

TELL EDFU

NADINE MOELLER and GRÉGORY MAROUARD



Panoramic view of the Temple of Horus at Edfu. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

The ancient city of Edfu is situated on the West Bank of the Nile valley, halfway between Aswan and Luxor. In ancient times, Edfu was the capital of the Second Upper Egyptian Nome and formed an important regional center in Upper Egypt since the mid-third millennium BC until the late Byzantine period.

Since 2014, one of the main research objectives of our archaeological fieldwork at Tell Edfu has been to identify the earliest traces for settlement activity and to investigate the Old Kingdom occupation that lies deep under the actual surface of the preserved tell site. In the continuity of previous seasons, we mainly focused this year on the excavation of Zone 2, which is situated to the west of the pylon of the Ptolemaic temple (fig. 1) and contains the earliest settlement remains at Edfu so far discovered, dating to the second half of the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2400–2300 BC) and the reigns of several of its late rulers, Nyuserre, Menkauhor (both kings were identified this season), and Djedkare Isesi.

After the extensive cleaning work conducted in the previous 2017 season on the top of the tell, on the north side of previously excavated Zone 1, marked by its massive silo courtyard and Middle Kingdom governors' residence, a new excavation area was opened this season at Zone 4 (previously named Zone 1 Northern Extension). After the meticulous 3-D mapping and the removal of several remains of houses from the early Late Period (Twenty-fifth Dynasty, ca. 750–650 BC), previously excavated by the French mission of the IFAO in 1932–33, a new settlement area of the late Second Intermediate Period and the early New Kingdom (early Eighteenth Dynasty, ca. 1580–1500 BC) has been discovered, and one urban villa has been partially excavated.

The 2018 season at Tell Edfu started on October 20 and finished on December 6, 2018. The project has been conducted by Professor Nadine Moeller (director; Oriental Institute, University of Chicago) and Dr. Grégory Marouard (codirector; Oriental Institute, University of Chicago). This year team members were Katarina Arias Kytnarová, PhD (Old Kingdom pottery specialist, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University, Prague), Aaron de Souza, PhD (Nubian pottery; Macquarie University, Sydney), Natasha Ayers, PhD (Middle and New Kingdom pottery specialist; University of Chicago),

Emilie Sarrazin (archaeologist, trench supervisor; University of Chicago), Sasha Rohret (archaeozoologist; University of Chicago), Camille Lemoine (independent contractor, small-finds drawings), Hilary McDonald (photographer; University of Chicago House in Luxor), Raghdha “Didi” El-Behaedi (archaeologist; University of Chicago), “Rebecca” Ziting Wang (Egyptologist, small-finds specialist; University of Chicago), Maja Sunleaf (assistant ceramicist; University of Chicago).

The local inspectorate of the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities (MoA) was represented this season by Mrs. Hanan Abd-el Fattah Ewees Mohamed and Mrs. Shaimaa Abdel Mageed Hassan.

EXCAVATIONS ON THE OLD KINGDOM SETTLEMENT AREA IN ZONE 2

The main objective of Zone 2 is to investigate an area on the northeastern side of the currently preserved tell, located only 25 m on west of the Ptolemaic temple (fig. 1), which corresponds to the only parts of the site where archaeological layers dating to the Old Kingdom are still accessible. Much of the remains in the area had been covered by several meters of unstratified debris dumped here by *sebbakh* diggers and previous excavations conducted by the French Institute (IFAO) in the 1930s. After several seasons that involved the removal of a thick deposition of mudbrick rubble and mixed pottery, archaeological layers that were still in situ were finally reached in 2012. These layers had also suffered from *sebbakh* digging, which left deep holes cutting through the ancient stratigraphy. Over the past three seasons, it has been possible to reach the natural substratum in several areas and to follow the overall development of a settlement quarter, from the oldest layers of occupation (ca. 2450 BC) ever found in Edfu that were directly settled onto the natural ground and constituted Nile sand and clay deposits, to the last preserved remains here, which date to the late First Intermediate Period (ca. 2100 BC). It is now evident that this town sector saw several phases of drastic transformations over time.

In Zone 2, the oldest constructions belong to a settlement phase that has been provisionally designated as “monumental” because of two sizeable buildings that do not show any of the usual characteristics of domestic architecture. These structures can be considered the first installations in this part of the settlement at Edfu and they were founded *ex nihilo*, directly on the natural Nile deposits.

This season, the excavation mostly focused on the unusual mudbrick Northern Building 1, whose massive exterior walls and main eastern entrance have been fully exposed along the western limit of Zone 2. Its eastern, northern, and southern outer walls have been preserved on a significant elevation of about 2.2 m above the functioning floor level (fig. 2). The Northern Building 1 was originally orientated east–west, and only its eastern façade including the main entrance door is preserved, which consists of the wooden lintel and door found still in situ during our 2012 season. The northern and southern walls have a width of 2.3 and 2.8 m. The eastern exterior façade stretches 9.2 m from north to south and probably more than 12 m at its base, which has not been reached yet. On the three sides of this massive building, the façade presents a fairly steep slope (fig. 9). Northern Building 1 was founded directly on the natural Nile sand deposits and therefore constitutes the very first planned installation here, clearly of an official nature, but this needs to be further clarified in more detail.

In 2014, a trench was dug along the interior of the entrance in order to reach the corresponding floor level, which is situated 1.8 m below the lintel. This permitted us to observe a system of an entry room in the southeast corner that led to two rooms to the west and the north. The massive trash layers that had covered the small entrance space seems to have filled up quickly with debris containing not only late Fifth Dynasty and early Sixth Dynasty pottery but also pieces of copper slag and crucible fragments covered with green copper splashes attesting to metallurgical activity in the area even after the abandonment of the structure. These pieces of copper ore and slag will be further analyzed next

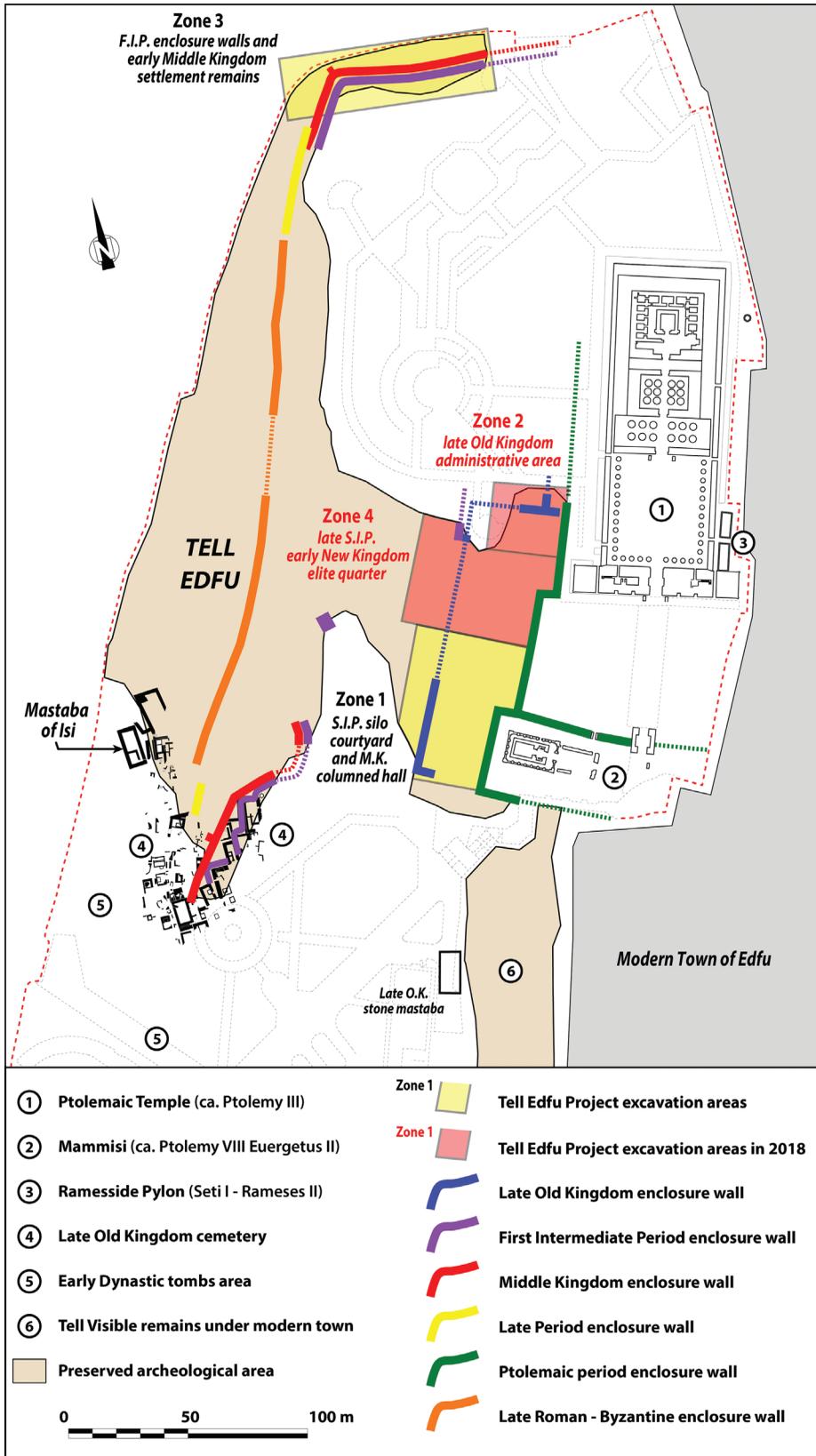


Figure 1. Schematic plan of Tell Edfu showing excavation areas, main monuments and sections of enclosure walls. Plan: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.



TOP: Figure 2. General view of the central part of Zone 2 with the large Northern Building 1 (end of the Fifth Dynasty) emerging from later occupation levels. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. BOTTOM: Figure 3. Bakery level in situ with several complete late Fifth Dynasty bread molds. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

season in order to determine its chemical components with the aim to trace their origin of extraction, most likely from the Eastern Desert. In addition, numerous sealings were excavated in association with the first buildings in this area, many of which are marked by a cylinder-seal impression naming the Horus name in a *serekh* of King Djedkare-Isesi, *Djed-Khaw*, the penultimate ruler of the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2375–2350 BC; fig. 7). Therefore, the first buildings in Zone 2, including Northern Building 1, can be dated exclusively to the late Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2400–2300 BC), which has close parallels to the larger installation at the town of Elephantine (modern Aswan), in the First Cataract region.

During the excavations in the fall 2016 season, a 1 m thick perimeter wall (W 1210) that is located to the south of Northern Building 1 was excavated, once again built directly on natural sand deposits. This well-built wall also has faces with a slight slope and runs east–west for about 12.5 m along the southern side of the Building 1. It is then linked on the east to a second wall of identical dimensions (W 1170 - W 1256), which runs north–south. These two long walls were used as a delimitation for a very large space that covers an open area of at least 100 sq. m on the eastern side of Northern Building 1 and functioned as a vast courtyard (fig. 2). The excavation of this outer zone that occupies most of the central part of Zone 2 was the focus of this season’s excavations. Many traces of fireplaces have been discovered on the thick floor layer of this open space, and the mud-floor itself consists of at least four phases attesting to a long period of use. An important quantity of copper ore, crushed slags, fragments of crucibles, and small balls of pure copper embedded in thick layers of charcoals and ashes attest to the extensive transformation of this metal in this area (fig. 8). The processing of copper in particular during the Old Kingdom was almost exclusively conducted under the supervision of official institutions, and the exploitation of this kind of raw material was mainly organized by the central state under the charge of a high official personage sent by the king.

To the east, we excavated a series of well-built walls that probably mark the original entrance into this courtyard (fig. 2). It is noteworthy that there was no direct access to the building, but the entrance is built in the typical kind of “barrier” fashion, where no direct view into the interior is possible from the outside. The excavation of trash layers that had accumulated on the floor level in this entrance room contain a few official clay sealings naming King Djedkare Isesi and also Nyuserre, an earlier king of the Fifth Dynasty. The latest, for the first time attested in this area of Tell Edfu, can be considered now as the king behind the founding of the ex nihilo complex at Zone 2.

After the abandonment of the building and its courtyard, a large amount of trash accumulated on top of the floor, with a large quantity of broken pottery and regular activities of baking (fig. 3).

The central part of the large courtyard of the Northern Building 1 is still marked for the moment by a series of small domestic later courtyards (fig. 2) that date back to the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty and that will be excavated next season with the aim to reach the original floor levels of the courtyard that are contemporary to the functioning of our massive building.

THE EARLY NEW KINGDOM SETTLEMENT AREA, ZONE 4 (NORTHERN EXTENSION OF ZONE 1)

This season, a second part of the Tell Edfu Project fieldwork was concentrated on the upper part of the tell on Zone 4 (fig. 1), and a new excavation area opened immediately to the north of the previously excavated Zone 1, marked by a large silo courtyard of the late Second Intermediate Period. This new trench was under the supervision of Emilie Sarrazin, PhD candidate in Egyptian archaeology, NELC Department of the University of Chicago.

The first few weeks of the season were devoted to the proper recording of structures totally or partially excavated by the French missions of the IFAO conducted by Maurice Alliot, who had



worked in this area during two seasons in 1932 and 1933. Due to the excavation methods of the time, these upper remains consisted mainly of mudbrick walls disconnected from their original floors and stratigraphy (fig. 11). All structures were photographed, described, mapped using the total station, and modeled using photogrammetry in order to produce a 3-D model and orthophotographic views.

In these upper levels, at least three different phases of constructions could be identified. The latest phase (Phase 1) identified here was only represented by four disconnected walls, built on top of two structures belonging to the preceding phase (Phase 2). According to the brick sizes and several walls previously excavated in Zone 1, those top walls can be dated to the early Ptolemaic period (ca. 300–150 BC) and are contemporaneous with the construction of the vast temple of Horus, which still stands to the east of the settlement. Thanks to the presence of these Phase 1 walls, some of the stratigraphic remains below were left undisturbed by the 1930s excavations, providing us with some critical information about the Phase 2 buildings.

Phase 2 could be, for now, summarily dated to the Late Period, and most of the pottery material seems to correspond to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (ca. 750–650 BC). A great discovery from this phase was a reused sandstone column, 1.6 m high, with a vertical line of hieroglyphic texts inscribed on it. It seems that this column belonged to an earlier context dating to the early New Kingdom and was then re-plastered and reused in another building before being discarded here (fig. 11). The original inscription on the column mentions a certain Amenmose, high priest in the temple of Horus at Edfu, and his wife, the lady of the house, Meret-Ger, which probably dates to the early Eighteenth Dynasty according to the paleography.



LEFT: Figure 4. Professor Nadine Moeller, director of the Tell Edfu Project, and NELC graduate student “Rebecca” Ziting Wang holding complete bread molds. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. MIDDLE: Figure 5. Old Kingdom pottery specialist Katarina Arias Kytarová, PhD (Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University, Prague) recording a set of beer jars in situ. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. RIGHT: Figure 6. Archaeozoologist and NELC PhD candidate Sasha Rohret. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. INSET (RIGHT): Figure 7. Clay sealings showing the *serekh* and cartouche of King Djedkare-Isesi in addition to the *sementiu* sign. Photo: H. McDonald, Tell Edfu Project.



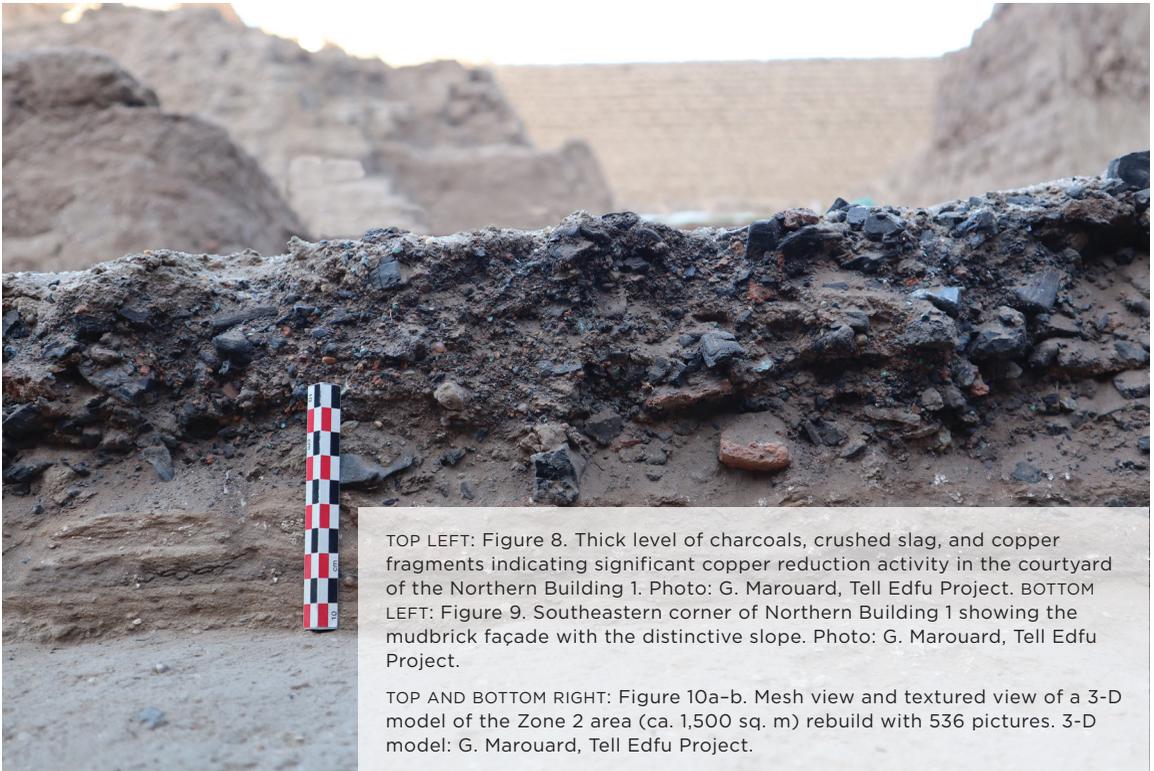
Phase 4 is characterized by an important building complex (fig. 12). This mudbrick structure was leveled shortly after its abandonment and buried under thick layers of stratified trash deposits (Phase 3) dating, according to the preliminary analysis of the pottery and several inscribed documents, to the first half of the New Kingdom, at least to the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmosid period, ca. 1500–1400 BC).

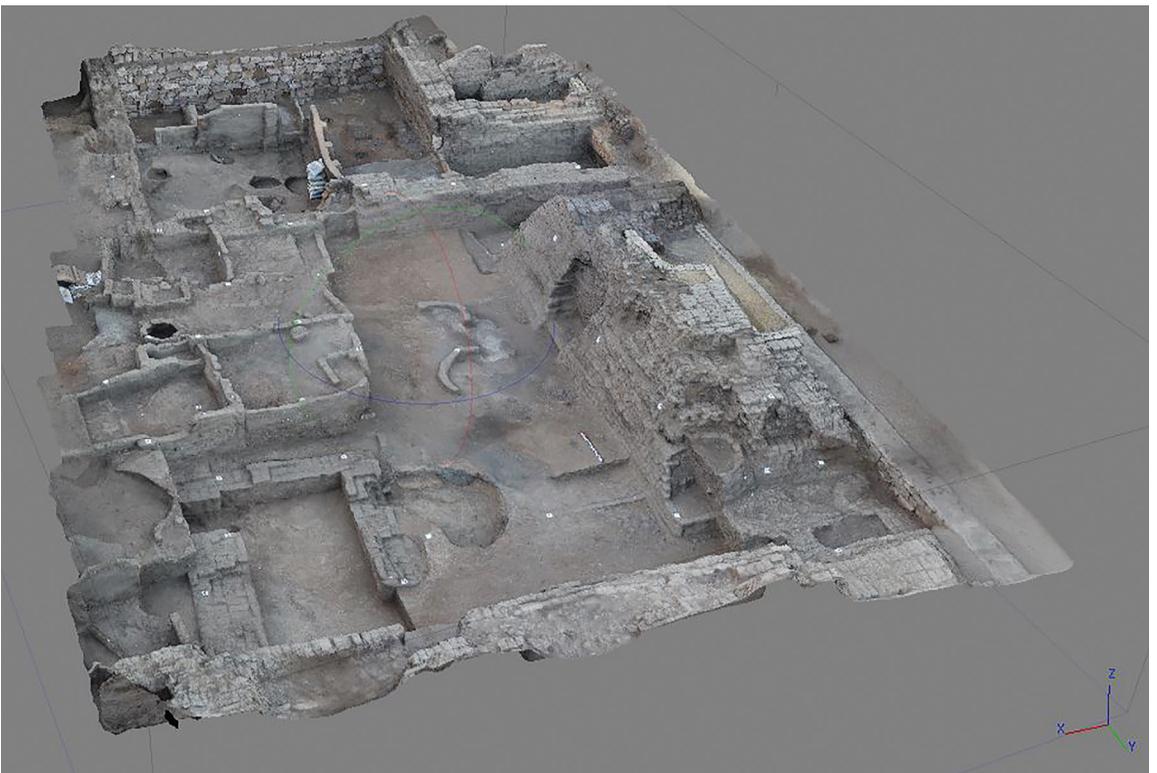
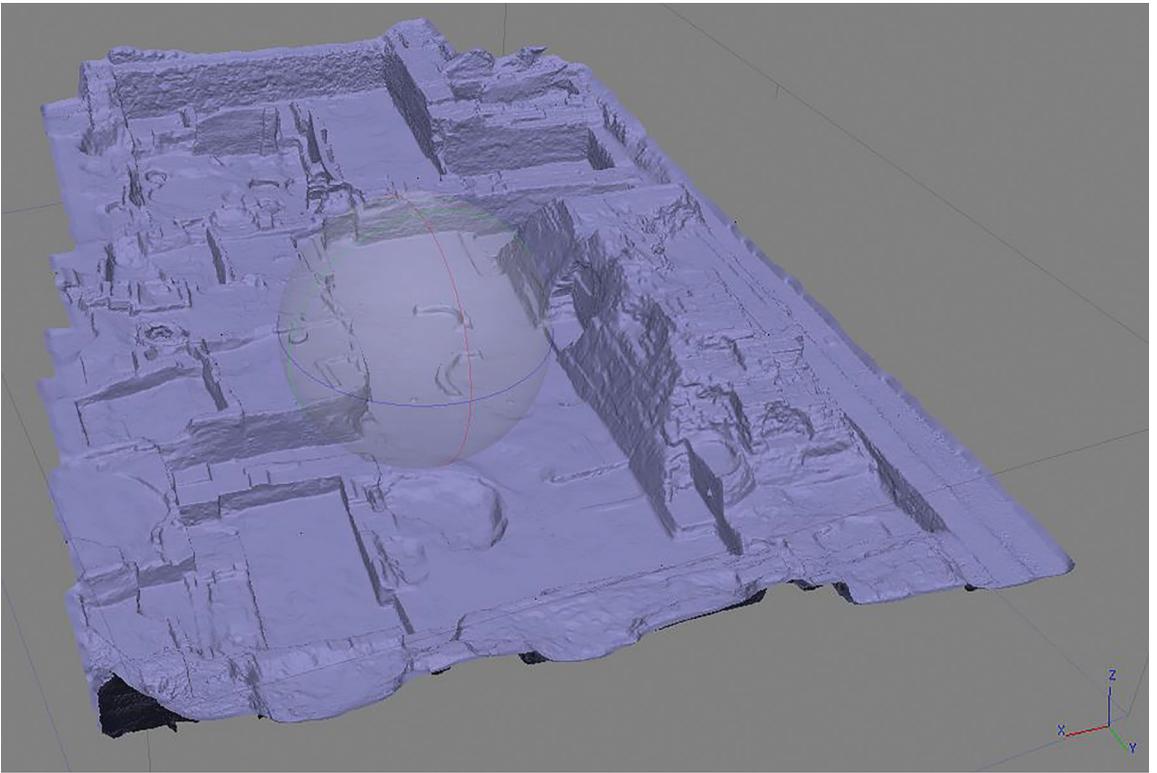
Due to the material found inside this large building and its stratigraphic position and relation with the late Second Intermediate Period silo courtyard (Zone 1), all evidence suggest that this complex belongs to the very end of the Seventeenth Dynasty and was still in use during the earliest reigns (Ahmose–Thutmose I) of the Eighteenth Dynasty, circa 1550–1500 BC.

This large building was not fully excavated, but five rooms were exposed this year in addition to the two rooms and a large columned courtyard previously investigated in 2015 (see OI Annual Report 2015–16, pp. 153–55). At this point, the exposed complex is measuring at least 26 ×

21 m in size, covering over 500 sq. m. If the northern façade and the main entrance is known, its eastern and western limits need to be found next season.

Its monumental size, domestic components, and associated finds suggest that it once was a large urban villa for an important family of the local elite living in Edfu. It is characterized by a large central hall with six columns and a large entrance marked by a stone threshold still in situ (fig. 19) that shows the pivot sockets for a two-winged door, and traces of two massive door jambs were found on its northern side. None of the column and column bases have been preserved; only the holes remain visible, as they were removed in ancient times, probably very shortly after the abandonment of the villa (fig. 12). The private rooms of this large house are arranged around the six-columned hall that









TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): Figure 11. Ongoing excavation of the Late Period remains (Twenty-fifth Dynasty) in the newly opened area at Zone 4 (northern extension of Zone 1). Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. TOP RIGHT: Figure 12. General view of the late S.I.P.-early New Kingdom elite villa with its central six-column hall and a private ancestors' shrine. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. Figure 13. Limestone ancestor bust found in situ on the floor of the private sanctuary. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. SECOND ROW RIGHT: Figure 14. Diorite seated statue of the "Scribe of the Nome," named *Iuf*, discovered on the floor of the ancestors' shrine. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

SECOND ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT): Figure 15. NELC PhD candidate Emilie Sarrazin removing the seated statue of *Iuf*. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. Figure 16 (CENTERFOLD). General view of the early New Kingdom ancestors' shrine after excavation. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

Figure 17. Ongoing excavation in the northern part of the main six-column hall of the urban villa. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project

THIRD ROW: Figure 18. Dr. Grégory Marouard, Tell Edfu Project codirector, photographing the villa with an extensible carbon fiber pole in order to build a photogrammetric 3-D model. Photo: E. Sarrazin, Tell Edfu Project.

BOTTOM ROW: Figure 19. Photogrammetric 3-D model showing the large urban villa, from the north. 3-D model: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.



LEFT: Figure 20. New protective mudbrick wall constructed on the eastern side of the Ptolemaic enclosure wall. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

OPPOSITE: Figure 21. Middle and New Kingdom pottery specialist Natasha Ayers, PhD (postdoc, Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Austrian Academy of Sciences), studying ceramics from Zone 1 area. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.

occupies the center. On the southern side and in the north–south axis of the columned hall, another small two-columned room could be accessed. A smaller entrance to the private rooms on the eastern side is also marked by a doorway that once was made with two fine limestone door jambs of which only small traces are preserved, which show a few incised lines from an inscription. However, some inscribed pieces of these doorjambs were found throughout the room, and further excavations next season will probably reveal more of them.

The most important finds from this building this season came from a small structure built in the northeastern corner of this central six-columned hall (fig. 16). This structure, slightly elevated, contains all the elements of a private domestic shrine, which was dedicated to the worship of the family ancestors. Among the most remarkable objects found within or in proximity to this sanctuary are an ancestor bust (fig. 13), an inscribed statue of a seated scribe (figs. 14, 15), and three inscribed stelae made of limestone, sandstone, and wood, respectively, as well as a several big blue faience beads. The small limestone bust (fig. 13) shows a lady wearing a long tripartite wig and a *wesekh* necklace. Traces of black paint have been recognized on the wig as well as traces of red on her ears and the necklace. It measures 20 cm in height. The best parallels for such an ancestor bust come from Deir el-Medineh, where those ancestor busts have been associated with wall niches and date to the Nineteenth Dynasty. However, the facial features of this bust show characteristics of the early Eighteenth Dynasty and can therefore be considered the earliest example found so far in a sealed archaeological context. It was also found close to the wall and might have fallen from a niche set into this wall.

The small diorite statue of a seated scribe (fig. 14) shows a man wearing a shoulder-length wig and a long kilt. The statue measures 25 cm in height. He holds a papyrus roll in his left hand, and the right had is stretched flat on his knee. The inscriptions on this kilt and the sides and back of his chair mention his names and titles: he was called *Iuf* (*Jwf*) and he held the title of “scribe of the nome of Edfu” (*sš Wts-Ḥr*). On the left side of his seat, the name of his wife has been inscribed. She was called Hori and holds the title of the “lady of the house” (*nb.t-pr*). On the right side of the seat, we find the inscription naming his father, also called *Iuf*, who held the title of “judge” (*s3b*). The usual offering formula is mentioned on the back in addition to the name of his mother, *N3j*. It is very clear from these names and titles that *Iuf* belonged to an important elite family of Edfu. The stylistic features of the face, with his large ears and wig, are reminiscent of the late Middle Kingdom, but the facial features like the eyes and his mouth are typical for the early Eighteenth Dynasty, prior to the reign of Thutmose I.

A small limestone stela measuring 32 cm in height was also found within the context of this small shrine. It shows a man and a woman standing, in raised relief in center. Their faces and some of the lower parts of the inscriptions, where their names would have stood, have been hacked out, most likely deliberately, in ancient times. The hieroglyphic text that surrounds the couple includes the usual offering formula invoking the goddess Isis-Renenutet, who is most famous for the Theban region. The man holds the title of “mayor” (*ḥ3ty-c*) and “overseer of priests” (*jmj-rc ḥmw-ntr*), as far as his name can be reconstructed at this point, was probably *Hor-Nakht*. The woman holds the title of “noble woman” (*jrj.t-pc.t*), and her name is very badly destroyed but might be reconstructed as *Nefer-Webenes*. This unusual piece clearly shows members of the family who once lived in this large house.

Pieces of a broken sandstone stela with traces of paint were also excavated, but it is incomplete, preserving only parts of the offering formula. A small wooden stela with traces of paint was also excavated, but because of its fragile state has not yet been cleaned. It needs to be treated by conservation first, which we are aiming to do next season with the help of a conservator.

The architecture of the shrine, with two small mudbrick pedestals (fig. 16), a hearth, and possible offering tables, still remains to be further excavated. Only very few parallels have ever been found in Egypt of such domestic shrines, the most famous examples coming from the workmen’s village at Deir el-Medineh, which was excavated more than eighty years ago. The size of this large villa as well as the elements found within it suggest that it belongs to an elite context and was probably part of several larger villas that formed a distinct elite quarter at the ancient town of Edfu dating to the very beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty.





SITE-MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

This year, several operations were engaged in order to support the site management of the Edfu temple area. We were able to replace a section of a wall constructed about fifteen years ago, when the new visitor-center complex was built at Edfu, as it was about to collapse on the path of the tourist pathway. This new protective wall has been constructed on the east side of the Ptolemaic enclosure wall (fig. 20). About forty-five thousand mudbricks were used in order to constitute a strong support for the antique wall behind it and to ensure the safety of the visitors. The red sand in the entire area and around the blockyard built by the Tell Edfu Project in 2012 was also renewed. Several lamps used for night lighting of the site were replaced by new energy-efficient LED lights near the excavation area of the Tell Edfu Project.

CERAMIC ANALYSIS

Again this season Katarina Arias Kytarová, PhD,—an expert on the pottery from the Old Kingdom, a member of the Czech Institute of Egyptology at the Charles University in Prague, and a member of their excavation project at Abusir—continued to process a large part of the pottery discovered in the Zone 2 excavations this season (fig. 5). She is comparing the pottery found in Edfu to the ceramic vessels excavated at Abusir dating to the same period.



LEFT: Figure 22. Nubian pottery specialist Aaron De Souza, PhD (postdoc, Austrian Academy of Sciences), drawing a complete bowl from Zone 2. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project, Tell Edfu Project. MIDDLE: Figure 23. Small-finds artist Camille Lemoine drawing a small bull figurine made of molded clay. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project. RIGHT: Figure 24. New Tell Edfu Project member, NELC graduate student Raghda “Didi” El-Behaedi, using a total station on Zone 4 area. Photo: E. Sarrazin, Tell Edfu Project.

Natasha Ayers, PhD, University of Chicago, resumed her work on the Egyptian pottery material (fig. 21) from the latest phases of the Zone 1 area, which date to the late Second Intermediate Period and the early New Kingdom. Aaron de Souza, PhD, from the Macquarie University, Sydney, continued his study of the Nubian and C-Group pottery material excavated during the previous seasons in Zone 1. He also studied numerous new pieces of Nubian A-Group and possible Eastern Desert ware pottery from late Old Kingdom found in Zone 2 (fig. 22). The presence of these ceramics, especially in the contexts presented above and dated to the reign of King Djedkare-Isesi, highlights possible contacts and exchanges with the populations from Eastern Desert regions, which is expected in the context of the mining expeditions sent from Edfu to extract raw materials, foremost copper.

FAUNAL ANALYSIS

This year’s study of faunal remains (animal bones) at Tell Edfu by Sasha Rohret continued the work from the last two seasons, focusing on the Old Kingdom contexts from past and present excavations in Zone 2 (fig. 6). The analysis of this material will be part of a wider comparative study with Dendara and with other Old Kingdom sites with signs of administrative activity. This year over six hundred animal bones were identified and recorded, taking note of signs of burning, butchery, carnivore and rodent gnawing, and other modifications to the bones before and after deposition. These modifications, as well as measurements of complete and/or diagnostic elements, were recorded and photographed. The greatest proportion of bones comes from sheep and goat, followed by cattle. While more

pig remains were found in the contexts excavated last season, there is still a noticeable difference in their relative proportion compared with other domesticates. This would suggest a lack of a household-level economic structure concerning animal husbandry (pig rearing is often associated with a more individualistic production strategy). These trends would appear to support the interpretation of the area as an administrative center in Zone 2, as the animals most common in the collection are easily incorporated into a regional provisioning model. As in previous seasons, hippopotamus remains have been found in numerous contexts from the Old Kingdom area of the site, and like last year, they appear to be juveniles. A modest quantity of Nile fish species is present in the collection as well, but do not compose a large proportion of the remains. Future work will continue the process of collecting data and analyzing the faunal remains from Zone 2, and will provide more insight into the possible production strategies and uses for different species at Tell Edfu during the Old Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The directors and entire Tell Edfu team would like to thank the Edfu inspectorate for their help and collaboration this year, especially Chief Inspector Susi Samir Labib. We would also express our gratitude to Mohamed Abd el-Moneim, general director of Aswan Inspectorate. We also express our gratitude to Mary Sadek (ARCE Cairo office) for her help with the paperwork and MoA-related matters. This 2018 campaign was funded with the support of the Oriental Institute and its director, Chris Woods, and the FIRE fund for Innovation in Research in Egypt.



Figure 25. Tell Edfu Project 2018 team. Photo: G. Marouard, Tell Edfu Project.