

Svenja C. Dirksen and Lena S. Krastel (eds.). 2020. *Epigraphy through five millenia: Texts and images in context* (“Sonderschriften des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo 43”). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. xii + 315. Hardbound. € 98. ISBN 978-3-447-11384-7

The publication to be discussed here offers the contributions of two conferences of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo*, which were organized in the years 2013 und 2016. The volume analyses Egyptian epigraphic monuments whose time frame stretches from the palaeolithic to Islamic times.

In the introduction, the editors introduce the topic. The articles focus on two main theoretical concepts: a) the notion of landscape in the context of the inscriptions and rock pictures, and b) interaction and communication between inscriptions/depictions and their recipients (: x-xi).

Mohamed A. Abd el-Latif Ibrahim (“An archaeological and cultural study of three Islamic sandstone stelae recently discovered on Elephantine Island, Aswan;” 1-12) publishes three fragmentary Islamic sandstone stelae recently unearthed on Elephantine Island, Aswan. Most Islamic funerary stelae dating from the 8th -12th century CE bear a consistent formula that is usually initiated by the Basmalah (: 2). The oldest known engraved Islamic funerary stelae from Egypt can be dated to the year 31 AH/652 CE (: 3). The oldest dated funerary stela from Aswan stems from the year 71 AH/691 CE, being the oldest known documentary evidence for Muslims in Aswan (: 4). The first new stela belongs to a woman, the inscription pointing to a Shiite background (: 7). The stela shows the influence of Shiism already in Abbasid Aswan (: 7). The owner of the second new stela is a man, while the third new stela gives a new phraseology using the expression “the ancient time” (: 8-9).

Linda Borrmann-Dücker (“Men at work. Textless rock inscriptions in the Aswan Area;” 13-32) investigates dynastic rock images in the Aswan area. The motifs of these images are mostly restricted to striding male figures and often resemble depictions accompanying pharaonic rock inscriptions (: 14). The textless rock inscriptions can be found predominantly on the surface of granite rocks situated on the Nile islands, the banks of the Nile and the east bank to the south of modern Aswan (: 15). The main motif and general design of the textless images in Tabyat al-Sheikh can be compared to the representation of inscription owners often accompanying the text tableaux of the area (: 20). Most of the textless images can be observed on surfaces that could easily be reached from ground level or from rock plateaus (: 22). The images of Sehel share with the ones of Tabyat al-Sheikh one or more standing male figures as main motif (: 26). The overwhelming majority of the images from Sehel do not have a direct relationship with the religious function of the island (: 26).

Linda Borrmann-Dücker (“Royal stelae revisited. Neue Überlegungen zu altbekannten Texten;” 33-60) presents four royal stela of the New Kingdom from Aswan. The traces of the transformation on

a stela of Ramsesses II. (ASW/ROY/001) give an impression of the design process of a state monument (: 40). The main text of the southern stela of Amenhotep II (ASW/ROY/005) very clearly sets out the doctrine of Egyptian foreign policy (: 47). The royal stelae in South Aswan may have marked a passage in the fortification wall between Schellal and Assuan (: 57).

Jitse H. F. Dijkstra (“Of fish and vendors. The Khnum Temple Graffiti Project;” 61-72) provides a first overview of the project to record and publish the figural and textual graffiti from the forecourt of the Chnum temple at Elephantine. The graffiti are all incised into the horizontal surface of the pavement (: 63). Half of the graffiti can be dated to the Roman or Christian Period (: 63). The graffiti contain the first attested topos-inscription in Demotic (: 68).

Rebecca Döhl (“Of signs and space. Rock art in Wadi Berber, Aswan;” 73-92) treats rock art in Wadi Berber, Aswan. The initial assessment of the landscape and the distribution of rock art in Wadi Berber demonstrate a special relationship between the geographical setting and the types of rock art or inscription (: 80). The probable hunting scenes and sequential depictions of animals could have served as a graphic memory aid or graphic narrative (: 88).

Jochen Hallof (“Meroitische Inschriften im Gebiet des Ersten Katarakts;” 93-100) reflects upon Meroitic inscriptions in the area of the First Cataract. In Philae, 31 meroitic inscriptions are known (: 94). The most important inscription can be seen in the two royal inscriptions at the Hadrian gate (: 95).

Salima Ikram (“Rock art and the transformation of landscape in the Kharga Oasis;” 101-112) deals with rock art and the transformation of landscape in the Kharga Oasis. In Wadi Bershama depictions of giraffes do not appear, suggesting that the site was probably not actively used prior to the Dynastic Period, when this species vanished from the region (: 102). In Khargan rock art, snakes play an important role (: 106).

Tim Karberg (“The rock art landscape of the Wadi Abu Dom, Northern Sudan;” 113-128) tackles the rock art landscape of the Wadi Abu Dom in the Bayuda Desert of the Sudan. The richest rock art station identified thus far is formed by “Site 29” (: 115). The highest density of rock art turns up in the lower Wadi Abu Dom (: 124).

Adel Kelany (“Epipalaeolithic rock art from the east bank near Aswan. Types, landscape, and meaning;” 129-144) explores Epipalaeolithic rock art from the east bank near Aswan. The Epipalaeolithic rock art appears there at Wadi el-Aqaba el-Saghira and Wadi Abu Subeira (: 131). The Epipalaeolithic rock art sites can be found in the main wadi and in tributary wadis (: 138). In the Epipalaeolithic rock art on the east bank near Aswan, human figures, animals, and geometric patterns are depicted (: 139).

Holger Kockelmann (“The epigraphy of Philae;” 145-156) gives an overview of the categories of epigraphic material found in the temples of Philae.

Tobias Krapf (“Vom Hofpflaster zur dritten Dimension. Der Kontext der Graffiti des Chnumtempelvorhofs von Elephantine;” 157-168) surveys the context of the graffiti in the forecourt of the Chnum temple at Elephantine. Sculptures from the New Kingdom were also used to furnish the Ptolemaic and Roman forecourt (: 158). The sculptural equipment of the temple court indicates its accessibility to laypeople (: 165).

Lena S. Krastel (“Words for the living and the dead. The Coptic inscriptions of Deir Anba Hadra;” 169-194) studies Coptic inscriptions of Deir Anba Hadra. The Coptic inscriptions in the monastery consist of funerary stelae, graffiti and dipinti as well as ostraca (: 176). The first and oldest type of the main formula of the funerary stelae is only dated after the indiction year, while the second type adds a date according to the Era of Diocletian (: 178). In the Coptic epigraphic sources in Deir Anba Hadra, about 300 graffiti and dipinti from the second half of the 10th century onwards are documented (: 179). The oldest dated Coptic inscription in the monastery from the 10th century contains the only reference to the Nubian king Zachari (: 182).

Ewa Laskowska-Kusztal (“Tightrope dancing. Research on religious building decorations on Ptolemaic-Roman Elephantine;” 195-210) describes religious building decorations in Ptolemaic-Roman Elephantine. Fragmentary texts and iconographic motifs confirm the interpretation of the Ptolemaic temple of Satet as a structure dedicated to the returning goddess (: 200).

Ludwig D. Morenz (“Cross-cultural contact reflected in rock-art from Rod el-Air, south-western Sinai;” 211-224) looks for cross-cultural contacts in the rock art from Rod el-Air, south-western Sinai. In Rod el-Air, almost no depictions of kings or gods can be detected (: 211).

Hana Navratilova and Ian Rutherford (“Religion and epigraphy at Elephantine in the Graeco-Roman Period. The case of the deity Neilammon;” 225-234) interpret religion and epigraphy at Elephantine in the Graeco-Roman Period. In the Roman Period, at least four cult complexes were operating at Elephantine (: 226). In graffito I.ThSy 277/G 26 an otherwise unattested deity Neilammon is named (: 229).

Maria Nilsson and John Ward (“Rock art through the ages. Rupestrian memoranda at Gebel el-Silsila;” 235-254) elucidate the stylistic, technical, and chronological variability of pictorial designs at Gebel el-Silsila. On the east bank of Gebel el-Silsila, 22 rock art locations are situated (: 236), while at Gebel el-Silsila West 52 rock art sites exist (: 239). A high number of giraffes is recorded in the predynastic petroglyphs of the west bank (: 241).

Pawel L. Polkowski (“World of images or imaginary world? Rock art, landscape, and agency in the Western Desert of Egypt;” 255-284) sheds light on rock art, landscape, and agency in the Western Desert of Egypt. The largest category of drawings is represented by prehistoric rock art (: 258). The foremost group of figures consists of zoomorphic depictions, the second most common group being anthropomorphs (: 258). In the Ptolemaic-Roman period, the “horned altar” was invented as a new rock art motif (: 260).

Cornelia Römer (“Walking up Hermupolis high street: lost in translation? Script in public spaces of Hellenistic Egypt and beyond;” 285-294) addresses the evidence for script in public spaces in Ptolemaic Egypt, Pompeii and Latin literature. In Ptolemaic times, many villages with a Greek population of a certain percentage possessed a gymnasium, which was allowed in the Roman time only in the metropoleis (: 286-287).

David Sabel (“Who carved first? A methodological approach for analysing the stratigraphy of intersecting and interacting rock art at the ‘resting-place’ of Rod el-Air, south-western Sinai;” 295-315) suggests a methodological approach for analysing two rock art palimpsests at the so-called “Resting Place” of Rod el-Air. In Rod el-Air, marks related to scoring with a sharp-edged tool and marks connected to carving with a chisel and a hammer-like tool can be distinguished (: 300). Rock images that copy other images with altered lines belong in Rod el-Air to the most common forms of compositional interaction (: 305).

The book can be rated positively. In general, the remarks are clear and the details are put forward with the necessary conciseness. I recommend the book to the reader.

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