

News & Notes

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THE
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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S STUDY

The Oriental Institute's mission of discovery, preservation, and the dissemination of knowledge is an endeavor that works best when we join forces and partner with other individuals, groups, and institutions; this enables us to assemble teams of researchers and experts who can accomplish far more than we ever could if we were only acting on our own. Global partnerships give us the flexibility to tackle large-scale challenges and the big questions in exploring and preserving the civilizations of the ancient Near East. The articles in this issue of *News & Notes* exemplify the OI's wide-ranging global engagement and partnerships of discovery.

The cover article highlights the Oriental Institute's newest fieldwork project — the excavations at the magnificent ancient Egyptian city of Dendara, under the direction of Research Associate Dr. Gregory Marouard. Dendara is renowned for its beautiful Ptolemaic-era temple of Hathor and its remarkably preserved architecture, wall paintings, and reliefs. But these late monuments are only the smallest part of the picture. Dendara was a large, complex, and extremely ancient city that played a key role in ancient Egyptian culture as the sister city of Edfu. The two centers were linked through the union of their two patron gods — Hathor (Dendara) and Horus (Edfu). Although we have learned much about the earlier periods at Edfu through Associate Professor Nadine Moeller's excavations, Dendara's urban origins and organization are still shrouded in mystery. This is precisely the focus of our innovative new project. The excavations at Dendara are a partnership that combines the complementary expertise of researchers from the Oriental Institute, the French Archaeological Institute, and Macquarie University in Australia. The OI's excavations at Dendara and Edfu are linked in an even broader project to explore the origins of Egyptian urbanism and the ways in which Egyptian cities functioned as communities and changed over time. With generous funding from an anonymous donor, this partnership will apply innovative approaches in archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, lithic analysis, geomorphology, and cartography to develop a comparative analysis of how Dendara and Edfu functioned as economic and administrative centers in the complex and ever-changing environment of the Nile River valley. This work has already begun to bear fruit; the results of Dr. Marouard's first season of excavations are giving us the first direct look at the Old Kingdom levels of Dendara, when the site reached full urban status.

The OI's global partnerships are not limited to archaeological excavations. The articles by Mike Fisher and Abbas Alizadeh show that the value of collaborative efforts also extends to the realm of cultural heritage preservation. Fisher's article highlights the impressive achievements of the Oriental Institute's four-year partnership with the National Museum of Afghanistan (NMA) in Kabul. Since 2012, a team of experts from the OI has been living in Kabul, with Mike as field director, working with the staff of the NMA in an innovative project funded by the US Department of State through the US Embassy-Kabul to help rebuild the curatorial infrastructure of the National Museum. The Museum was devastated in the Afghan civil war and the years of Taliban rule, losing ca. 70% of its objects through destruction or theft, while an astounding 90% of its records were burned in rocket attacks on the museum. The OI-NMA partnership has jointly developed a bilingual database in English and Dari (one of Afghanistan's two national languages). For the past three and a half years, we have been using the database to conduct the first ever complete inventory of the museum's holdings. With over 109,000 pieces inventoried, we are in the final stretch of building the tools that the museum needs to curate its objects in keeping with international museological standards. At the same time we have trained the NMA staff in the use of the database — about 99% of the objects were described, photographed, and inventoried by Afghan Museum staff members. Our partnership has also helped equip the National Museum's conservation lab, and has conducted training workshops for the NMA's conservators. Finally, every object we have inventoried has been re-housed in acid-free, archival-quality microenvironments. In doing all this, the OI-NMA partnership is making a major and lasting contribution to preserving the cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

Our heritage preservation partnerships also include important work in Iran — home to one of the greatest civilizations of the ancient Near East. As Dr. Alizadeh reports in his article, he has been working with the staff of the Iranian National Museum in Tehran to organize and inventory the artifacts in the vast storerooms of that institution. This is just the latest in a long series of collaborative projects that Dr. Alizadeh has conducted in museums and artifact repositories in both Tehran and Susa — always with the aim of sharing our own expertise with our Iranian colleagues, while training them in international standards of curatorial practices. This kind of capacity-building partnership is one of the most important ways in which the Oriental Institute can contribute to the urgent need to preserve the priceless and irreplaceable cultural heritage of the Near East.

Overall, these three partnerships of discovery are inspiring examples of the ways in which the OI and its international partners can together accomplish extraordinary things that none of us could ever achieve by working in isolation.

Gil J. Stein, Director

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On the Cover

Graduate student Emilie Sarrazin using a Wi-Fi camera connected with an iPad tablet during the excavation in front of the Isis temple at Dendara.



EXCAVATING IN THE SHADOW OF HATHOR, MISTRESS OF DENDARA

Overview of the Site and Preliminary Results of the 2015 Oriental Institute Mission

By Gregory Marouard

Dendara is one of the major sites of Upper Egypt (fig. 1) and an essential stopping point for the tourist or the scholar who wishes to admire and take the full measure of the artistic and architectural heritage of ancient Egypt.

The site is well known by its sanctuary complex of the goddess Hathor, Mistress of Dendara, commonly depicted as a cow. The pronaos of the main temple, which dates back to the early Roman period, is one of the best-preserved examples of architectural engineering, being perfectly harmonic between the extensive depiction of sacred rituals and the covenant of colors and Egyptian sculpture.

Mentioned by travelers since the late seventeenth century, the sanctuary of Hathor was first recorded by the French expedition in 1799 and published in volume 4 of *La Description de L’Egypte* in 1809 (fig. 2).

Numerous archaeologists and Egyptologists have investigated the various temples and the necropolis area. In 1898, Flinders Petrie and Charles Rosher, followed in 1915–1917 by Clarence Fisher, extensively excavated the cemetery south of the temple complex of Hathor (fig. 3). These operations revealed dozens of mudbrick mastabas and hundreds of tombs dating from the Early Dynastic period to the beginning of the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000 BC) and from the Late Period (seventh century BC) to the late Ptolemaic and early Roman periods. More than 500 objects from the necropolis excavations by Flinders Petrie are actually preserved in the Oriental Institute Museum Archives, and some masterpieces are on display in the galleries.

For almost a century, successive French scholars such as Auguste Mariette, Émile Chassinat, and François Daumas conducted an extensive textual study of the buildings within the main

Left: Column with Hathor-emblem capitals in the pronaos of the temple of Hathor.

enclosure wall, and the completion and publication of the entire epigraphy is still ongoing, now conducted by Sylvie Cauville. More recently, complete architectural reexaminations of some of the main monuments have been undertaken: the Hathor temple has been examined by Pierre Zignani, and the Coptic basilica by Ramez Boutros. Some cleanings and occasional trenches have been also conducted in order to complete the knowledge of monuments such as the Sanatorium, the temple of Isis, and, in the late 1990s, the temenos of the Hathor temple.

But the settlement itself and its evolution are still poorly known and despite 120 years of research at the site, and wide surface survey outside of the main enclosure wall, only an extremely small part of the extensive urban remains has been investigated (fig. 3). Engaged in 2013–2014 with two preliminary seasons of evaluation, in autumn 2015 the Oriental Institute signed an agreement with the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology (IFAO) to work on its archaeological concession. The specific focus lies on the study of the settlement remains covering the periods from its origins through the Christian period, and the inter-

connections between the civic and administrative spaces with the religious structures in addition to the enclosure walls and town walls that mark the phases of extension and contraction for most of the archaeological site in Upper Egypt such as Edfu or El Kab.

This project is a part of an extensive and collaborative venture that naturally includes the IFAO mission, directed by Dr. Pierre Zignani, whose work focuses on the mapping of some of the main monuments at the site such as the Roman *mammisi* (birth house), which was never properly recorded with a detailed architectural plan. This project also includes a mission of Macquarie University in Sydney, directed by Dr. Yann Tristant, in charge of the archaeological and anthropological reexamination of the various phases of the necropolis.

The sanctuary of Hathor was always considered the sister site of Edfu and the sanctuary of Horus. The triad of Edfu (Horus-Hathor-Harsomtus/Ihy) is indeed honored, as clearly illustrated by the specific configuration of the shrines and temples at Dendara. Every year in the month of Epiphi, when the Nile waters were at the lowest level, the “Feast of the Beautiful Re-

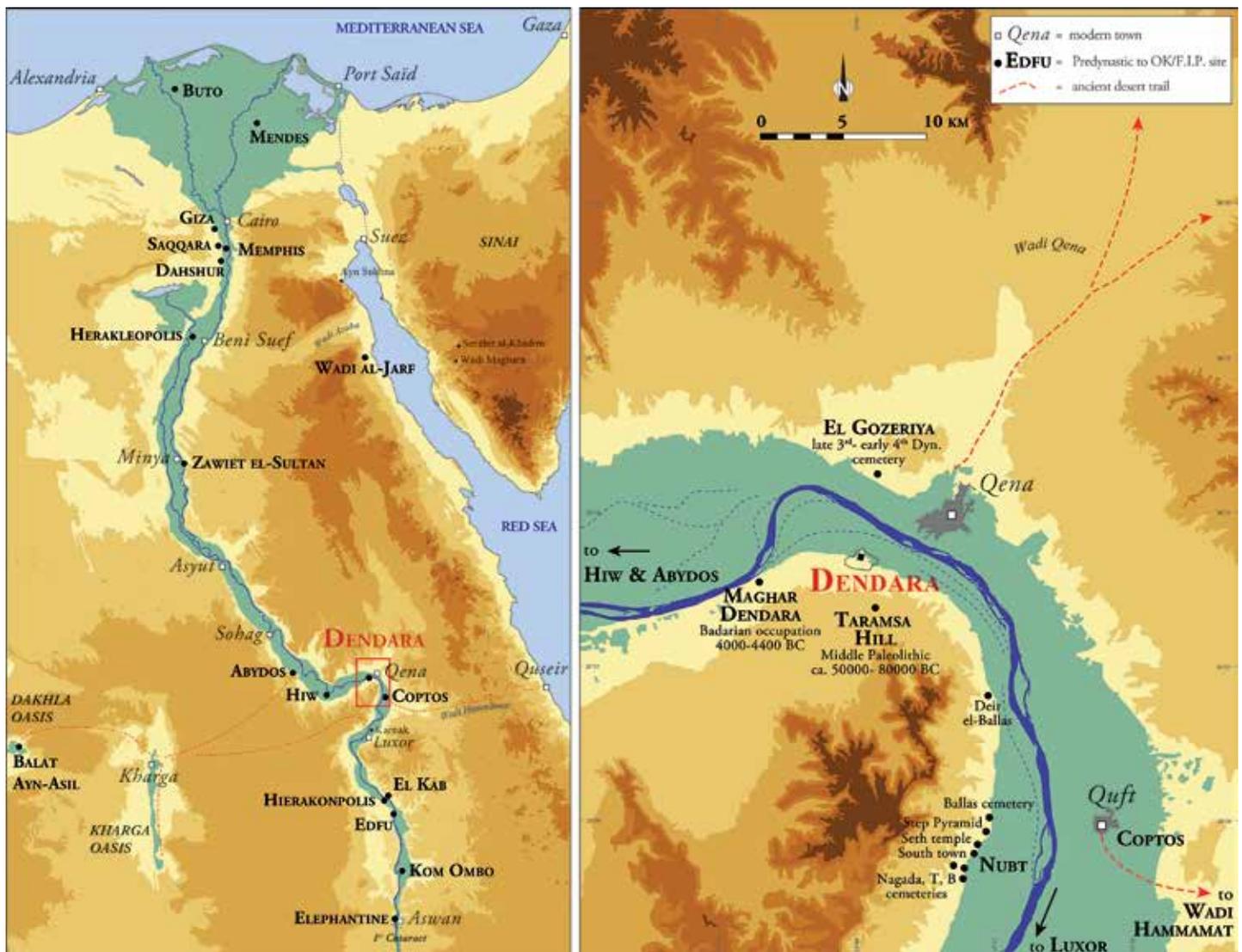


Figure 1. General map of Egypt with location of Dendara and its region.

union” was celebrated. The statue of Hathor left its temple and traveled by boat upstream to the south (via Coptos, Thebes, and Nekhen) in order to join her consort Horus in Edfu.

But these close and highly symbolic relationships between the two sites can also be found on a historical and archaeological level, with a very similar evolution of both the sanctuaries and urban settlements. Therefore, the new research of the Oriental Institute mission at Dendara is closely related to the ongoing archaeological work conducted by Oriental Institute archaeologist Nadine Moeller at Tell Edfu, which focuses on the enclosure walls and the oldest urban remains, which were founded directly on the rocky subjacent island and next to the Ptolemaic temple of Horus (see “Tell Edfu,” *News & Notes* 220, 2013, *News & Notes* 206, 2010 *News & Notes* 198, 2008).

By combining these two complementary urban excavations and two sister sites, the Oriental Institute has a unique opportunity to examine on a deeply comparative level the archaeological data from two provincial capitals with the aim to better characterize the multiple facets of the urban phenomenon in addition to the process and dynamics of the development of the agglomerations of Upper Egypt over more than three thousand years, from their Predynastic origins to the end of the Pharaonic times.

LOCATION AND SHORT HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF DENDARA

Dendara, ancient Ta Iunet/Tentyra, was the capital of the 6th Nome of Upper Egypt and is symbolized by a crocodile. The site is located 55 km (34 mi) north of the Luxor area and 5 km (3 mi) south of the modern town of Qena; this region is the cradle of the Egyptian Predynastic cultures, halfway between Abydos and the Nagada-Nubt-Ballas area. Situated on the “west bank” in an ancient Egyptian perspective, Dendara lies south of the river, in a curving bend of the Nile, the only part of the valley where the river runs from east to west (fig. 1).

Today the site is positioned along the desert fringe of the Nile valley floodplain; it seems quite likely that the river — currently situated 2 km to the north — flowed much closer to the site in ancient times. According to a trilingual stela from the time of Augustus, during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the port area that was the main access to the site (fig. 2) was apparently connected to the Nile by a canal system. However, very few elements of the original environment of the site — from a geomorphological or botanical point of view — are currently known; it is one of the goals of the Oriental Institute mission and its partners seek more information about these features during this long-term project.

In the early 1990s, on a small promontory named Taramsa Hill (fig. 1), 2.5 km south of the Hathor and Isis complex, the oldest modern human of Egypt — possibly Africa’s oldest intentional burial — was discovered, which indicates a clear link between the East African and the Middle Eastern populations. The skeleton, a child of eight to ten years old at the time of death, was attributed to the Middle Paleolithic period with a possible age between 50,000 and 80,000 years (mean age ca. 55,000).

A few kilometers to the west, rescue excavations conducted during the mid 1980s at Maghar Dendara 2 revealed an occupation from the Badarian culture (Early Predynastic Period, ca. 4500 to 4000 BC).

Opposite the Nile River is the site at El Gozeriya, a severely deteriorated Predynastic (Badarian to Nagada IA?) and Early Old Kingdom cemetery (late 3rd and 4th Dynasty mastabas).

The site of Dendara seems to really emerge and take a form at the very beginning of the Old Kingdom. It is precisely during these ancient phases that the current mission of the Oriental Institute chose to direct its first attention, in order to give a better archaeological and factual image to the important study already published in 1968 by Henri Fischer in his monograph *Dendara in the 3rd Millennium BC*, which is mainly based on the textual material from ancient excavations conducted in the necropolis area. The worship of Hathor as the cow goddess, probably already strong since the very first dynasties, seems to have grown in importance at the early times of the Fourth Dynasty.

According to Egyptologist Fr. Daumas, one of the inscriptions of the third western crypt of the Roman temple could be interpreted as a proof for the creation of a shrine dedicated to Hathor and the establishment of a liturgical ritual at the very beginning of the Fourth Dynasty and the reign of King Khufu.

A stela found in 1952 at Dahshur mentions a son of King Snofru, *Ntr-pr.f*, priest of the Bent Pyramid, who was also a high-ranking provincial administrator, the “overseer of commissions of Coptos, Hiw and Dendara,” a position that indicates that the agglomeration already existed at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty as a nome capital with a hierarchical and fully functional administration attached to the central power at Memphis.

Finally, in the central area of the necropolis, the so-called group of Abu Suten, *Nj-Jbw-nswt* (fig. 3), excavated by Flinders Petrie in 1898 and re-excavated in 1915 to 1917 by Clarence Fisher, lies the oldest set of mudbrick mastabas (elite tombs), clearly dated by the architecture, reliefs, and pottery from the very end of the Third Dynasty and the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty. If this group attests that local elites were buried at the site since this time, the main individual in the group was not directly attached to the administration of the nome, but was linked to the activities of the temple of Hathor, another element that supports the presence of a shrine at least since the reign of Snofru or Khufu.

Most of the remainder of the necropolis corresponds to the phases dating to the second half of the Old Kingdom (5th and 6th Dynasties), the First Intermediate Period, and early Middle Kingdom (11th and early 12th Dynasties). These tombs testify to an incredible increase in the number of the elite tombs, as well as hundreds of much more common burials (familial and collective graves), a phenomenon that is also reflected for these periods by a considerable extension of the contemporary urban area. The Oriental Institute mission hopes to start excavation of this area in 2016.



Figure 2. Views of the Hathor and Isis sanctuaries at Dendara (ca. 1800) published in *La Description de l'Égypte*.

MAIN MONUMENTS PRESERVED AT THE SITE

The intra-mural part of the site has been under excavation since the time of Mahomet Ali, who in 1845 ordered an open trench cut through the vestiges of the Late Byzantine period in order to access the pronaos of the Temple of Hathor. Work continued until the end of the 1920s, when the excavations of the Antiquities Service were supervised by Pierre Lacau and Émile Baraize but executed by hundreds of *sebbakhin*. These operations led to a complete and very expeditious clearance of most of the mudbrick constructions within the sanctuary, including the entire Greco-Roman town that extended east of the main monuments with a thickness of over 12 meters (fig. 2).

Today the intra-mural area is dominated by stone monuments, dating mainly from the end of the Ptolemaic period and especially the beginning of the Roman period. So far, the oldest monument found in Dendara is a limestone chapel built by Mentuhotep II (fig. 5, no. 13), the founder of the Middle Kingdom (mid-11th Dynasty, ca. 2030 BC). This monument, extended during the New Kingdom by Merenptah (19th Dynasty, ca. 1210 BC), was discovered in 1916 by the *sebbakhin*, then dismantled and sent to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where it is still on display.

Blocks reused in the foundations of the temple of Isis or in the temple of Hathor, in addition to being scattered over the site, also indicate the possible presence of monuments attributable to Amenemhat I and Senusret I, the first two kings of the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1990–1920 BC).

Although several blocks dating to the New Kingdom dot the site and the fact that the sanctuary was obviously still functional (especially after a restructuring under Thutmose III), the archaeological traces of this important period of Egyptian history are particularly faint on the site. If an older phase of the temple of Isis, perhaps from Ramesside times, was mentioned in the past, the Oriental Institute mission's 2015 fieldwork in this sector did not confirm such a hypothesis.

Most of the other monuments in the current landscape are much later. Nectanebo I (30th Dynasty) seems to have been particularly active in the second quarter of the fourth century BC, having undertaken the reconstruction of the temple of Isis (fig. 5, no. 5) and the construction of the first mammisi (fig. 5, nos. 8 and 10 [10 is the basilica? 9 is meant?]), the first monument of this kind in Egyptian architecture. The work of the Oriental Institute mission is also able to demonstrate today that this great builder is probably at the origin of the first large mudbrick enclosure, which previously all researchers agreed dated from the early Roman times.

According to various interpretations, it was under the reign of Ptolemy VIII or Ptolemy XII, and after the completion of the temple of Horus at Edfu, that the reconstruction of the naos of Hathor began (fig. 5, no. 1). Continued by Cleopatra VII, this project was also widely boosted under the reign of Augustus with the beginning of the construction of the pronaos (fig. 5, no. 2). The first Roman emperor was also at the initiative of the reconstruction of the temple of Isis (fig. 5, no. 6), the gate of Isis (fig. 5, no. 7), and especially the construction of a new mammisi (the so-called Roman mammisi, fig. 5, no. 9), which replaced the previous building condemned by the construction of the peribolos wall and a project of pylons, which remains unfinished. If most of the structural work seems completed under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, the decoration of all these architectural projects continued throughout the Julio-Claudian, Flavian, and Antonine periods, the names of whose emperors appear regularly in the royal cartouches (Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Antoninus Pius, etc.).

One last important monument to report intra-muros is a Coptic church (fig. 5, no. 10), a rare example of a basilica layout structure, dating from the second half of the fifth century AD. Built by using sandstone blocks from the dismantled Roman mammisi, this construction might have been built on top of an older Pharaonic-era monument adjoining the first mammisi of Nectanebo, to the south.

Another seriously altered part of the site should be mentioned, a second temple complex to the east, which probably consisted of two temples dedicated to Horus of Edfu and Harsomthus/Ihy, of which only a few architectural elements remain today, including a complete door of the Roman period that stands at the entrance of the modern village that today occupies a large part of the area. The plan published by *La Description de l'Égypte*, or the even more accurate plan from 1870 by Auguste

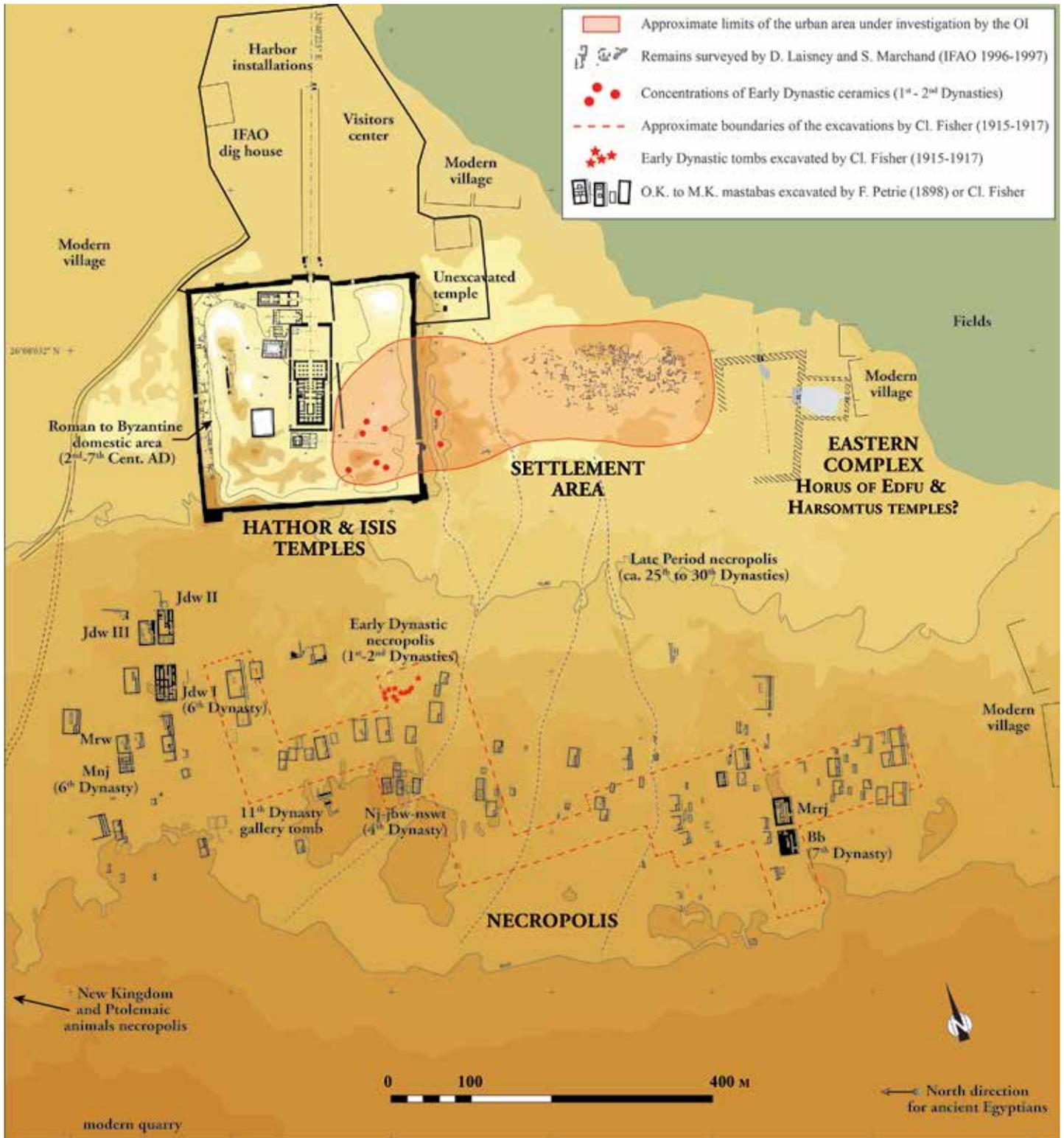


Figure 3. General plan of the archaeological site at Dendara.



Figure 4. View of the Oriental Institute excavation at Dendara, looking southeast from the roof of the Hathor temple. In the background the Isis gate (left), the Late Period enclosure wall, and the necropolis area.

Mariette, as well as some visitors' descriptions such as the one left by Paul Lucas circa 1699–1703, relate to limited details about this bipartite sanctuary. It is between this complex and the one dedicated to Hathor and Isis where the Tentyrite agglomeration had specifically developed (fig. 3).

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE 2015 SEASON, FIRST EVIDENCE FOR NAQADA II AND EARLY DYNASTIC OCCUPATIONS

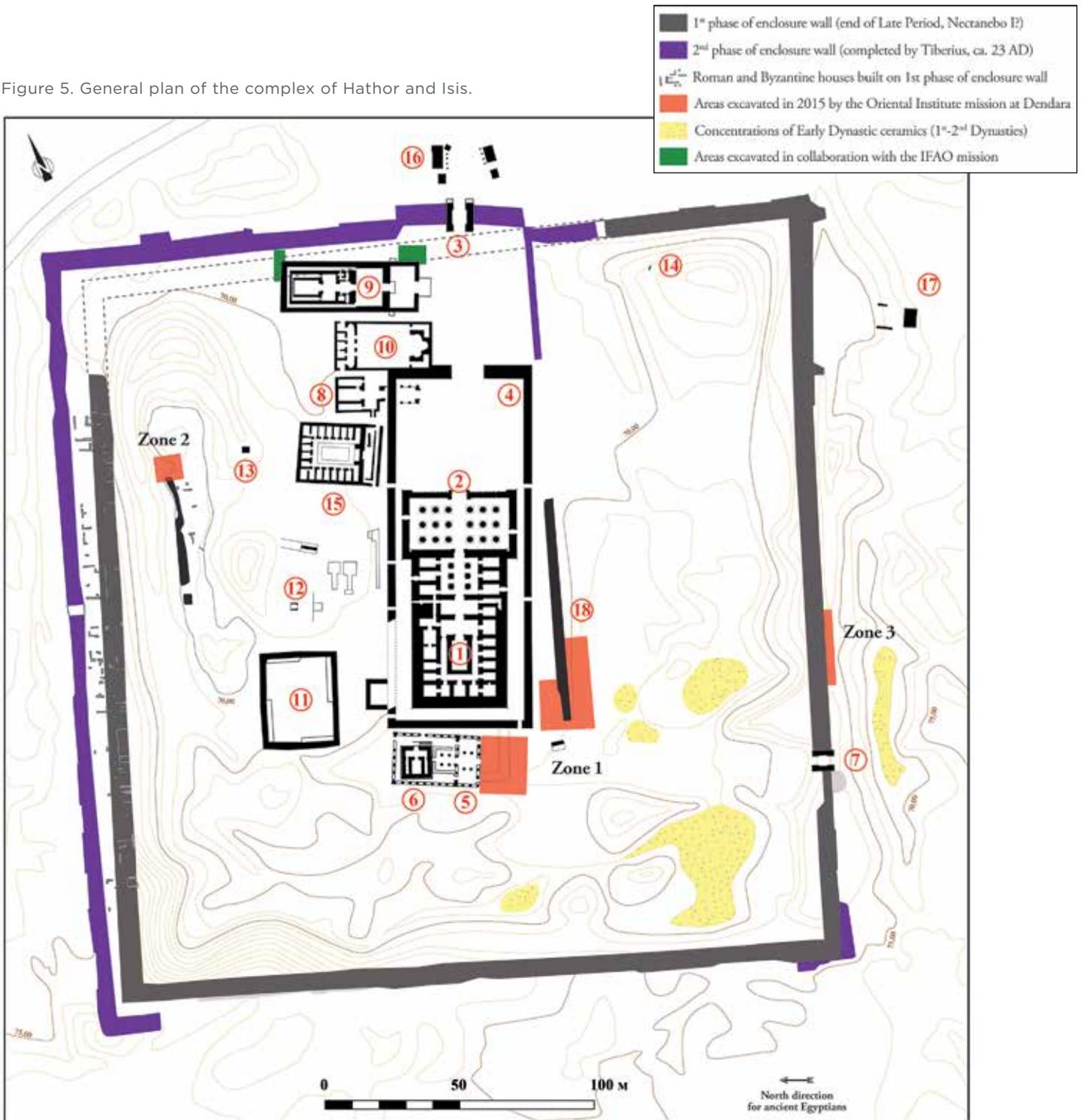
The oldest phases of Egyptian history are not totally absent from Dendara, and some rare elements allow us to consider here a possible occupation as early as the Early Dynastic period. Excavations conducted by Cl. Fisher between 1915 and 1917 revealed, especially in squares 7 and 5 of the necropolis (fig. 3), a dozen pit graves with bodies in contracted position. Although few of them contained abundant and identifiable grave goods, they can be dated with confidence to the First and Second Dynasties (Naqada III C–D, ca. 3100–2800 BC) by the pottery, stone vessels, and a preserved, complete wooden cylinder seal now housed at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

However, the preliminary mission of the Oriental Institute, conducted in 2014, led to the discovery of features from that

same period farther north and within the walled area (fig. 5). The remains are apparently damaged, but the archaeological artifacts are characteristic of a domestic-type occupation (bread molds and beer jars) and for some craft activities such as the production of beer and the fabrication of stone vessels. These elements underline clearly here, in close proximity to the Roman temple, the presence of a small settlement at the end of the Predynastic period, probably in close connection with the synchronous Early Dynastic cemetery discovered by Cl. Fisher.

But the 2015 campaign revealed in Zone 1, and for the first time at the site, much older and more conclusive remains about the presence of a settlement at Dendara 500 years earlier. Directly under the foundations of the temple of Isis (see cover image) and in the area next to the southeast corner of the temple of Hathor (with more than 1.5 m in thickness here; see fig. 8), sandy floor levels, fireplaces, and thick ash layers revealed a highly artisanal kind of occupation devoted to beer production. Examination of the ceramics and lithic tools assemblages, especially in comparison with the excavations at Adaima, reveals this area dates to the Naqada IIC–D period, ca. 3400–3200 BC (fig. 6). The ash levels have also delivered significant quantities of charcoal and seed remains that will undergo further botanical study and radiocarbon dating.

Figure 5. General plan of the complex of Hathor and Isis.



- ① Naos of the temple of Hathor, initiated by Ptolemy VIII and/or XII
- ② Pronaos of the temple of Hathor, completed by Tiberius ca. 35 AD
- ③ Gate of Hathor, decorated by Domitian and Trajan
- ④ Unfinished peribolos and pylon, construction engaged by Augustus
- ⑤ Temple of Isis, Nectanebo I, extension by Ptolemy VI and X
- ⑥ Temple of Isis, reconstruction and change of orientation by Augustus
- ⑦ Reconstruction of the gate of Isis, completed by Augustus
- ⑧ Mammisi of Nectanebo I, extension by Ptolemy II and Ptolemy IX
- ⑨ Roman Mammisi, construction by Augustus and Tiberius

- ⑩ Coptic church with basilica layout (2nd half of 5th Cent. AD)
- ⑪ Sacred Lake (31 m x 25 m)
- ⑫ Barque chapel, Ptolemy VIII
- ⑬ Early M.K. chapel of Mentuhotep II (Cairo), extension by Merenptah
- ⑭ Door jamb of a chapel of Thoth
- ⑮ Sanatorium (Ptolemaic and Roman periods ?)
- ⑯ Fountains from the Roman period (2nd - 4th Cent. AD)
- ⑰ Remains of an unidentified temple (Thermutis?)
- ⑱ Early M.K. enclosure wall with 25th Dyn. reconstruction (Shabaka?)



Figure 6. Pottery sherds and flint blades from Naqada II contexts.

After the abandonment of these levels and several phases of aeolian (wind-blown) deposits marking a significant chronological hiatus, the excavation revealed multiples phases of light walls and occupation floors, including a perfectly preserved pig pen, complete with clearly discernible hoofprints. Ceramics analysis dates these levels to the Third Dynasty (fig. 7).

STUDY OF THE ENCLOSURE WALLS AND TOWN REMAINS

Those ancient levels that are still characterized by a light and “rural” type of occupation are then followed by a radical change in the function of the area that can be clearly highlighted by the recent study of enclosure walls and settlement vestiges.

East of the Hathor temple stands a lengthy north–south section of a massive mudbrick enclosure wall (fig. 5, no. 18), renovated on several occasions (maybe by King Shabaka, 25th Dynasty), and that seems to have marked the boundary of the sanctuary for a date that remains to be determined.

Several cleaning operations and stratigraphic trenches engaged this season (fig. 8) have confirmed a construction corresponding to the early Middle Kingdom, at end of the Eleventh or the early Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 2000–1900 BC), a period that roughly corresponds to the construction of the chapel of Mentuhotep II or to the lost monuments of Amenemhat I and Senusret I.

This precinct was founded directly on the surface of a large, highly stratified urban occupation dating back and including the entire Old Kingdom (from the 4th to late 6th Dynasty), a fact

that the great British archaeologist Barry Kemp had detected as early as 1978. The most ancient levels here are of particular interest because they correspond to a well-structured occupation of a new kind, located on the surface levels of windblown sand that directly overlie the pig pen of the Third Dynasty, and whose ceramics can be dated accurately to the early Fourth Dynasty. Subsequently, less than 20 m (65 feet) from the temple of Hathor, it is possible to find archaeological layers with constructed floors and walls of unusual thickness that clearly confirm the existence of a settlement at that time and probably a sanctuary, as the inscriptions of the crypt or the Dahshur stela of *Ntr-pr:f* appear to attest.

In addition to this first archaeological evidence for an occupation at Dendara in the Fourth Dynasty, stratigraphic cleaning was undertaken on the west side of the Middle Kingdom enclosure wall and just below its foundation, making it possible to highlight another very massive wall that was also installed at the beginning of the Fourth Dynasty (fig. 7). The size and orientation of this construction, which forms a right angle here and at the southeastern limit, might correspond to the very first phase of an enclosure wall for the early Hathor sanctuary, which fits well to its origin at this time.

The archaeological levels in situ against this potential enclosure, characterized in particular by a thick and very stratified dump, have yielded large quantities and equivalent proportions of beer jars of and bread molds, both in standard modules and in unusual large modules. Dozens of fragments of mud jar stoppers and clay sealings have been discovered, some showing cyl-

inder-seal imprints. It should be pointed out that one of these jar stoppers revealed a *serekh*, an early form of royal cartouche, containing the Horus name of a king who is not identified so far due to the erosion of this impression (fig. 11), a discovery that could emphasize both the administrative character of this area and the control of these activities by the central government.

EXCAVATIONS ON THE ROMAN MAMMISI

In close collaboration with the IFAO team, two excavation areas have been opened on the northwestern and the northeastern corners of the Roman mammisi in 2014 and 2015 (fig. 5, no. 9; fig. 9). These operations are beneficial for both partners to the extent that the question here is twofold.

In order to complete the architectural study of the mammisi and document the foundation, deep trenches are necessary. These revealed, for example, a complex system of foundations, set on a mudbrick case filled with 55 cm of thin yellow sand from the desert. On this strong and incompressible layer, five different levels of blocks were disposed in order to compose a foundation floor on which the building itself is constructed.

These two operations also have the objective to confirm an earlier phase of the massive mudbrick enclosure wall that actually surrounds the entire sanctuary. Our hypothesis was that this pre-

cinct was not built in one single phase, as suggested previously, but in two very different phases, a solution that should explain many of the irregularities and inconsistencies of its plan and multiple stratigraphic and chronological contradictions observed elsewhere on the site. In both excavations a wide mudbrick wall has been visible which seems to have been voluntarily dismantled right under the mammisi foundation system and was clearly cut by its foundation trench. This discovery confirms a first enclosure wall here, probably constructed at the end of the Late Period, according to the technique used, and maybe under the reign of Nectanebo I, such as the enclosure walls at Karnak temple or at El-Kab. This first precinct was partially demolished at the very beginning of the Roman period when Nectanebo's mammisi was condemned, and the project for a new mammisi initiated at this place. After the completion of the main structure of the Roman mammisi, but before its decoration, a new section of enclosure wall was reconstructed farther north, all along the northwestern and western sides of the sanctuary. This operation was commemorated by a stela, discovered during the *sebbakhin* excavations and published in 1926, which mentions the completion during Year 9 of Tiberius (ca. 23 AD). Prior to the recent fieldwork, this document has always been systematically and paradoxically mentioned to emphasize the exclusively Roman date for the entire enclosure wall.

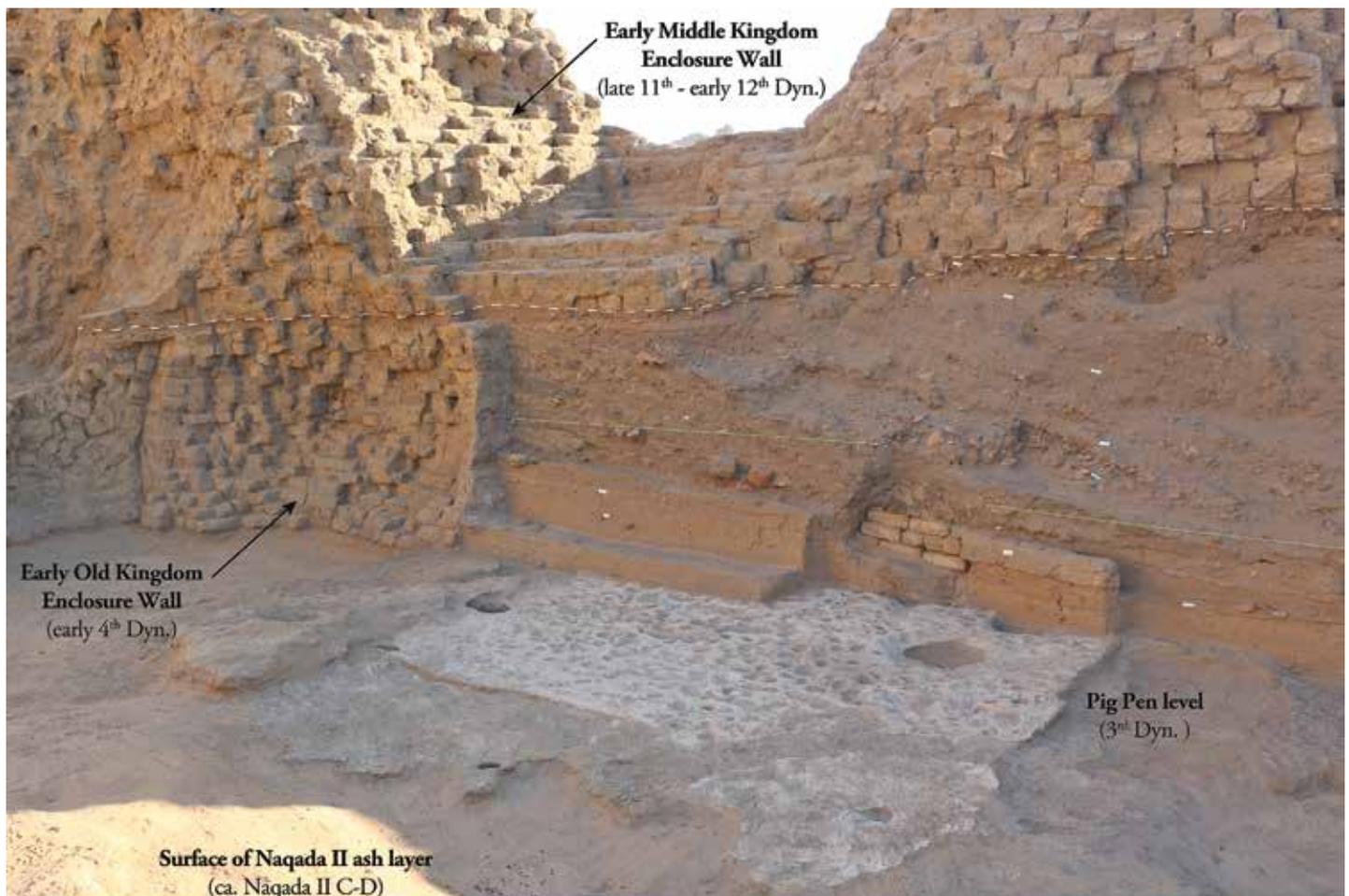


Figure 7. Third Dynasty pig pen and remains of the early Fourth Dynasty enclosure wall.

Untouched since the 1950s, the area of the 2015 operation revealed a wide installation of red bricks and lime mortar, with a large well of about 3.5 m diameter and the flat surface of a wide basin. The latter was used to hold and conduct the water from the well to a semicircular fountain installation set on the eastern face flanked by two half columns (fig. 9, inset). This original and new construction can be dated in the current state of the study to the fifth to the seventh century AD. It probably served as a fountain or maybe a baptistery installation in relation to a second Coptic church in brick, which was built onto the dismantled entrance terrace of the Roman *mammisi*.

An extension of the trench farther to the east is planned for the 2016 season in order to recover the remains of the original gate of the complex dating to the first Late Period phase of the enclosure wall.

FURTHER ONGOING PROJECTS

This season, an operation was launched on the eastern limit of the temple of Isis (cover image and fig. 5, nos. 5–6), which is a key node for the understanding of this part of the complex. This project will be conducted in the future in close cooperation with the IFAO as part of a complete architectural review of the building. After the first cleaning, it is already possible to point out here the existence of an older temple, a totally new discovery dating to the early Middle Kingdom, which was built directly on the surface of the Naqada II levels. Additional excavations, cleaning, and trenches under the stone pavement will be needed to better

understand the complex evolution of this temple before the Late Period (phase of Nectanebo I).

As part of our ongoing questions about the long-term evolution of the ancient town and settlement during the third millennium, aerial photographic coverage assisted by a kite was undertaken in 2015 on the extra-mural urban area (fig. 10) in order to plan for the next season an extensive excavation of the residential neighborhoods, which date from the end of the late Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period. Identifiable over an area measuring 350 m in length and covering nearly 8 hectares (20 acres), this sector has barely been touched by archaeologists, with the exception of an operation conducted between 1999 and 2002 by a French-Polish team, which focused on a single domestic unit.

To better define the northern margins of the extra-mural urban area and possibly to find some of the boundaries of the eastern sanctuary that are now partly under the cultivated fields, an extensive geomagnetic survey will be launched in 2016. This initiative will be conducted simultaneously with geomorphological operations and attempts at landscape reconstruction across the Tentyrite territory, extending into the floodplain, in order to track the capricious developments of Nile River (Macquarie University) and with a more targeted and geoarchaeological approach for the settlement areas (Oriental Institute).

In order to protect the entire extra-mural area — town, necropolis, and also a very rare example of an animal necropolis — which is seriously exposed to the encroachments of new constructions, the extension of modern cemeteries, large trash deposits, and very occasional looting attempts (the site is well



Figure 8. Eastern face of the early Middle Kingdom enclosure wall with ongoing excavation on the Old Kingdom settlement contexts.



Above: Figure 9. General view of the Roman mammisi with detail of Byzantine fountain found in the 2015 trench. Left: Figure 10. Aerial view of the extra-mural settlement area to be excavated in 2016.

guarded), an accurate mapping and a clear delimitation of the archaeological site with visible and lasting boundary markers should be considered in the short term. In addition to the priority to accurately redefine the areas that need to be protected, it should be possible to include in that project a more extensive trail for future visitors while maintaining the area open for the locals, such as the children who have to cross this part of the site every day to go to school.

Depending on the available funding, an important site management operation also needs to be undertaken on the intra-mural area, especially in the area of the Roman mammisi in order to reorganize, sort, store, protect, and study the hundreds of decorated blocks in red granite, sandstone, and limestone carelessly piled up for decades on the northern side of the building.

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Figure 11. Mud jar stopper with the imprint of a royal *serekh*.



Figure 12. Excavation of the Third Dynasty pig pen installation by Sasha Rohret and Emilie Sarrazin.