAVID 2015: 33–35).

10 Together with Ursula Verhoeven from the University of Mainz and our Egyptian colleagues from Sohag University – especially Mahmoud El-Khadragy, Mohamed Abdelrahim, Ahmed Alansary and Mahmoud El-Hamrawi – I am responsible for coordinating and directing the fieldwork on the mountain.

- to describe the various functions the mountain fulfilled over the millennia – this goal is accomplished via talks and presentations as well as via essays, exhibitions and monographs, for the purpose of which a dedicated publication series has been established.¹¹
- to investigate change and continuity from the Pharaonic Period to the Byzantine and in some cases even the Islamic Period
- to document endangered monuments and other architectonic structures
- to question western perspectives on Asyut, and to come to a better understanding of our own archaeological activities by making sure that the voice of the local population is heard
- and finally, to reconstruct the history of the ancient city of Asyut.

In order to achieve these objectives, an international research team with about 25 members is deployed on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi from mid-August to mid-October every year. This team is supported by inspectors and guards provided by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation, by highly-skilled restorers, and around 80 local workers.

Given that parts of the excavation area belong to a restricted military zone, and given that Asyut saw a spate of terrorist incidents in the 1990s, we are constantly accompanied by the police, and sometimes by the military.

About one kilometre long and rising to a height of up to 200 metres on Asyut's western outskirts, Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (Figs. 9–10) quite literally constitutes a field of research that raises a multitude of fascinating questions – fortunately, it also supplies clues that allow us to answer at least some of them.

The mountain's peculiar shape is quite remarkable: with a little imagination, it resembles a nose pointing towards the city (Figs. 11–12). The population of Asyut has used the Gebel continuously since the Archaic Period, that is, since 3000 BCE. As the finds of our recent excavation campaigns suggest, human activity on the mountain began even earlier, around 4000 BCE.¹² The mountain served as:

- cemetery for humans,¹³ but also for animals¹⁴
- quarry¹⁵
- site of the temple of Hathor¹⁶
- destination for literate visitors¹⁷
- place of prayer¹⁸
- dwelling of Christian anchorites¹⁹
- site of Christian monasteries²⁰
- place of school²¹
- military base²²

11 *The Asyut Project*, Harrassowitz Verlag, https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/reihe_412.ahtml

12 RZEUSKA 2014: 84–100; RZEUSKA 2017: 27–61.

13 Cf. KAHL 2007: 59–106; ZITMAN 2010; KAHL, SBRIGLIO, DEL VESCO & TRAPANI 2019.

14 Cf. KITAGAWA 2016.

15 Cf. KAHL 2007: 61–63; KAHL 2013: 79–85, 126.

16 Cf. VERHOEVEN 2013a.

17 VERHOEVEN 2013b; VERHOEVEN 2020.

18 Tomb N13.1, for example, was used as place of prayer during the Islamic Period, cf. AHMED-MOHAMED 2020: 411, 422–426.

19 Cf. KAHL 2007: 103–106; KAHL 2014a; KAHL 2015; EICHNER 2020: 4.

20 KAHL 2007: 99–103; KAHL 2014a; EICHNER 2020: 11–54..

21 Coptic school exercises written on a wall were found near the mausoleum of Sheikh Abu Tug.

22 Today as well as during the third Persian occupation of Egypt (618/619–629 CE; RICHTER 2003). Cf. also the large numbers of military personnel attested on the stelae from the Salakhana Trove (DUQUESNE 2009: 62).

Based on the work of Dietrich and Rosemarie Klemm, the limestone mountain's geological structure can be divided into 11 steps.²³ In the area of the burial sites, this division corresponds quite closely to the archaeological stratification of the Gebel: for static reasons, ancient Egyptian tombs were cut from a solid limestone layer wherever possible.

Enormous mountains of debris caused by extensive quarrying and earlier excavations determine the appearance of the mountain today (Figs. 9–10, 13); steep escarpments are the result of the use of explosives – not only by quarry workers, but also by archaeologists.²⁴ Metaphorically speaking, the mountain was stripped of its skin and flesh down to its bare bones – when Jean François Champollion visited the mountain in 1828, he aptly compared the tombs to abandoned skeletons. On the slope pointing towards Asyut, around 10 to 15 metres of the mountain's surface has been quarried away – this means that whenever we examine the tombs and their architecture, we must keep in mind that their frontmost areas may be damaged, or even lost altogether as this is the case with Tomb II (Figs. 14–15).²⁵

What remains today, apart from the quarries and ruined monasteries, are tombs filled with debris, abandoned objects and all kinds of osteoarchaeological material. Parts of their architecture may have been blown to pieces, their images and inscriptions exposed to the elements and to vandalism, but they still contain invaluable information concerning the regional history of Asyut. What is more, a steady stream of fresh finds (Figs. 16–18) – sometimes of a type or nature as yet unknown in Egyptology – has increased and consolidated our knowledge of Ancient Asyut considerably.²⁶

From the rich inventory of research results established by *The Asyut Project*, the following chapters will focus on three particularly interesting aspects of the city's history:

- Asyut as a wounded city
- as a border city
- and as a city of culture.

4. Asyut – A City of War and Terror, a Wounded City

Badly damaged by quarrying, the tombs of Asyut's nomarchs from the First Intermediate Period (Fig. 19) contain inscriptions that testify to Asyut's crucial role in the civil war between Herakleopolis and Thebes during the 21st century BCE.

The royal house of Herakleopolis in the north of the country represented the traditions of the Old Kingdom; Thebes, on the other hand, located in the country's south, was a nome that pursued a highly aggressive policy of expansion, seeking – and ultimately gaining – control over all of Egypt. The decisive battle in this power struggle took place at Asyut: supported by the royal family of Herakleopolis, the nomarchs of Asyut were the last bulwark against the approaching Thebans.

The autobiographical inscriptions in Tombs III and IV (Figs. 20–21) – commissioned by the nomarchs Iti-Ibi and Khety II, respectively – give us a graphic description of the civil war, a description that is more or less unparalleled elsewhere in Egypt in its stunning intensity. Here are some of the terms that were used:

²³ KAHL 2007: 59–61; KLEMM & KLEMM 2008: 112–115.

²⁴ KAHL 2013: 79–95; RYAN 1988: 79.

²⁵ Cf. BECKER 2012; KAHL 2013: 79–85.

²⁶ Cf. magical bone: KAHL 2016a; Dosoo 2021; ceiling decoration: KAHL 2016b; hippopotamus figurine: KAHL 2018a; statue: KAHL 2019.

“act of violence”, (<i>3wh</i> IV, 34),	“to be afraid” (<i>š:ʿb3</i> IV, 12),
“aggressor” (<i>3dw</i> III, 6),	“arrow” (<i>ššr</i> IV, 33),
“battleground” (<i>pg3</i> III, 5),	“to burn” (<i>hwt</i> IV, 14),
“civil war” (<i>d3is</i> III, 7),	“crime” (<i>bt3</i> III, 39),
“to die” (<i>mwt</i> IV, 4),	“to drive away” (<i>hšf</i> IV, 12),
“enemy” (<i>hrw.i</i> III, 51),	“to expel” (<i>dr</i> III, 5, 7, 25),
“to fall” (<i>hr</i> III, 23),	“fear” (<i>hry:t</i> III, 20, 36; <i>šnd</i> III, 10, 36; IV, 10, 13, 54; <i>šnd.t</i> IV, 13),
“fight” (<i>ʿh3</i> III, 21),	“fighter” (<i>ʿh3.w</i> III, 7),
“to fight” (<i>ʿh3</i> III, 16, 34; IV, 33, 48),	“fire” (<i>ht</i> III, 24),
“flame” (<i>nšr:t</i> IV, 14),	“to flash” (<i>š:šd</i> IV, 12),
“fleet” (<i>hʿw;</i> III, 23),	“fortress” (<i>htm</i> III, 35),
“insurgent” (<i>bšt</i> III, 25),	“to land” (<i>mini</i> IV, 16),
“painful” (<i>kšn</i> IV, 14, 52),	“protection” (<i>mkw:t</i> III, 10),
“to protect” (<i>mk(i)</i> III, 63),	“refugee” (<i>tšw.ti</i> IV, 18),
“to repel” (<i>hšf</i> III, 6),	“to rob” (<i>hʿd3</i> IV, 33),
“robber” (<i>hʿd3</i> IV, 12),	“shield” (<i>ikm</i> IV, 54),
“to shoot” (<i>štī</i> IV, 33),	“to strike (dead)” (<i>sh</i> IV, 33),
“to suppress” (<i>š:hr</i> III, 17),	“terror” (<i>nh3.t</i> III, 32; <i>šfy:t</i> IV, 13),
“to tremble” (<i>šd3</i> IV, 12),	“troops” (<i>ʿh3</i> III, 10; <i>mšʿ</i> III, 16, 20, 23, 26, 34, 36),
“to unleash” (<i>š:tw3</i> IV, 50)	

Alarming as it sounds, this list captures only a fraction of the terror, the atrocities and the suffering that must have befallen the city.

The horrors of civil war found their way into the tombs’ imagery as well: a wall painting that we discovered in 2004 depicts an Egyptian in the act of striking and killing another (Fig. 22).

The depictions of tomb owners with their troops that we encounter in several places at Asyut are another reflection of the civil war.²⁷ The images from Tomb IV (Fig. 23) are certainly from the same period when the hostilities took place.

The images in Tomb N13.1, on the other hand, were probably created after Asyut’s final defeat by the Theban ruler, Mentuhotep II.²⁸ The painting on the eastern wall (Fig. 24) shows the nomarch Iti-ibi(-iqer) leading his troops, the number of which – there are 40 soldiers all told – corresponds exactly to the number of wooden model soldiers found in the tomb of Mesehti²⁹ (Fig. 25). The inscriptions we discovered in Tomb N13.1 tell us that Mesehti succeeded Iti-ibi(-iqer) as Asyuti nomarch. This crucial piece of information allows us to date Mesehti’s tomb to Dynasty 11 with a high degree of certainty, most likely to the reign of Mentuhotep II.³⁰

The fragmentary images (Fig. 26) in the Northern Soldiers-Tomb³¹ (H11.1) – a tomb heavily damaged by quarrying – can also be dated to the final stages of Dynasty 11, or possibly to the period of transition between Dynasties 11 and 12.

Warfare and the exercise of command over their own troops were of the highest importance for the Asyuti nomarchs, not only during the civil war in the First Intermediate Period, but also for some time – even for generations – after the reunification of Egypt.

Our knowledge of the civil war during the First Intermediate Period has enabled us for the first time to grasp Asyut’s special status as a “wounded city”, a status that the following 4,000 years held in

27 Cf. EL-KHADRAGY 2012.

28 Cf. EL-KHADRAGY in print.

29 EL-KHADRAGY 2012: 38.

30 KAHL 2019a: 26–32.

31 ABDELRAHIEM 2020.

store for the city on more than one occasion.³² The fight for Asyut lasted for almost two decades,³³ but the city did not perish – it survived conquest by the Thebans under the reign of Iti-ibi, liberation from Theban rule under Khety II, and a further – and this time final – defeat at the hands of the Thebans under Khety II or Iti-ibi(-iqer). It seems that the city recovered quickly from the devastations of war – at least that is what the monumental nomarchs' tombs that were constructed from the end of Dynasty 11 onward suggest.

Asyut met a similar fate several times over the course of its history:³⁴ in the Second Intermediate Period, Asyut was pillaged once again – we know this because statues looted from Asyut were found at places as far away as Kerma (statues of Djefai-Hapi I and his wife Sennwy)³⁵ and Gebel Barkal (statue of Djefai-Hapi I)³⁶ in modern-day Sudan; there is evidence that an armed uprising took place at Asyut during the Assyrian occupation in the first half of the 7th century BCE;³⁷ in the civil war between the Theban anti-king Ankhwennefer and the Ptolemies in the 2nd century BCE, Asyut yet again signified a major turning point: Ankhwennefer's campaign apparently failed to penetrate northwards past the city³⁸. Incursions by marauding Blemmyes from Nubia in the middle of the 5th century CE, as well as raids by other Nubian invaders on Asyut's monasteries, are further instances where Asyut's character as a "wounded city" becomes manifest.³⁹

5. Asyut – A Border City in the Middle of Egypt

The reason for Asyut's special fate is to be found in its specific geographic circumstances: although it is located in the middle of Egypt, it was always a border city.

S3ww.ti – "guardian city" – is Asyut's ancient Egyptian name (Fig. 27),⁴⁰ a name that lives on in the modern Arabic toponym. The epithet "guardian city" evidently derives from the city's location and its strategic significance. 375 kilometres south of modern Cairo and Memphis, the erstwhile capital of ancient Egypt, Asyut marks the halfway point for travellers to Thebes about 300 kilometres further to the south – the logistic and strategic implications of this are obvious.

Asyut is located to the south of Gebel Abu el-Feda, the most dangerous section of the Nile north of the First Cataract. According to Early Modern travelogues, the current was particularly strong there, and Asyut offered shelter from adverse winds and inclement weather until conditions had improved enough to negotiate the narrow passage.⁴¹

Even more important was the fact that Asyut was the gateway to a caravan route that Early Modern sources refer to as *Darb al-Arba'in*, which translates into English as "Forty Days Road". This important trade route leads to the oasis of Kharga and all the way on to Darfur in modern-day Sudan, 1,767 kilometres to the south. Asyut offered much-needed shelter and supplies at the beginning or at the end of a long and dangerous voyage through the desert. In the 19th century CE, there were occasions on which more than 10,000 people embarked on the route at the same time, although not all of them did so voluntarily: many of them were slaves.⁴²

32 Cf. KAHL 2007: 3–20.

33 For a chronology of the fight, see KAHL 2019b: 25, Table 4.

34 See KAHL 2007: 9–12.

35 Boston, MFA 14.724 and 14.720; KAHL 2007: 116–119.

36 DUNHAM 1937–38: 14–15.

37 ONASCH 1994: 36, 55, 118–121; Kahl 2007: 11–12.

38 KAHL 2007: 12 (cf. Trinity College Dublin Pap. Gr. 274).

39 KAHL 2007: 12.

40 OSING 1976: 320, 866 note 1377.

41 EBERS 1880: 198; KAHL 2007: 14.

42 KAHL 2013: 48–54.

There is evidence that a network of fortresses guarded the caravan route during the Graeco-Roman Period.⁴³ The hypothesis⁴⁴ that the third expedition to Nubia under the leadership of the Old Kingdom official Harkhuf travelled on the Darb al-Arba'in remains highly plausible: research conducted by Mohamed Osman has demonstrated that the terrain in the vicinity of Asyut is passable, that is to say, suitable for a caravan route. In all likelihood, the entrance to the desert route was located between Asyut and Beni Ghaleb and donkeys were used as pack animals (see Mohamed Osman & Jochem Kahl, *The Desert Route of Darb el Arba'in at Asyut*, in this volume).

While Asyut gave access to the oases and to Nubia, by the same token it was also a natural gateway for invaders. It is very likely that the above-mentioned marauding Blemmyes made use of the Darb al-Arba'in,⁴⁵ and it is just as likely that the looted statues of the Asyuti nomarch Djefai-Hapi I and his wife Sennwy travelled in the opposite direction on the same route.

Based on numerous finds of Roman and Late Roman pottery from the oases Dakhla and Kharga, Teodozja Rzeuska's research⁴⁶ for *The Asyut Project* has demonstrated that the caravan route was in use during the Late Period and the Roman Period.⁴⁷ It is safe to assume that Asyut served as an important commercial hub for goods that were transported from the oases to the Nile delta during that time.⁴⁸

Situated right at the junction of the Nile and the caravan route, Asyut was, of course, also an important way station for merchandise and imported goods coming from the north:

A Canaanite amphora (Fig. 28) found in the reused tomb of the nomarch Khety I can be dated to the late Middle Kingdom or the Second Intermediate Period. It originates from the region between Akko in Israel and Akkar in Lebanon.⁴⁹ Phoenician amphoras from the Persian Period, that is from around 500 BCE, have been found as well.⁵⁰ Another spectacular find dating from the Persian Period is a hoard of more than 870 coins from all over the Mediterranean: from Italy and the Cyrenaica in the west to Caria and Asia Minor in the east.⁵¹ Pottery from the Ptolemaic Period found on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi by *The Asyut Project* includes items from the Greek islands (Fig. 29).⁵² Finds of pottery from the Roman and Byzantine Periods illustrate Asyut's role as a major distribution centre for merchandise from Italy, Northern Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and the southern oases.⁵³

Allegedly found in a monastery close to Asyut, a hoard of high-carat gold jewellery consisting of almost 40 gemmed pieces can also be dated to Late Antiquity or the Byzantine Period, to between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 7th century CE. One theory is that the jewellery originated from the Imperial Treasury of Constantinople – exactly how, why and by whom they were brought to Asyut is still unclear.⁵⁴ What we do know is that links between Asyut and Constantinople existed as

43 VIVIAN 2000: 359: "massive fortresses".

44 Cf. OBSOMER 2007: 45.

45 The Blemmyes advanced as far as Cynopolis (LEIPOLDT 1902/03, 129; EMMEL 1998: 86–88). More than 20,000 people sought refuge at the White Monastery close to Sohag.

46 RZEUSKA 2017: 648, Fig. 350: mainly water kegs (known as *sigā*, in production since the Late Period up to the present day) and flasks made with a hard limestone temper; content: wine; larger quantities found than at other archaeological sites.

47 It is hard to determine whether pottery originates from Dakhla or Kharga without detailed petrographic analysis.

48 RZEUSKA 2017: 651.

49 RZEUSKA 2017: 425, pl. 8.

50 RZEUSKA 2017: 503.

51 The coins were found in 1969 by Egyptian workers, who subsequently sold their finds piece by piece to various antique dealers. Today, the coins are spread over almost 100 different collections. As far as can be reconstructed, they were brought to Egypt over a period of less than 15 years (c. 490–475 BCE). The owner of the hoard and his or her origins (Greek or Egyptian?) are unknown; PRICE & WAGGONER 1975: 121.

52 RZEUSKA 2017: 563–565 (amphorae, 3rd to 2nd century BCE).

53 RZEUSKA 2017: 627–731.

54 See PLATZ-HORSTER 2004: 286, who assumes that the artefacts were brought to Egypt because Constantinople was under imminent threat of being conquered. The reasons why they ended up in, of all places, Asyut remains shrouded in mystery. See also WILLIAMS 2014.

early as the 4th century: The prophet and seer St John of Lycopolis not only attracted pilgrims from all over Egypt – even the Byzantine Emperor Theodosius sought his advice.⁵⁵

In light of Asyut's geopolitical significance, it is no surprise that the city was characterised by a strong military presence throughout its history. The modern military camp on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi has many precursors: in the 4th and 5th centuries CE, Mauretanian cavalrymen were stationed at Asyut;⁵⁶ during the third Persian occupation of Egypt from 618/19 to 627 CE, the city served as a Persian military base.⁵⁷

As early as in the New Kingdom, in the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE, soldiers must have been a common sight in Asyut: members of the military are frequently mentioned on the stelae from what is known as the Salakhana Trove,⁵⁸ a hoard of votive offerings found in the tomb of the Middle Kingdom nomarch Djefai-Hapi III.

6. Asyut – A City of Culture

It has become clear at this point that the city was not only a commercial hub, but also a melting pot of local and royal artisans, soldiers and foreign merchants – or in other words, of people and ideas from vastly different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, Asyut's specific geopolitical situation has not resulted in suffering alone: its location lent the city lasting importance. It not only allowed it to recover from armed conflicts time and again, but also to achieve remarkable progress and innovation in the arts, in literature and architecture – in short, to develop its very own intellectual culture.

There is no better example for this than Tomb I, the final resting place of the Asyuti nomarch Djefai-Hapi I (Fig. 30). The tomb was constructed during the reign of Senwosret I – that is, in the 20th century BCE. Djefai-Hapi I served as the mayor of Asyut, as overseer of the priests of the temple of the Asyuti main god Wepwawet, and as the overseer of the priests of the temple of Anubis. Given that he held the office of high priest, he had probably received thorough philological training and was well educated in medicine and astronomy.⁵⁹ Djefai-Hapi I was married twice, to women named Sennwy and Wepay. He had a brother who was also called Djefai-Hapi, and a mother named Idy, the elder. Djefai-Hapi's daughter was called Idy like his mother, and his two sons again carried his own name.

Unlike his predecessors, Djefai-Hapi did not have his tomb installed at mid-height of the mountain in solid limestone of good quality, but rather in the lower part (Fig. 13), which already had a natural scattering of karst caves. According to the geologist Dietrich Klemm, Djefai-Hapi made use of these existing cavities to build the largest non-royal rock tomb of his time.⁶⁰

With an original depth of 70 metres, a ceiling height of up to 11 metres and a massive causeway connecting it to the edge of the cultivated land, the rock tomb was a monument to Djefai-Hapi's power and ability that was visible from afar. A reconstruction was prepared in 2004 (Fig. 31) based on archaeological and textual evidence – for example, we can be reasonably sure that the chapel with pond and trees existed because it is described in the tomb's inscriptions.⁶¹ A three-dimensional model from 2018 shows the result of cleaning operations that took place in the years before (Fig. 32).

⁵⁵ KAHL 2007: 138–140; KAHL 2015.

⁵⁶ TIMM 1984: 240.

⁵⁷ RICHTER 2003: 228–229.

⁵⁸ DUQUESNE 2009: 62.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Book of the Temple*. On the curriculum for the children of high priests, see QUACK 2002: 170. Quack argues that the origins of the *Book of the Temple* date back as far as the 2nd millennium BCE.

⁶⁰ Cf. KAHL 2007: 60–61.

⁶¹ ENGEL & KAHL 2009.

Today, the tomb still extends 55 metres deep into the mountain; the missing 15 metres fell victim to quarrying prior to 1799, when the French Expedition arrived in Asyut. Research concerning the causeway and the tomb's substructure is still ongoing.

Tomb I was – and is – a fascinating sight: Its architectural concept, including a chapel and a causeway, is reminiscent of the pyramid layouts of the Old Kingdom. Its architecture is truly monumental – the first hall was about 11 metres high, as the remaining parts of the ceiling show (Fig. 33). The first corridor (Fig. 34) with a height of more than 10 metres is particularly noteworthy: A wooden door, about 6 metres high, gave access to the Great Transverse Hall, which retains a stunningly rich decor even today. The imagery on its northern wall include a scene where cattle is presented to the tomb owner, and an illustration of boys and various animals in trees.⁶² The eastern wall contains a catalogue of more than 100 epithets that form an idealised biography. There is also a depiction of Djefai-Hapi I in front of the name of his king, Senwosret I.⁶³ Another outstanding feature is the ceiling decoration in the Great Transverse Hall with its fascinating geometric patterns. Thanks to an Egyptian restoration team led by Niazy Mostafa Mohamed and Khaled Abd el Malek Abu Zed, the original colours were uncovered (Pls. 1–2a). The second corridor, too, is adorned with exceptionally fine decorations – for example a beautifully detailed rendition of vessels in a scene that depicts the bearers of gifts and offerings (Pl. 2b).⁶⁴ The innermost area of the tomb housed a shrine, which has been damaged rather badly by quarrying. It could once be sealed with a double-wing door, a symbol for the gates of heaven. The walls of the shrine were decorated with offering scenes and a false door. There was also a statue of the deceased in the shrine.⁶⁵

A system of corridors descends into the depths of the mountain from the southern rear section of the tomb and leads to the decorated, but heavily destroyed burial chamber at a depth of c. 28 m below ground level.⁶⁶ Presumably, this sprawling underground structure was inspired by the cult of Osiris, a religious practice for which we have ample evidence from Asyut for the time of Djefai-Hapi I. According to the autobiographical epithets in his tomb, Asyut, too, maintained a tomb of Osiris like the one that is known to have existed at Abydos during the Middle Kingdom.⁶⁷

The texts and images Djefai-Hapi I used in his burial site are unique in their radiance. Refined, augmented and reworked time and again, the pictorial and textual agenda of his tomb contributed to his being venerated as a god in the late Middle Kingdom, during Dynasty 18 and probably as late as the 1st millennium BCE.⁶⁸ One example for the long afterlife of texts from Djefai-Hapi's tomb are ten contracts that ensured that the cult of the deceased would be properly carried out by Asyut's priesthood and necropolis staff. The monumental inscription covers an area of 40 square metres (4 m x 10 m) on one of the walls, and was probably intended as a kind of biographical testimony, but also as a reminder to posterity to respect the stipulations of the contracts. These contracts (Fig. 35) were recopied as late as the Roman Period – that is, more than 2,000 years later – as manuscripts found at Tebtynis on the edge of the Fayum basin suggest.⁶⁹

Other texts and images developed or used in the political, social and cultural environment of Djefai-Hapi I and his predecessors from the end of the First Intermediate Period were greatly admired and frequently copied all over Egypt hundreds and even thousands of years later.⁷⁰ High-ranking civil servants such as Senen-mut, Rekh-mi-Ra and Pui-em-Ra (all from Dynasty 18 in the 15th century BCE), Pa-di-Amenope, Mont-em-hat and Ibi (from Dynasties 25 and 26 in the 7th century BCE), reused ex-

62 EL-KHADRAGY 2007a: 131–133, 139, 144.

63 Cf. KAHL 2014b.

64 EL-KHADRAGY 2007a: 126–131, 140–143.

65 EL-KHADRAGY 2007b.

66 BECK 2017; KILIAN 2017; KAHL 2018b.

67 KAHL 2019a: 47–48; VÉGH 2019.

68 KAHL 2012.

69 OSING 1998. KAHL 2014b.

70 KAHL 1999; KAHL 2014b: 168–169.

cerpts from biographic formulas, liturgical texts, and decan lists found in Asyut in their own tombs or on statues.⁷¹

One example of the high regard in which the products of Asyuti artists and craftsmen were held are the beautiful ceiling paintings in Djefai-Hapi's tomb (Pls. 1–2a). A spiral pattern on the ceiling (Pl. 2a) shows an Aegean influence, probably from Crete.⁷² This demonstrates yet again just how international a place Asyut must have been as early as during Dynasty 12. 1,200 years later and 300 kilometres further to the south in Upper Egyptian Thebes, the ceiling patterns were reused in a scaled-down format in the tomb of the lector priest Pa-di-Amenope (TT 33).⁷³ Indeed, the influence of these ornaments reached as far as 19th-century Britain, as could be demonstrated in 2016 based on previous research undertaken by Stephanie Moser on the designer and architect Owen Jones. His book *The Grammar of Ornament* from 1856 contains patterns that are remarkably similar to the ceiling painting in Djefai-Hapi's tomb.⁷⁴

Another case of pictorial transfer is the above-mentioned painting on the eastern wall of the Great Transverse Hall, which shows Djefai-Hapi I standing in a respectful pose in front of the names of his king, Senwosret I (c. 1956–1910 BCE). Some 450 years later, this motif was adapted by the Theban official Senen-mut and reused in his tomb.⁷⁵

Houses of Scroll stored Asyut's collection of knowledge. Texts, images and architectural designs from the city circulated all over Egypt: in Thebes, Naga'el-Hasaya (near Edfu), Memphis/Saqqara, Sais, Rhoda, Athribis (in the Delta), Kom Abu-Yasin and Tuna el-Gebel. According to current research, the above-mentioned Roman Period library in Tebtynis is the last traceable station of the lore from Asyut. Asyut's epistemic heritage formed an integral part of the cultural memory of the ancient Egyptians – or rather, of the collective memory of a powerful group of civil servants and priests. It belonged to a body of knowledge that allowed the Egyptian elites to stabilise and project their self-image and their sense of unity and uniqueness.⁷⁶ It is thus fully justified to refer to Asyut as an archive of knowledge. Yet the Houses of Life, the libraries and temples where this knowledge was once preserved have long since disappeared.

The main temple of the city was dedicated to the canid-shaped god Wepwawet. There were also temples for Anubis, Hathor, Osiris and Thot, as well as cults for other gods and kings.⁷⁷ As we know from chance finds, the temple of Wepwawet is buried underneath the modern city. For example, a block that surfaced a couple of years ago on the art market, and that has since been returned to Egypt thanks to the efforts of Marcel Marée of the British Museum, certainly originates from Asyut, and very likely from the city's temple of Wepwawet.⁷⁸

What little we know about the main temple of the city is mostly due to an illicit excavation during the 1930s, when a house owner found the temple walls below his cellar while looking for gold, and neighbours called the police after the walls of the house threatened to collapse.⁷⁹ We know from Sami Gabra's report on this illicit excavation where the temple of Wepwawet is located, and that it lies at a depth of 8 metres below the modern buildings. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of the blocks that were confiscated at the time were unknown for decades. In 2008, a number of crates were shipped from Cairo to the magazine of the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation at Shutb (see Mohamed Abdelrahim, *The*

71 KAHL 1999.

72 KAHL 2016b.

73 KAHL 2016b.

74 KAHL 2016b: 38–40.

75 KAHL 2014b: 161–163. Senen-mut also reused astronomical imagery known from a 12th Dynasty coffin at Asyut in his burial site at Thebes (Tomb TT 353, constructed in the reign of Queen Hatshepsut, Dynasty 18): see DORMAN 1991: 138–146, Tab. 84–85. On the coffin of Heny (Dynasty 12) from Asyut, see: GUNN 1926.

76 KAHL 1999. See ASSMANN 1988: 15.

77 KAHL 2007: 35–58.

78 <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/9/40/152042/Heritage/Ancient-Egypt/Egypt-recovers-Stolen-relief-of-King-Seti-I-from-L.aspx>

79 GABRA 1931.

Coffin of Nakhti (S1Shu) at the Shutb Storage Museum in Asyut in this volume). They had not been opened for 50 years, and contained, among other things, the blocks examined by Gabra. As the numbering of the blocks suggests, there were probably over 90 of them, significantly more than the 20 described in Gabra's article. At present, I am in the process of cataloguing and examining these finds together with my colleague Mohamed Abdelrahim from Sohag University in a project funded by the Freie Universität Berlin (see Jochem Kahl & Mohamed Abdelrahim, *Der verschollene Tempel des Upaut, des Herrn von Assiut* in this volume).

Concluding this overview, the question remains: why is it that Asyut never became the official capital of Egypt despite its cultural and military significance? The answer is clear: the city's geographical location is what made it important in the first place, but it also made it unsuitable as the nation's seat of government – throughout the millennia, Asyut was simply too vulnerable to attacks from the desert, and too remote from the arena of international politics.

As a result, Asyut ultimately remained a “capital of dreamland”...

...a “capital of dreamland” for the ancient scribe, who – consciously or not – included a highly place-specific detail in one of his texts: on a Middle Kingdom coffin currently located at the Ruhr Museum in Essen,⁸⁰ the determinative for the word “necropolis” is not, as could be expected, the usual hieroglyph for mountainous terrain, but nothing other than the outline of Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (Fig. 36).

Asyut also remains, as it has always been, the “capital of dreamland” for treasure hunters of all stripes – medieval or modern, in the city or on the Gebel. This dream, however, is not without dangers – the last fatal incident took place in 2016 right next to the Tomb of the Dogs.

Last but not least, Asyut is the “capital of dreamland” for all team members of *The Asyut Project* and *The Shutb Magazine Project*, whose great hope it is to answer as many questions concerning the city as possible, and to return to it at least some of its many histories.

Bibliography

- AHMED-MOHAMED 2020: Y. Ahmed-Mohamed, Texte und Zeichnungen aus islamischer Zeit, in: U. Verhoeven (ed.), *Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut* (The Asyut Project 15; Wiesbaden 2020), 409–444.
- ABDELRAHIEM 2020: M. Abdelrahim, The Northern Soldiers-Tomb (H11.1) at Asyut (The Asyut Project 14; Wiesbaden 2020).
- ASSMANN 1988: J. Assmann, Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität, in: J. Assmann & T. Hölscher (eds.), *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt 1988), 9–19.
- BECK 2017: T. Beck, Tomb I, Shaft 1, in: J. Kahl, A. Alansary, U. Verhoeven, T. Beck, E. Czyzewska-Zalewska, E. Gervers, A. Kilian, *The Asyut Project: Twelfth Season of Fieldwork* (2016), *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 46, 2017, 131–141.
- BECKER 2012: M. Becker, The Reconstruction of Tomb Siut II from the Middle Kingdom, in: J. Kahl, M. El-Khadragy, U. Verhoeven & A. Kilian (eds.), *Seven Seasons at Asyut. First Results of the Egyptian-German Cooperation in Archaeological Fieldwork. Proceedings of an International Conference at the University of Sohag, 10th-11th of October, 2009* (The Asyut Project 2; Wiesbaden 2012), 69–90.
- BÉNÉDITE 1923: G. Bénédite, Un „chien“ égyptien du Nouvel Empire au Musée du Louvre, in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 65, Paris 1923, 129–136.
- DAVID 2015: É. David, La statue Louvre E 8059, un chien typiquement non-égyptien, in: L. Gabolde (ed.), *Un savant au pays du fleuve-dieu. Hommages égyptologiques à Paul Barguet*. Kyphi 7, Paris 2015, 32–43.
- DELANGE 1987: E. Delange, *Catalogue des statues égyptiennes du Moyen Empire* (Paris 1987).
- DORMAN 1991: P. F. Dorman, The Tombs of Senenmut. The Architecture and Decoration of Tombs 71 and 353 (Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Egyptian Expedition) 24; New York 1991).

⁸⁰ Ruhr Museum Essen, Inv.-Nr. 2002:2 (formerly known as S2Tü).

- DOSOO 2021: K. Dosoo, The Powers of Death: Memory, Place and Eschatology in a Coptic Curse, in: *Religion in the Roman Empire* 7, 2021, 167–194.
- DUNHAM 1937–38: D. Dunham, An Egyptian Statuette of the Middle Kingdom, in: *Worcester Art Museum Annual* 3, 1937–38, 9–16.
- DUQUESNE 2009: T. DuQuesne, The Salakhana Trove: votive stelae and other objects from Asyut (Oxfordshire Communications in Egyptology 7; London 2009).
- DEL VESCO 2015: P. Del Vesco, The provincial burials of Gebelein and Asyut, in: *Museo Egizio* (Modena 2015), 70–83.
- EBERS 1880: G. Ebers, Ägypten in Bild und Wort dargestellt von unseren ersten Künstlern beschrieben von Georg Ebers (Stuttgart – Leipzig 1880).
- EDWARDS 1877: A. B. Edwards, A Thousand Mile up the Nile (London 1877).
- EICHNER 2020: I. Eichner, Der Survey der spätantiken und mittelalterlichen christlichen Denkmäler in der Nekropole von Assiut/Lykopolis (Mittelägypten) (The Asyut Project 14; Wiesbaden 2020).
- EL-KHADRAGY 2007a: M. El-Khadragy, Fishing, Fowling and Animal-handling in the Tomb of Djefaihapi I at Asyut, in: *The Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 18, 2007, 125–144.
- EL-KHADRAGY 2007b: M. El-Khadragy, The Shrine of the Rock-cut Chapel of Djefaihapi I at Asyut, in: *Göttinger Miszellen. Beiträge zur ägyptologischen Diskussion* 212, 2007, 41–62.
- EL-KHADRAGY 2012: M. El-Khadragy, The Nomarchs of Asyut During the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom, in: J. Kahl, M. El-Khadragy, U. Verhoeven & A. Kilian (eds.), *Seven Seasons at Asyut. First Results of the Egyptian-German Cooperation in Archaeological Fieldwork. Proceedings of an International Conference at the University of Sohag, 10th–11th of October, 2009* (The Asyut Project 2; Wiesbaden 2012), 31–46.
- EL-KHADRAGY in print: M. El-Khadragy, Tomb N13.1 of the Nomarch Iti-ibi(-iqer) at Asyut, with collaboration of U. Dubiel and E. Gervers (The Asyut Project; Wiesbaden in print).
- EMMEL 1998: S. Emmel, The Historical Circumstances of Shenute's Sermon God Is Blessed, in: M. Krause & S. Schaten (eds.), *ΘΕΜΕΛΙΑ. Spätantike und koptologische Studien. Peter Grossmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients 3; Wiesbaden 1998), 81–96.
- ENGEL & KAHL 2009: E. – M. Engel & J. Kahl, Die Grabanlage Djefaihapis I. – Ein Rekonstruktionsversuch, in: J. Popielska-Grzybowska, O. Białostocka & J. Iwaszczuk (eds.), *Proceedings of the Third Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists. Egypt 2004: Perspectives of Research. Warsaw 12–14 May 2004* (Acta Archaeologica Pultuskiensia 1, Pultusk 2009), 55–60.
- GABRA 1931: S. Gabra, Un temple d'Aménophis IV à Assiout, in: *Chronique d'Égypte* 6, 1931, 237–243.
- GRÉBAUT 1890–1900: E. Grébaut, *Le Musée Égyptien. Recueil de monuments et de notices sur les fouilles d'Égypte. Tome premier* (Le Caire 1890–1900).
- GUNN 1926: B. Gunn, The Coffins of Heny, in: *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 26, 1926, 166–171.
- HAYES 1959: W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of the Egyptian Antiquities in The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part II: The Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (1675–1080 B.C.)* (New York 1959).
- INAGAKI 2007: H. Inagaki, The South Wing. Art of the Ancient World, in: *Miho Museum* (exhibition catalogue) (Shigaraki 2007), 47–97.
- JOMARD 1820–1830: E. – F. Jomard et al., *Description de l'Égypte ou recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'Expédition de l'armée française, Seconde édition* (Paris 1820–1830).
- KAHL 1999: J. Kahl, Siut – Theben. Zur Wertschätzung von Traditionen im alten Ägypten (Probleme der Ägyptologie 13; Leiden – Boston – Köln 1999).
- KAHL 2007: J. Kahl, *Ancient Asyut. The First Synthesis after 300 Years of Research* (The Asyut Project 1; Wiesbaden 2007).
- KAHL 2012: J. Kahl, Regionale Milieus und die Macht des Staates im Alten Ägypten: Die Vergöttlichung der Gaufürsten von Assiut, in: *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 41, 2012, 163–188.
- KAHL 2013: J. Kahl, Die Zeit selbst lag nun tot darnieder. Die Stadt Assiut und ihre Nekropolen nach westlichen Reiseberichten des 17. bis 19. Jahrhunderts: Konstruktion, Destruktion und Rekonstruktion (The Asyut Project 5; Wiesbaden 2013).
- KAHL 2014a: J. Kahl, *Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in the First Millennium AD*, in: E. R. O'Connell (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork* (British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 2; Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA 2014), 127–138.

- KAHL 2014b: J. Kahl, Assiut – Theben – Tebtynis. Wissensbewegungen von der Ersten Zwischenzeit und dem Mittleren Reich bis in römische Zeit, in: *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 43, 2014, 159–172.
- KAHL 2015: J. Kahl, The Cave of John of Lykopolis, in: G. Gabra & H. N. Takla (eds.), *Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt: Al-Minya and Asyut* (Cairo – New York 2015), 255–264.
- KAHL 2016a: J. Kahl, Magical Bone, in: J. Kahl, N. Deppe, D. Goldsmith, A. Kilian, C. Kitagawa, J. Moje & M. Zöller-Engelhardt, *Asyut, Tomb III: Objects* (The Asyut Project 3; Wiesbaden 2016), 333–337.
- KAHL 2016b: J. Kahl, Ornamente in Bewegung. Die Deckendekoration der Großen Querhalle im Grab von Djefai-Hapi I. in Assiut (The Asyut Project 6; Wiesbaden 2016).
- KAHL 2018a: J. Kahl, Ewiges Leben: Nilpferdfigurinen aus Assiut, in: A. I. Blöbaum, M. Eaton-Krauss & A. Wüthrich (eds.), *Pérégrinations avec Erhart Graefe. Festschrift zu seinem 75. Geburtstag* (Ägypten und Altes Testament 87; Münster 2018), 239–247.
- KAHL 2018b: J. Kahl, Tomb I (P10.1): Causeway, first hall, and main shaft, in: J. Kahl, M. El-Hamrawi & U. Verhoeven, *The Asyut Project: Thirteenth Season of Fieldwork* (2017), in: *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 47, 2018, 137–142.
- KAHL 2019a: J. Kahl, Die Statue S10/16. Ein Regionalstil und seine Bewertung (The Asyut Project 11; Wiesbaden 2019).
- KAHL 2019b: J. Kahl, Asyut, in: J. Kahl, A. M. Sbriglio, P. Del Vesco & M. Trapani, *Asyut. The Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission (1906–1913)* (Studi del Museo Egizio 1; Modena 2019), 7–38.
- KAHL, SBRIGLIO, DEL VESCO & TRAPANI 2019: J. Kahl, A. M. Sbriglio, P. Del Vesco & M. Trapani, *Asyut. The Excavations of the Italian Archaeological Mission (1906–1913)* (Studi del Museo Egizio 1; Modena 2019).
- KILIAN 2017: A. Kilian, Pottery from P10.1, main shaft (inner hall), in: J. Kahl, A. Alansary, U. Verhoeven, T. Beck, E. Czyżewska-Zalewska, E. Gervers, A. Kilian, *The Asyut Project: Twelfth Season of Fieldwork* (2016), *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 46, 2017, 141–145.
- KITAGAWA 2016: C. Kitagawa, The Tomb of the Dogs at Asyut: Faunal Remains and Other Selected Objects (The Asyut Project 9; Wiesbaden 2016).
- KLEMM & KLEMM 2008: R. Klemm & D. D. Klemm, *Stones & Quarries in Ancient Egypt* (London 2008).
- LEIPOLDT 1902/03: J. Leipoldt, Berichte Schenutes über Einfälle der Nubier in Ägypten, in: *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 40, 1902/3, 126–140.
- OBOMER 2007: C. Obsomer, Les expéditions d’Herkhouf (VIe dynastie) et la localisation de Iam, in: M.-C. Bruwier & R. Betz (eds.), *Pharaons Noirs, sur la piste des quarante jours* (Musée Royal de Mariemont 2007), 39–52.
- ONASCH 1994: H.-U. Onasch, Die assyrischen Eroberungen Ägyptens. Teil 1: Kommentare und Anmerkungen (Ägypten und Altes Testament. Studien zu Geschichte, Kultur und Religion Ägyptens und des Alten Testaments 27/1; Wiesbaden 1994).
- OSING 1976: J. Osing, Die Nominalbildung des Ägyptischen (Mainz 1976).
- OSING 1998: J. Osing, PSI inv. I 3 + pCarlsberg 305 + pTebt. Tait Add. 2 e PSI inv. I 4 + pCarlsberg 306 + pTebt. Tait Add. 3. Copie delle iscrizioni nelle tombe di Assiut, in: J. Osing & G. Rosati (eds.), *Papiri geroglifici e ieratici da Tebtynis* (Firenze 1998), 55–100.
- PLATZ-HORSTER 2004: G. Platz-Horster, Schmuck und Private Frömmigkeit: Der Goldschmuck von Assiut, Ägypten, in: L. Wamser (ed.), *Die Welt von Byzanz – Europas östliches Erbe. Glanz, Krisen und Fortleben einer tausendjährigen Kultur* (München 2004), 286–304.
- PRICE & WAGGONER 1975: M. Price & N. Waggoner, *Archaic Greek Coinage. The Asyut Hoard* (London 1975).
- QUACK, 2002: J. F. Quack, Die Dienstanweisung des Oberlehrers im Buch vom Tempel, in: H. Beinlich, J. Hallof, H. Hussy & C. von Pfeil (eds.), 5. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung Würzburg, 23. – 26. September 1999 (Ägypten und Altes Testament 33,3; Wiesbaden 2002), 159–171.
- RICHTER 2003: S. G. Richter, Beobachtungen zur dritten persischen Eroberung und Besetzung Ägyptens in den Jahren 618/19 bis 629 n. Chr., in: A. I. Blöbaum, J. Kahl & S. D. Schweitzer (eds.), *Ägypten – Münster: Kulturwissenschaftliche Studien zu Ägypten, dem Vorderen Orient und verwandten Gebieten – donum natalicium viro doctissimo Erharto Graefe sexagenario ab amicis collegis discipulis ex aedibus Schlaunstraße 2/ Rosenstraße 9 oblatum* (Wiesbaden 2003), 221–232.
- RYAN 1988: D. P. Ryan, *The Archaeological Excavations of David George Hogarth at Asyut, Egypt* (Cincinnati 1988).
- RZEUSKA 2014: T. Rzeuska, In the Shadow of Wepwawet: An Early Necropolis on Gebel Asyut al-gharbi?, in: *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 18, 2014, 84–100.

- RZEUSKA 2017: T. Rzeuska, Chronological Overview of Pottery from Asyut. A contribution to the history of Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (The Asyut Project 7; Wiesbaden 2017).
- TIMM 1984: S. Timm, Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit. Teil 1 (A-C) (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B (Geisteswissenschaften) 41/1; Wiesbaden 1984).
- VÉGH 2019: Z. Végh, The *mḥ.t* of Osiris in Asyut, in: I. Regulski (ed.), Abydos: The Sacred Land at the Western Horizon (British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 8; Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT 2019), 301–313.
- VERHOEVEN 2013a: U. Verhoeven, New Kingdom Temple Remains and Other Religious Objects from the Mountain Plateau, in: J. Kahl, M. El-Khadragy, U. Verhoeven, M. Abdelrahim & E. Czyzewska, The Asyut Project: Tenth Season of Fieldwork (2012), Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur 42, 2013, 126–138.
- VERHOEVEN 2013b: U. Verhoeven, Literatur im Grab: Der Sonderfall Assiut, in: G. Moers, K. Widmaier, A. Giewekemeyer, A. Lümers & R. Ernst (eds.), Dating Egyptian Literary Texts (Lingua Aegyptia – Studia Monographica 11; Hamburg 2013), 139–158.
- VERHOEVEN 2020: U. Verhoeven (ed.), Dipinti von Besuchern des Grabes N13.1 in Assiut (The Asyut Project 15; Wiesbaden 2020).
- VIVIAN 2000: C. Vivian, The Western Desert of Egypt. An Explorer's Handbook (Cairo 2000).
- WILLIAMS 2014: E. D. Williams, "Into the hands of a well-known antiquary of Cairo": The Assiut Treasure and the Making of an Archaeological Hoard, *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 21, No. 2, 2014, 251–272.
- WINLOCK 1919: H. E. Winlock, The Statue of Iny and Rennut, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 14 (2), 1919, 32–35.
- ZITMAN 2010: M. Zitman, The Necropolis of Assiut: A Case Study of Local Egyptian Funerary Culture from the Old Kingdom to the End of the Middle Kingdom, 2 vols. (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 180; Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2010).

Internet References

- <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/9/40/152042/Heritage/Ancient-Egypt/Egypt-recovers-Stolen-relief-of-King-Seti-I-from-L.aspx>
- <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544740>
- <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544742>
- The Asyut Project, Harrassowitz Verlag, https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/reihe_412.ahtml

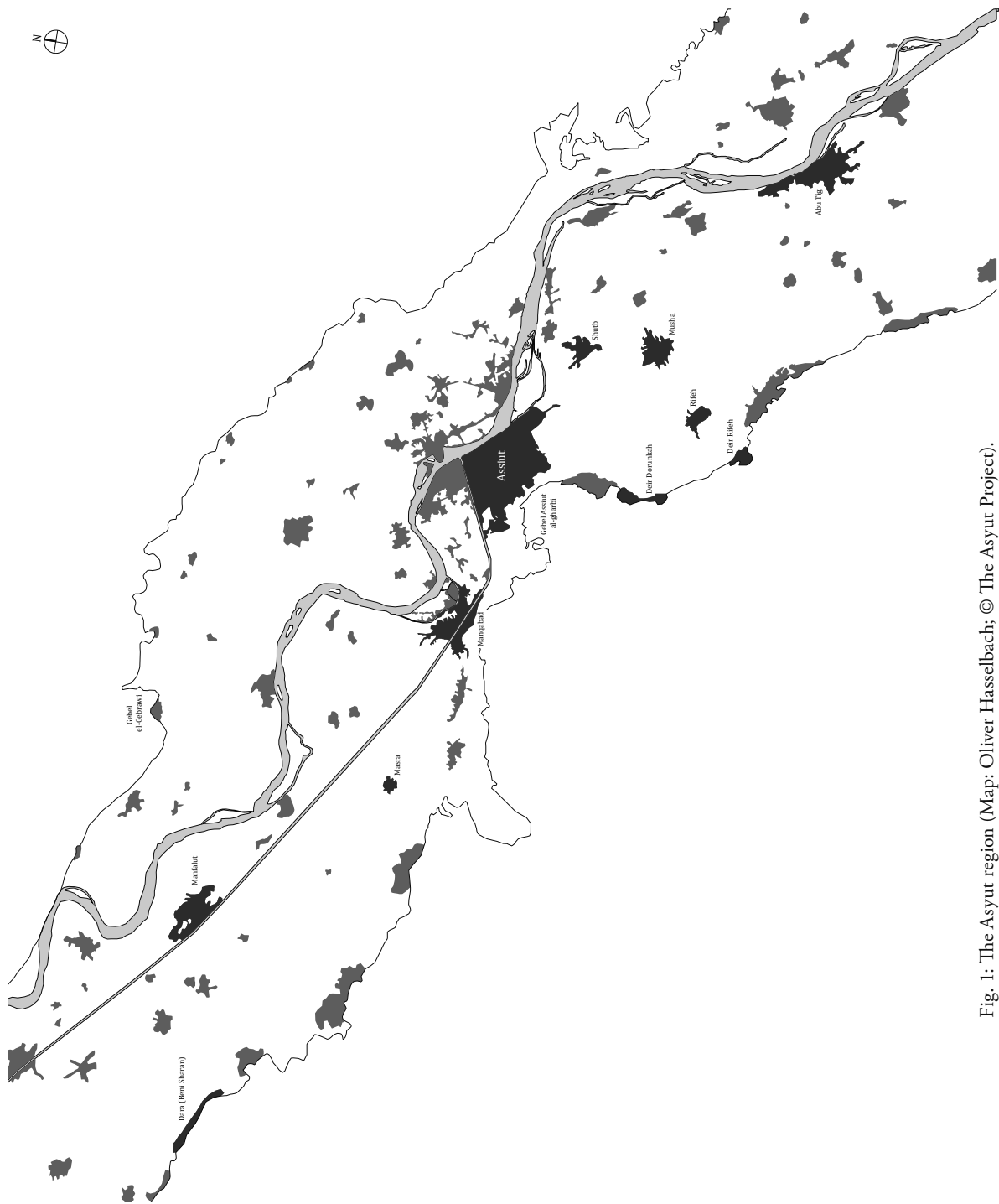


Fig. 1: The Asyut region (Map: Oliver Hasselbach; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 2: The city of Asyut in 2012 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 3: Google view on Asyut and Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in 2006.



Fig. 4: The city of Asyut in 2016 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).

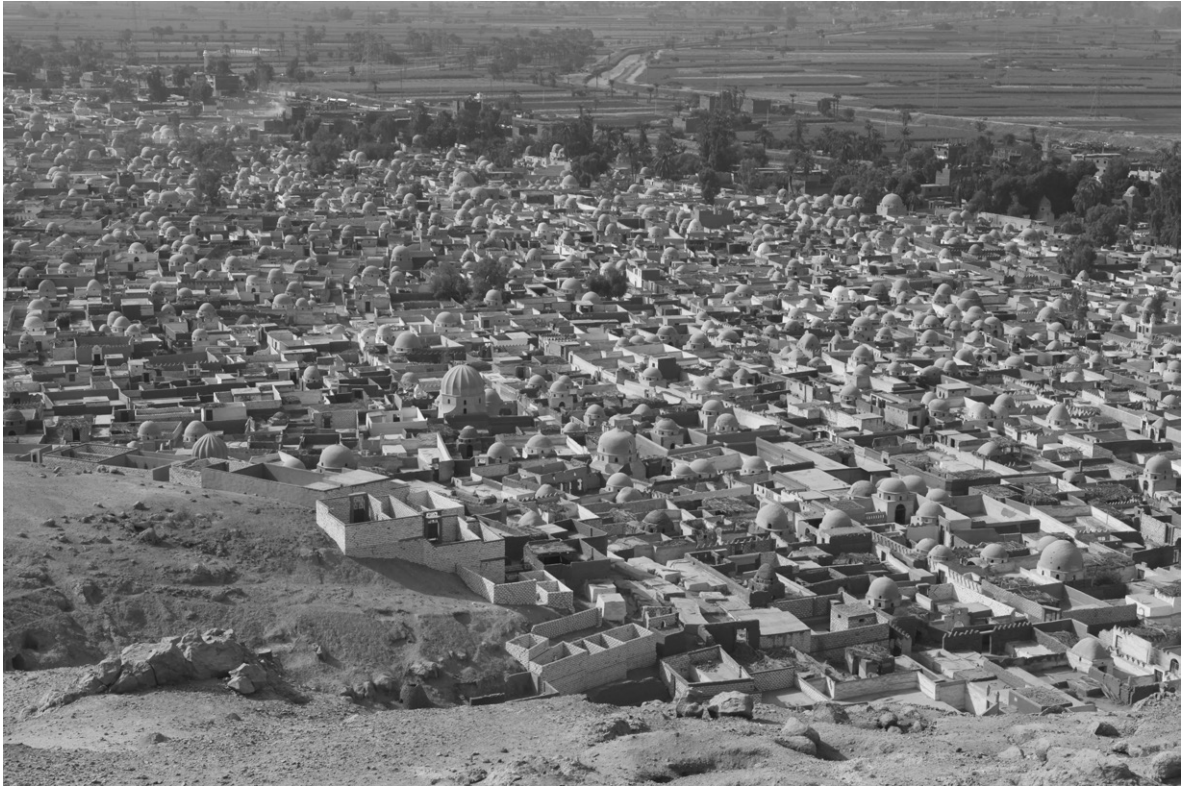


Fig. 5: Asyut, modern cemetery in 2010 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).

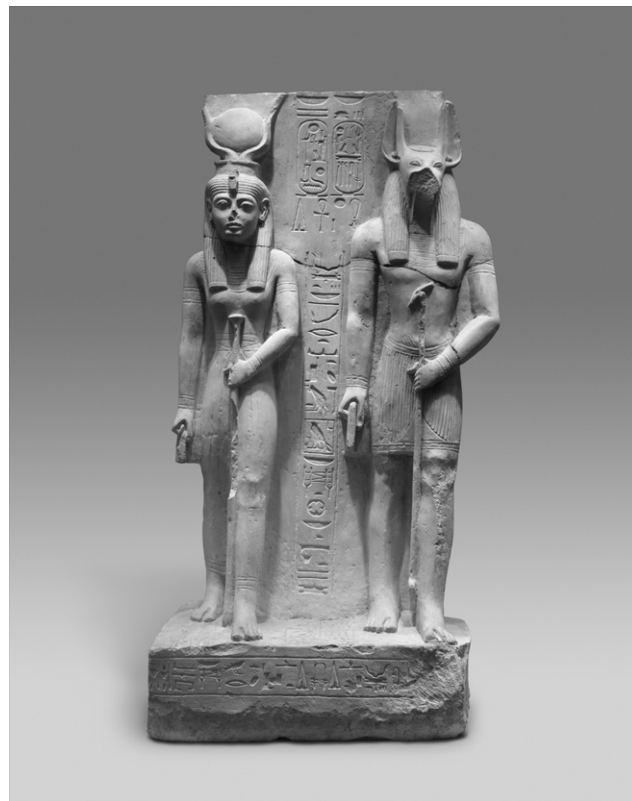


Fig. 6: Statue of Isis-Hathor and Wepwawet (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 17.2.5, Rogers Fund, 1917; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544742>).



Fig. 7: Statue of Iuny and Renenut, front (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.2.1, Rogers Fund, 1915; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544740>).



Fig. 8: Statue of Iuny and Renenut, back (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 15.2.1, Rogers Fund, 1915; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544740>).



Fig. 9: Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in 2012 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 10: Gebel Asyut al-gharbi in 2018 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 11: Map of Asyut (© The Asyut Project).

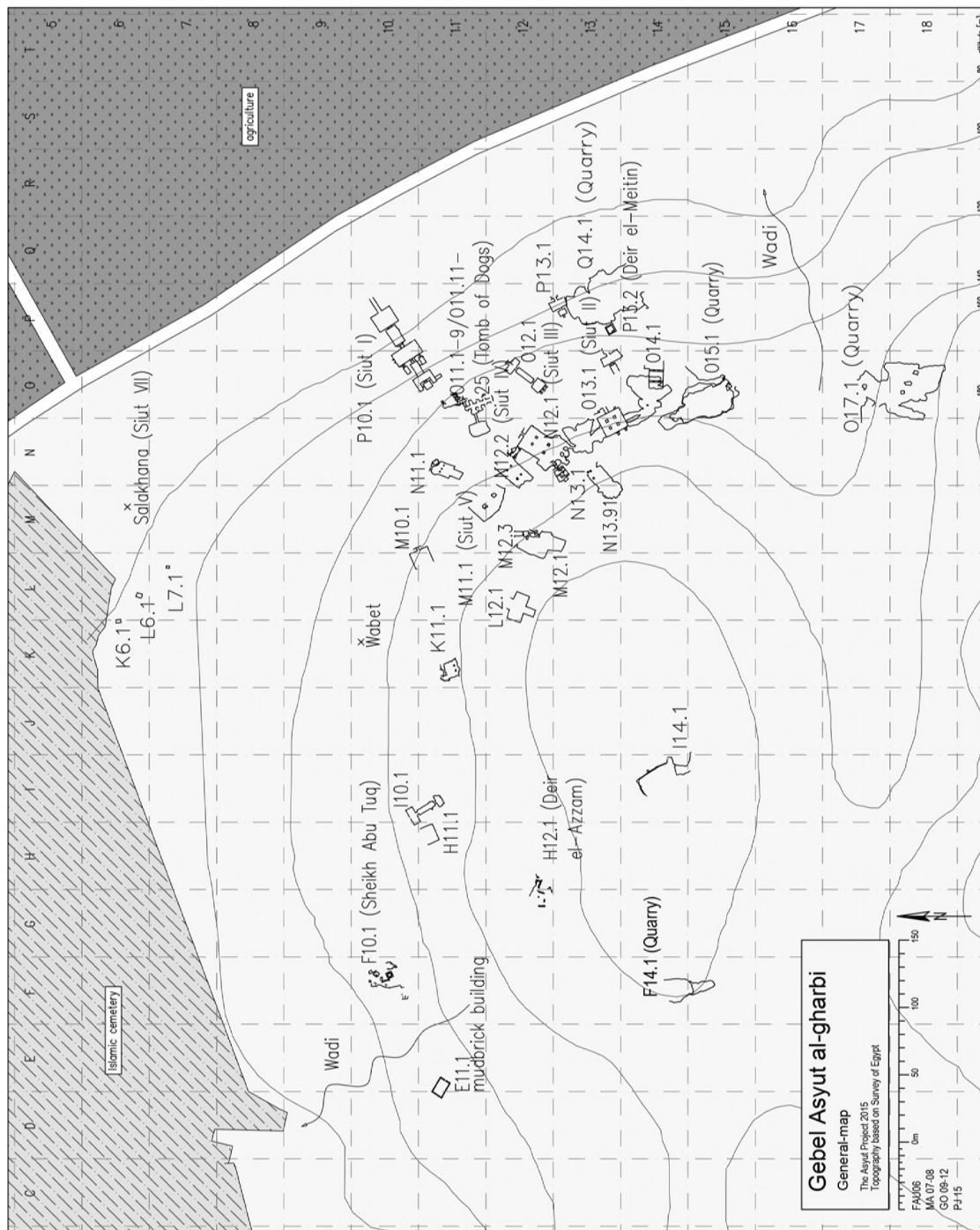


Fig. 12: Gebel Asyut al-gharbi (© The Asyut Project).



Fig. 13: Gebel Asyur al-gharbi in 2010 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).

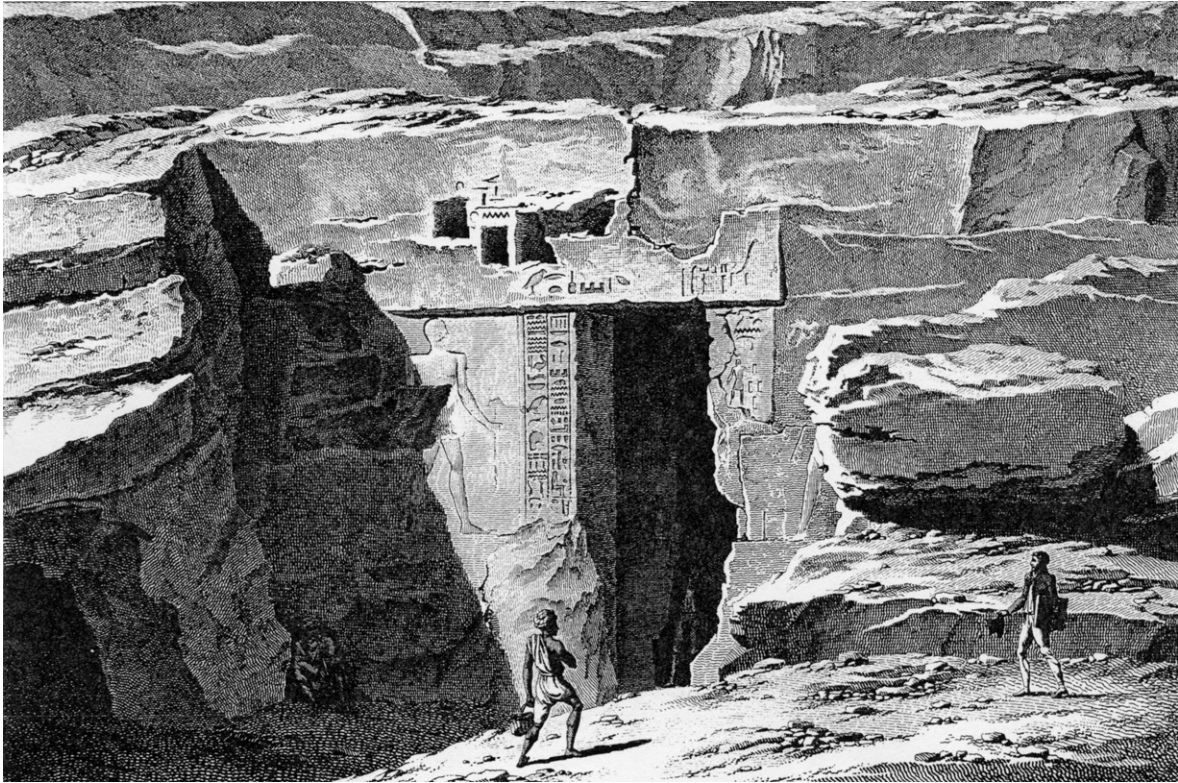


Fig. 14: Tomb II in 1799 (JOMARD 1820–1830: pl. 46.10).



Fig. 15: Tomb II in 2005 (photo: Jochem Kahl; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 16: Statue S10/16 (photo: Fritz Barthel;
© The Asyut Project).



Fig. 17: Figurine of a hippopotamus (S10/4, photo:
Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).

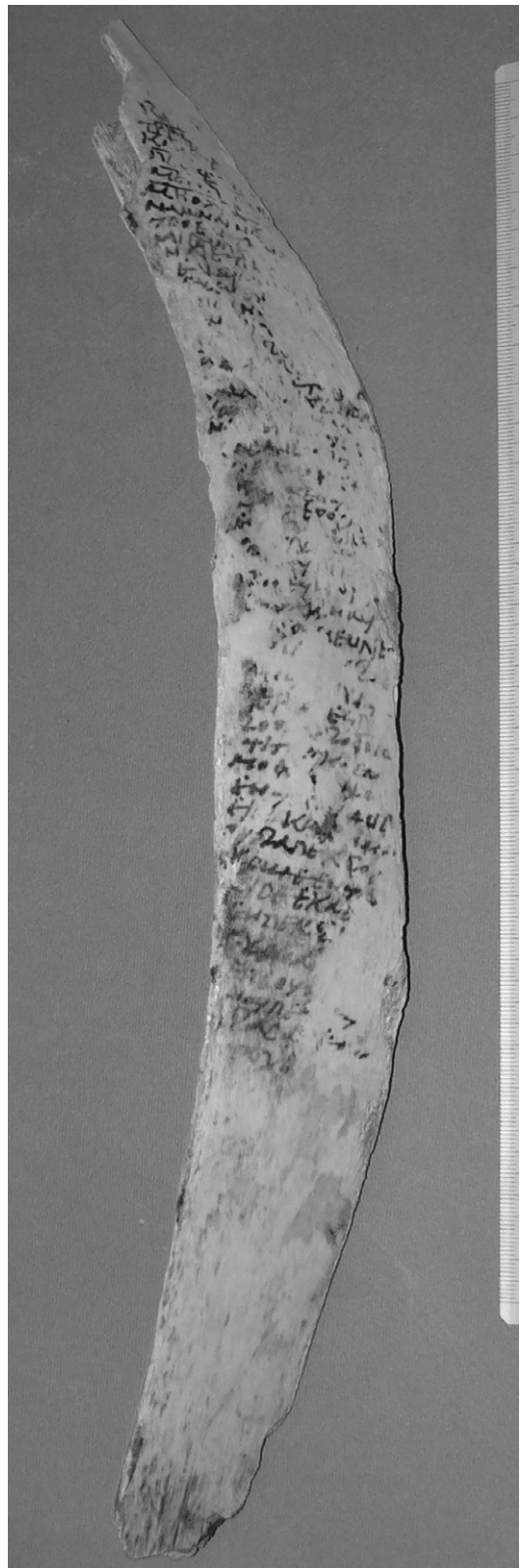


Fig. 18: Magical bone (S05/46, photo: Jochem Kahl;
© The Asyut Project).



Fig. 19: Asyut, Tomb III, IV, and V (from left to right) from the late First Intermediate Period, 2007 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 20: Tomb III, northern wall, autobiographical inscription of Iti-ibi, 2006 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).



Fig. 21: Tomb IV, northern wall, autobiographical inscription of Khety II, 2006 (photo: Fritz Barthel; © The Asyut Project).

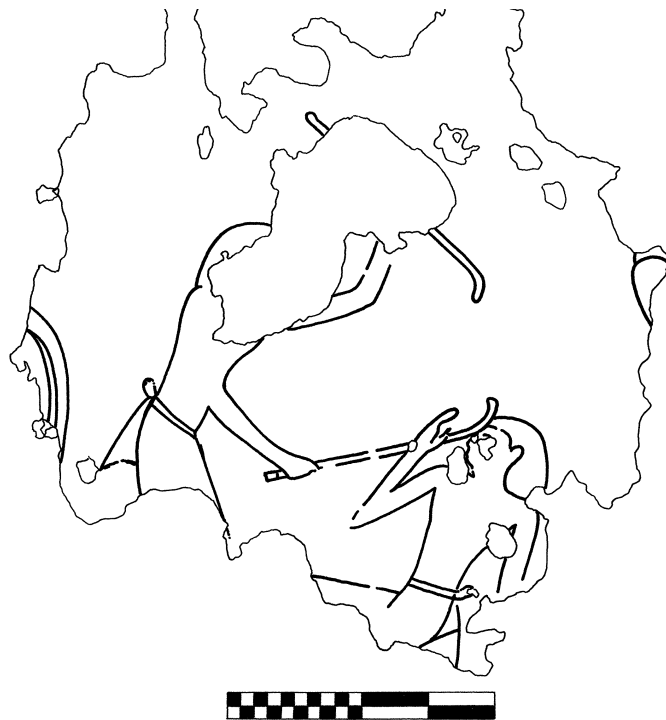


Fig. 22: Tomb III, northern wall, fighting soldiers (drawing: Ilona Regulski; © The Asyut Project).