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Hosted by Macquarie University



Centre for
Ancient
Cultural
Heritage and
Environment

Program (subject to change)

Session 1 (2 hours)

08:00 London; 09:00 Cairo; 10:00 Jerusalem/Beirut/Amman; 17:00 Sydney

07:00 GMT Welcome and Introductions (Dr Karin Sowada, ARC Future Fellow, Macquarie University)

07:10 GMT *Social History of Cultural Interaction from Non-Elite Context: Paleoethnobotanical and Isotopic Evidence*

Amr Khalaf Shahat (University of California, Los Angeles)

07:30 GMT *Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Copper in Egypt: Latest Data, Open Questions*

Martin Odler (Charles University, Prague), Jiří Kmošek (Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna), Marek Fikrle (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), Yulia V. Erban Kochergina (Czech Geological Survey)

07:50 GMT *'There's No Place Like Home'? Travels, Travelers, and Tropes from the Old to the Middle Kingdom*

Anna-Latifa Mourad (Macquarie University)

08:10 GMT *Tales of Destruction and Disaster: The End of Third Millennium BC in the Central and Northern Levant and its Regional Impact*

Melissa Kennedy (The University of Western Australia)

08:30 GMT Discussion (30 mins)

Break (1 hour)

10:00 London; 11:00 Cairo; 12:00 Jerusalem/Beirut/Amman; 19:00 Sydney

Session 2 (2 hours)

11:00 London; 12:00 Cairo; 13:00 Jerusalem/Beirut/Amman; 20:00 Sydney

10:00 GMT *Imported Combed Ware from the Abydos Tombs of Weni the Elder and His Family*

Christian Knoblauch (Swansea University, Wales & University of Michigan Middle Cemetery Project) and Karin Sowada (Macquarie University)

10:20 GMT *There and Back Again: A Preliminary Discussion about the Presence of Imported Artefacts in Elite Tombs of the Egyptian Early Dynastic Period*

Olivier P. Rochecouste (Macquarie University)

10:40 GMT *Multi-Proxy Residue Analysis of Levantine Combed Vessels from the Early Old Kingdom Giza*

Sophia Aharonovich (Macquarie University), Ailish Schneider (University of Sydney), and Karin Sowada (Macquarie University)

11:00 GMT *The Xkr nswt and the Role of Luxuria in Egyptian Diplomacy in the Levant during the Late Old Kingdom*

Andres Diego Espinel (CCHS CSIC)

11:20 GMT Discussion (30 mins)

Abstracts

Social History of Cultural Interaction from Non-Elite Context: Paleoethnobotanical and Isotopic Evidence

Amr Khalaf Shahat

University of California, Los Angeles

The study of cultural interaction between Egypt and other cultures in the Near East and East Mediterranean has been of increasing interest to archaeologists. Meanwhile, the main reliance on textual and iconographic evidence from Egypt has a caveat that is limiting our understanding to elite contexts. Cultural interactions from non-elite contexts (settlements and graves), where textual, iconographic, and lavish material cultures are limited, continues to be less understood, especially in the predynastic. This study presents unpublished datasets of ancient archaeobotanical food remains from the predynastic site of Nag ed Deir and the New Kingdom site of Deir el Ballas in Egypt to address diachronic and regional variation in Egyptian history of cultural interaction. This research also presents a new application of interdisciplinary methods combining stable isotope and nano-archaeology on ancient desiccated botanical remains to answer questions on cultural interaction from the lens of food as an active agent in the formation of society, economy, and cross-regional relationships. The data will also help future research applying stable isotope in Egyptian archaeology by providing an isotopic baseline for the reconstruction of diet and environmental history. The goal is to contribute to the broader social history of Egyptian cultural interactions with the ancient Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, specifically from under-researched non-elite contexts.

Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Copper in Egypt: Latest Data, Open Questions

Martin Odler

Charles University, Prague

Jiří Kmošek

Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna

Marek Fikrle

Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

Yulia V. Erban Kochergina

Czech Geological Survey

Recent years have brought to light the first substantial corpora of data on the provenance of ancient Egyptian copper of the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods (Kmošek et al. 2018; Odler and Kmošek 2020; Rademakers et al. 2018). Besides establishing Sinai and the Eastern Desert as the major sources of copper in ancient Egypt at this time, the corpora also opened new questions, commented upon already by Ben-Yosef 2018. We would like to frame these datasets into the wider context of the statistical population (i.e. total counts) of all known Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom copper artefacts, and the limited subset of data already analysed (and data published on the ore sources), raising the question of the statistical representativeness of the available information. Some published and unpublished case studies of particular artefacts will clarify our main argument: currently, a patchwork of data is available, representing a few odd pieces of a giant mosaic. Although the systems of the Early Bronze Age were scaled down in comparison to the trade and exchange systems of the Late Bronze Age, supra-regional exchange of precious materials must have existed already in fourth millennium BC, including metals. Application of the techniques of natural sciences is vital in uncovering these “invisible connections”, especially in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age, specifically as detailed sources such as the Amarna Letters or the annals of Amenemhat II are lacking. The possibilities and limits of the natural sciences on the one side, and on the other the limitations of the historical and archaeological evidence, must be realized and accounted for in truly interdisciplinary research.

Ben-Yosef, Erez. 2018. “Provenancing Egyptian Metals: A Methodological Comment.” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 96: 208–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2018.06.001>.

Kmošek, Jiří, Martin Odler, Marek Fikrle, and Yulia V. Kochergina. 2018. “Invisible Connections. Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Egyptian Metalwork in the Egyptian Museum of Leipzig University.” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 96: 191–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2018.04.004>.

Odler, Martin, and Jiří Kmošek. 2020. *Invisible Connections: An Archaeometallurgical Analysis of the Bronze Age Metalwork from the Egyptian Museum of the University of Leipzig. With Chapters by Katarína Arias, Veronika Dulíková, Lucie Jirásková*. Archaeopress Egyptology 31. Oxford: Archaeopress.

Rademakers, Frederik W., Georges Verly, Luc Delvaux, and Patrick Degryse. 2018. “Copper for the Afterlife in Predynastic to Old Kingdom Egypt: Provenance Characterization by Chemical and Lead Isotope Analysis (RMAH Collection, Belgium).” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 96: 175–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jas.2018.04.005>.

**‘There’s No Place Like Home’?
Travels, Travelers, and Tropes from the Old to the Middle Kingdom**

Anna-Latifa Mourad
Macquarie University

The Tale of Sinuhe is one of the most frequently attested pieces of literature that has survived from the Pharaonic Period. Its exploration of Sinuhe’s encounters with courtly affairs, border crossers, and Levantine lands and peoples, has been well-studied. However, how novel was the tale in its representation of travel to the northeast? This paper focuses on travel and travelers, as mainly preserved in Old to Middle Kingdom textual material relating to Egyptian-Near Eastern relations. Examining similarities and differences across time, it questions whether Old Kingdom transregional agents and activities, as well as their representations, influenced the emergence of tropes on border transgression and foreign entities. It further discusses how periods of increased connectivity may have impacted concepts of travel, distance, geography, and cross-border social relations, and whether such concepts were temporally transmitted in spite of the political shifts in Egypt from the late 3rd to the early 2nd Millennium BCE.

**Tales of Destruction and Disaster:
The End of Third Millennium BC in the Central and Northern Levant and its Regional
Impact**

Melissa Kennedy
The University of Western Australia

Scholars have frequently described the end of the 3rd millennium BC as an era of ‘collapse’ and settlement disruption. In the southern Levant, this horizon is distinguished by the disintegration of the walled-town culture of the Early Bronze Age II–III (ca. 3200–2600/2500 BCE) and a return to small-scale ruralism during the Early Bronze Age IV (ca. 2600/2500–2000 BCE). Whilst in the northern Levant settlement continued relatively unchanged. A variety of differing hypotheses have been posited to account for these changes—with aridification, earthquake and population movements all cited to account for the decline of the southern Levantine Early Bronze Age. This paper will focus on the destructions of settlements in the central and northern Levant (the Lebanese coast and western inland Syria) at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, exploring the potential causes, as well as the wider regional impact these destructions had on the surrounding regions, such as Egypt and the southern Levant.

Imported Combed Ware from the Abydos Tombs of Weni the Elder and His Family

Christian Knoblauch

Swansea University, Wales & University of Michigan Middle Cemetery Project

Karin Sowada

Macquarie University

A 2010 article reported on a corpus of supposedly imported Combed Ware vessels found in contexts of the late Fifth and Sixth Dynasties in the Abydos Middle Cemetery. At the time, apart from some unique finds from sites like Elephantine, Edfu and Meydum, the 11 vessels described in that paper were the largest group of Combed Ware vessels of this date found outside the Memphite region, increasing by approximately one-third the total number of true imports recorded from Egypt for this period. In the decade since the publication, a number of important new studies on Combed Ware in both Levantine and Egyptian contexts have appeared. At the same time, work on the Abydos material has continued and the corpus has grown to more than 20 vessels. The current paper evaluates the Abydos corpus in light of this new work with the goal of identifying the likely origin of the vessels, Combed ware workshop traditions, and the nature of late Old Kingdom foreign relations at the end of the Early Bronze Age.

**There and Back Again:
A Preliminary Discussion about the Presence of Imported Artefacts in Elite Tombs of the
Egyptian Early Dynastic Period**

Olivier P. Rocheouste
Macquarie University

For over 4000 years, ancient Egypt has conveyed its ability to conduct and maintain foreign relations with a variety of cultural groups based within the Fertile Crescent, Arabia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean regions. Evidence of these relations have been known from textual sources such as the Palermo Stone recounting maritime trade with Lebanon and pictorial reliefs depicting representations of expeditions to Punt within Hatshepsut's funerary temple of Deir el-Bahari. However, questions have been asked as to how these relations originated, how they transformed Egypt's social complexity and benefited its people, especially during the Early Dynastic period (c. 3100-2700 BCE) when the first royal rulers emerged to commence the age of Dynastic Egypt.

Information about Egypt's foreign relations and understanding how foreign trade was conducted during this time is limited, but the information we have mostly comes from the study of imported artefacts from Egyptian tombs, especially the royal tombs within the Umm el-Qa'ab cemetery at Abydos. These artefacts come in the form of pottery, stone vessels and semi-precious stones like lapis lazuli, which have been sourced from faraway lands. However, such items are not exclusive to the royal tombs and have been found amongst First Dynasty dated elite tombs in Tell el-Farkha, Saqqara, Helwan and Abu Rawash.

This presentation will discuss what the presence of these artefacts signified for elite and/or non-royal tomb owners during the Early Dynastic period, and how tomb owners may have acquired such foreign provisions. Did they acquire them through the royal administration or through independent means? These are important questions to ask, especially given that an apparent quantitative decline in foreign mortuary objects is noticed amongst elite tomb assemblages from the 2nd Dynasty onwards. On the other hand, royal tombs gain more notoriety in their mortuary provisions, culminating in the construction of the Step Pyramid of Djoser of the 3rd Dynasty.

Multi-Proxy Residue Analysis of Levantine Combed Vessels from the Early Old Kingdom

Sophia Aharonovich
Macquarie University

Ailish Schneider
University of Sydney

Karin Sowada
Macquarie University

Flat-based ceramic jars with vertical loop handles and a 'combed' exterior surface, are a well-known type associated with Levantine commodity exchange (Thalmann, Sowada 2014). Based on petrographic results from samples of 4th Dynasty Combed jars from Giza, Sowada, Ownby & Wodzinska (2019) concluded that the vessels originated in the Byblos region. The jars probably arrived in Egypt from Byblos by maritime trade routes (Sowada 2009). However, the original commodities transported to Egypt from the Levant are not known with certainty. In this paper, we present preliminary results of multi-proxy analysis of organic and botanical residues from the jars sampled in the petrographic study.

Ten sherds from different vessels were analysed in Macquarie University laboratories. To detect and identify pollen grains, diatoms, and phytoliths, we utilized Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) images. For residue analysis, we used Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS). In six sherds we did not detect traces of botanical residue using SEM images. Four other samples suggest the presence of *Olea Europaea* (Olive), *Ziziphus* sp. (Jujube), and *Salvia Sativa* (Sage) pollen grains. The data also show detectable levels of various *n*-alkanes and fatty acids, indicating that the major source of the organic residue derives from plant origins.

Sowada, K., 2009. *Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Old Kingdom: An archaeological perspective*. Saint-Paul.

Sowada, K., Ownby, M., Wodzińska, A., 2019. The petrography of imported Levantine Combed vessels from early Old Kingdom Giza. *Levant*, 1-18. doi.org/10.1080/00758914.2019.1664197

Thalmann, J.-P., Sowada, K., 2014. Levantine "combed ware", *Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean: ARCANE Interregional Vol. I: Ceramics*. Brepols, 355-378.

The *Xkr nswt* and the Role of *Luxuria* in Egyptian Diplomacy in the Levant during the Late Old Kingdom

Andres Diego Espinel
CCHS CSIC

The aim of this paper is to offer a new interpretation of the Egyptian term *Xkr-nswt*, proposing its connection to Egyptian diplomatic practices in the Levant. This expression, usually translated as “royal ornaments” or “royal insignia”, seems to refer more precisely to both the most precious items intended for the royal consumption and the institution devoted to their elaboration, management and keeping. Prosopographical evidence indicates that the *Xkr-nswt* was tightly connected to the Egyptian Treasury (*pr-HD*) and was related to either *exotica* collected in foreign regions or *luxuria* crafted in/for the royal palace, as is the case of some textiles, gold jewels or unguents.

Maria Giovanna Biga’s recent identification of the toponym *Dugurasu* with Egypt in some Eblaite tablets offers new insights on the diplomatic and trading connections between Egypt and its Levantine neighbours during the late Old Kingdom (6th Dynasty). According to data from the Ebla state archive, different products were sent by the court of *Dugurasu*/Egypt to Ebla as payment and/or recognition of the giving by Ebla of materials such as lapis lazuli and tin, among others. The bulk of the Egyptian gifts comprised some of the main items that formed the *Xkr-nswt*: textiles, gold and other luxury materials (e.g. semi-precious stones).

Considering the Eblaite data connected to the products given by *Dugurasu*/Egypt and other pieces of evidence coming from Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, it is possible to suggest that the main, if not all, diplomatic gifts were managed by the Egyptian State as *Xkr-nswt* items. On the other hand, these gifts fit well within Near Eastern diplomatic practices attested during the 3rd millennium BCE, pointing toward the integration of Egypt into the diplomatic procedures of the region.