

# Society and Culture in the Western Desert of Egypt during the Pharaonic Period

**Frederick E Hardtke, BA, BEng.**

**Department of Ancient History, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University**

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## **Abstract**

The Western Desert during the Pharaonic period was a place that witnessed the habitation and incursion of various cultural groups over time. Its aridity and its unique landscape and resources required the cultures associated with it to adapt and adopt social and cultural traits appropriate to this environment and, ultimately, for their survival there. Aside from the environment, the meeting of differing cultures with varying ethnic origins and structures also led to change and adaptation within the respective groups. Of these groups, those emanating from the Nile Valley may be viewed as a "core" group whose influence may be seen across the desert and oases of the region all the way to the present day Libyan border area. In its incursions of the Western Desert this Nile Valley Culture (NVC) encountered other cultures that may be viewed as a "periphery" in relation to the Nile Valley in terms of their geographic distance, social complexity and power. This simple division should not however be taken to imply that the influence was always from the core to the periphery and at times the influence was bidirectional. The level of influence and control that the NVC could exert upon the periphery was affected by distance, the social structure of the peripheral group and the use of cult-based influence as a means of overcoming the physical distance and ensuring a level of symbolic control and order in the areas remote from the Nile Valley.

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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**Frederick E Hardtke**

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## List of Abbreviations

ACACIA	Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa
ASEA	Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte
BACE	Bulletin of the Australian Centre for Egyptology
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
BMSAES	British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan
BSAA	Bulletin de la Société archéologique d'Alexandrie
CRIPPEL	Centre Régional pour l'Intégration des Personnes Etrangères ou d'Origine étrangère de Liège
DOP	Dakhleh Oasis Project
EA	Egyptian Archaeology
FIFAO	Fouilles de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
GJ	Geographical Journal
GM	Göttinger Miszellen
JARCE	Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSSEA	Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities
MDAIK	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo
NVC	Nile Valley Culture
PMMA	Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
SAK	Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur
SCA	Supreme Council of Antiquities
SMC	Sheikh Muftah Culture
ZÄS	Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde



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# Chapter 1

## The Egyptian Western Desert during the Pharaonic Period

### 1.1 Motivations

Classically, the primary focus of Egyptological scholars in studying the Egyptian culture of antiquity has always been on sites spanning the Nile Valley since it is here that the densest concentration of archaeological and epigraphic evidence has always been available. Areas outside the Nile Valley, however, also feature these types of evidence and have the potential of highlighting how the Nile Valley culture changed or adapted to these different environments. This work therefore sets out to explore the relationships of people with the arid environment of what is currently known as the Egyptian Western or Libyan Desert. As such, we are considering that stretch of desert bounded by the Nile Valley to the east, the Mediterranean to the north, Libya to the west and Sudan to the south. The chronological period chosen will follow the Pharaonic Period of Egyptian history, refer Figure 1. The definition of what is meant by the Pharaonic Period can vary between Egyptological scholars. In this work, I have chosen for it to mean the period wherein the Nile Valley was a well established state society, at the start of the Old Kingdom, up to the time of the last native Egyptian ruler. Historically, I have set the end at autumn, 343BC, when the Persian king Artaxerxes II appeared at Pelusium with a large army and defeated the last native ruler Nectanebo II<sup>1</sup>.

The primary question that will be addressed is that of who lived in the Western Desert during the Pharaonic period, and what influences can be observed on these people that can be directly ascribed to this desert environment. In order to address this question, the physical characteristics of the environment will be established and the various known and suspected ethnic groups that spent time in the Western Desert will be described, with the primary focus being on Nile Valley Culture. Having thus established the context of influence (ie. the landscape on the groups and the groups on each other), evidence will be sought for influences in the archaeological remains of the Western Desert. Specifically, the evidence for influence within social and cultural indicators will be sought. Much debate surrounds the terms of society and culture and their separation as concepts within anthropological circles. This work will follow the

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<sup>1</sup> Military conquest of Egypt by the Persians for the last time as described in Diodorus (XVI.46-51).

approach of Kroeber and Parsons<sup>2</sup> who believed that separating cultural from societal aspects does not classify concrete and empirically discrete sets of data, but abstracts two analytically distinct sets of phenomena. Thus, although society and culture might derive from a common source, the analysis will use a social and cultural lens, particularly since the two concepts are also detectable and well represented in archaeological material evidence. This will be achieved through the determination of the influences on the people through the perspectives of their society/social constructs and culture as distinct aspects.

In order to provide a balanced treatise on the cultures in question, a definition of culture provided by Rapoport<sup>3</sup> will be used, where culture can be viewed through the following dimensions:

1. A way of life typical of a group
2. A system of symbols, meanings and schemata transmitted through enculturation
3. A set of adaptive strategies for survival in relation to resources and ecology.

As such, culture will be analysed through the material remains of these symbols and meanings, as for example in traditions and cult practice. Social structure will be examined separately from cultural aspects with an assumption that they are independently variable yet mutually interdependent<sup>4</sup>. In this way culture embraces a framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings and make their judgements, in contrast is the ongoing process of interactive behaviour whose persistent form is called social structure<sup>5</sup>. Social structure and how it is shaped in the Western Desert is a key concern here.

The research questions to be explored will relate to the society and culture of this spatial and chronological demarcation. This entails identifying the range of cultural units that inhabited the Western Desert and examining the lives of these people and how they had adapted to life in extremely arid conditions. In essence, it will examine the relationship between this landscape and the people associated with it.

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<sup>2</sup> A. L. Kroeber and T. Parsons, "The concept of culture and of social system", *American Sociological Review* 23, (1958), pp. 582-583.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rapoport, "Cross-Cultural Aspects of Environmental Design", in I. Altman, A. Rapoport, and J. F. Wohlwill (eds.), *Human Behavior and Environment Volume 4: Environment and Culture*, (New York, 1980), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973), p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

This work will look at who these people were, how they were organised, what they did here and why they lived and spent time here. It will look at how the Western Desert landscape shaped and affected their functional, day-to-day approaches to life as well as their beliefs. It will also look at how the Western Desert was placed and symbolised in their mythologies and cult practice. The chronological dimension chosen means that the bulk of material examined will be related to Nile Valley Culture (from here on referred to as “NVC” to differentiate from other cultures), that is NVC people who lived in or traversed the Western Desert. This creates an interesting point of comparison whereby we ask how did NVC people perceive themselves in this environment and how did they change when they were away from their original home in the Nile Valley. What happened when these NVC people met Western Desert indigenes? Studies of desert societies have provided fertile ground for debates about human adaptability and how societies cope with marginal and precarious environmental circumstances as well as the effects of these environmental conditions on human land-use, mobility and dispersal<sup>6</sup>.

The focus of this work will be upon the sites and archaeological evidence primarily from the Western Desert. Obviously, there is also a plethora of data concerning the Western Desert available from the Nile Valley (primarily textual), which has been given significant coverage in previous works such as that of Lisa Giddy<sup>7</sup>. Since Giddy’s publication of 1987 much more evidence has become available from the desert itself, and I have therefore intentionally focussed on this area as it has been the most dynamic and rich in new sources.

It is hoped that the exploration of these questions will be of interest to a number of disciplines - not only Egyptologists but also disciplines involving the archaeology and anthropology of arid landscapes.

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<sup>6</sup> P. Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock, “Global Deserts in Perspective”, in P. Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock (eds.), *Desert Peoples: Archaeological Perspectives*, (Carlton, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see L. Giddy, *Egyptian Oases Bahariya, Dakhla, Farafra and Kharga during Pharaonic Times*, (Warminster, 1987).

PERIOD	DATES (BC)
<b>Predynastic</b>	5500–3100
<b>Early Dynastic</b>	2900–2545
1st Dynasty	2900–2730
2nd Dynasty	2730–2590
3rd Dynasty	2592–2544
<b>Old Kingdom</b>	2543–2120
4th Dynasty	2543–2436
5th Dynasty	2435–2306
6th Dynasty	2305–2118
7th & 8th Dynasties	2150–2118
<b>First Intermediate Period</b>	2118–1980
9th & 10th Dynasties	2118–1980
<b>Middle Kingdom</b>	2055–1650
11th Dynasty	2080–1940
12th Dynasty	1939–1760
<b>Second Intermediate Period</b>	1759–ca. 1539
13th Dynasty	1759–ca. 1630
14th Dynasty	?
15th Dynasty	?–ca. 1530
16th & 17th Dynasty	?–1540
<b>New Kingdom</b>	1539–1077
18th Dynasty	1539–1292
19th Dynasty	1292–1191
20th Dynasty	1190–1077
<b>Third Intermediate Period</b>	1076–723
21st Dynasty	1076–944
22nd Dynasty	943–ca. 746
23rd Dynasty	730
24th Dynasty	736–723
<b>Late Period</b>	722–332
25th Dynasty	722–ca. 655
26th Dynasty	664–525
27th Dynasty	525–404
28th Dynasty	404–399
29th Dynasty	399–380
30th Dynasty	380–343

**Figure 1 Pharaonic Period Chronological Table<sup>8</sup>**

## 1.2 The Western Desert Culture and Arid Space

Definitions for arid environments are many and varied, frequently employing such terms as “inhospitable”, “barren”, “useless”, “un-vegetated” and “devoid of water” – whatever criteria are used all schemes involve a consideration of moisture availability through the relationship

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from E. Hornung, R. Krauss and D.A. Warburton (Eds), *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* (*Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 1, The Near and Middle East*, 83), (Leiden, 2006), pp. 490–495.

between precipitation and evapo-transpiration<sup>9</sup>. Aridity can be measured in a number of ways, one useful definition is that it represents a moisture deficit under normal climatic conditions where  $P/PET < 0.20$ , that is, where rainfall is less than 20 percent of potential moisture lost through evaporation<sup>10</sup>. Three types of deserts may be defined: semi-arid, arid and hyper arid - with further climatic classifications of hot, mild, cool and cold<sup>11</sup>. Under this classificatory scheme, the Egyptian Western Desert is a hot, hyper-arid desert<sup>12</sup>.

For much of world history arid environments have been places to avoid - where lack of surface water, limited foodstuffs and climatic extremes have made these areas uninhabitable except for resourceful hunter-gatherer and pastoral-nomadic groups<sup>13</sup>. The difficulty of life in the desert is due not only to the scarcity of water and resources - the resources are variable in both space and time where often small parts of the wider landscape – springs, groundwater and discharge zones are keys to utilisation of the region<sup>14</sup>. Deserts are also patchy environments where the required resources are concentrated in patches within the larger, less productive landscape<sup>15</sup>. In addition, as will be seen, archaic state societies such as the NVC during the Pharaonic period, also were able to enter, exploit and/or settle in these areas - this, despite a cultural abhorrence of the deserts as areas representative of death and chaos. Special incentives are required to bring about intensive development of arid areas. This might be the occurrence of minerals - whose exploitation makes it worthwhile to undergo the hardships involved. Mineral exploitation and trade routes are unstable foundations for permanent occupancy in these regions, since a mineral resource may be exhausted or become obsolete or trade routes may shift, with settlements based on these often unstable in the long term such that there is often a swing between a high level of development and complete abandonment, much like gold rush towns<sup>16</sup>. An example of settlements created for the purposes of serving a trade route may be seen in the Nabatean civilisation of the Central Negev where a trade route of 170 to 300 km could not be

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> P. Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Geertz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> P. Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock, *Op. cit.*, Fig. 1.1 and Table 1.4.

<sup>13</sup> D. S. G. Thomas, "Arid environments: their nature and extent" in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> P. Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> D. H. K. Amiran, "Man in Arid Lands I – Endemic Cultures", in E. S. Hills (ed.), *Arid Lands – a Geographical Appraisal*, (London, 1966), p. 223.

operated without a staging and service area roughly half way along<sup>17</sup>. A further example relevant to this sphere of investigation is El Areg oasis (refer Chapter 7).

The nature of oases, located in arid surrounds makes them fundamentally different from settlements in the humid zone where there is a system of other settlements – the oases are marked with isolation and a requirement for self-sufficiency<sup>18</sup>. Often, in history, trade routes were politically controlled by forces on either side of the desert for which it was vital to secure the oases' use as staging points, while trade routes were controlled by nomads meaning that the oasis dwellers were more often than not subject to outside rule<sup>19</sup>.

Oases can also be subject to hardships based on water availability. Springs can dry up or even produce an overabundance of water, as in Siwa oasis, Egypt, where unused water drains into salt lakes, whose water level in turn rises causing harm to nearby cultivation<sup>20</sup>. In either case, the results can be devastating for ecosystems with such a high level of self-sufficiency where not only cultivated crops, but also resources such as fruit trees and palms are affected. In Baharia Oasis, Egypt, for example, over a period of nine years between 1947 and 1956, 32 springs dried up from the original 207, while a spring that previously irrigated 270 acres declined to 11 acres irrigated<sup>21</sup>. This situation added greatly to the poverty of the inhabitants with the result that almost 20% migrated to the Nile Valley<sup>22</sup>. Oasian horticulturalists in general therefore needed to make planned and economic use of fields, which are often small plots, such as in Toconao oasis in the Atacama Desert, Chile, where most plots are 100 m<sup>2</sup> or less<sup>23</sup>. The depression of Baharia is estimated to have a surface area of 2000 km<sup>2</sup> of which the cultivated area is never more than 5% of this area<sup>24</sup>. In the Atacama, the desert hinterland has no appreciable resources, resulting in all productivity being separated in isolated oases and ravines which in turn encourages investment in territoriality and durable infrastructure such as semi-sedentary villages and storage facilities<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> A. Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis*, (Cairo, 1973), p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahriya and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> D. H. K. Amiran, "Man in Arid Lands II – Patterns of Occupance", in E. S. Hills (ed.), *Arid Lands – a Geographical Appraisal*, (London, 1966), p. 240.

<sup>24</sup> Fakhry, *Op.cit.*, (2003), p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> P Veth, M. Smith and P. Hiscock, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.



In Egypt there exist two primary desert systems – the Western Desert and the Eastern Desert. The Eastern Desert has an area of 223 000 square kilometres<sup>26</sup> and consists primarily of a backbone of high mountains running parallel to the Red Sea. Many of the peaks rise to over 1500 metres above sea level<sup>27</sup> and in contrast to the flatter Western Desert; travel is far more restricted often to the extent that travel is only possible in lines of drainage.

The Western Desert covers an area of 681 000 square kilometres<sup>28</sup>, representing one of the most arid regions in the world, with water sources often lying hundreds of kilometres apart. It exhibits the effects of aridity in terms of major aeolian phenomena - deep depressions, large sand seas and extensive yardangs as well as of major climatic changes - ancient lakes, river courses and tufas<sup>29</sup>. The climatic conditions, placement and distance of resources, areas of easy travel and obstacles played a decisive role in determining how people travelled in this region, where they decided to settle and how they expressed themselves socially and culturally.

Viewed from the perspective of being the eastern sector of the North African Sahara, it can be seen that in relation to other Saharan regions, the Western Desert is in a unique geographical position to receive cultural interaction and incursion from all directions. The most unusual feature of the Western Desert is that it has two major bodies of water on its northern and eastern frontiers – the Mediterranean and the Nile both rich in cultural potential for influence within the period of study. This is an advantage shared by no other portion of the Sahara, even the opposite extremity of the Sahara, which has an extensive coast line - however facing distant America and no commercial relations in history<sup>30</sup>.

### 1.2.1 Climatic Conditions

An important aspect of this work is to understand the climatic conditions that prevailed in the period under study and the resultant effects on its inhabitants. While it is seen in section 1.2.1.2 that the pluvial phase officially ends before the start of the Old Kingdom, recent investigations into certain archaeological sites show that the extent of aridification might still have been slightly less than it is today. An interesting example is that of sites 99/38 and 99/39, approximately 20 km southwest of Dakhla oasis. Today, these Hilltop sites (see Chapter 3) are situated in an environment approximating the desert proper. Recent analysis, however, of

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<sup>26</sup> F. N. Ibrahim and B. Ibrahim, *Egypt: an Economic Geography*, (London, 2003), p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> A. S. Goudie, *Great Warm Deserts of the World*, (New York, 2002), p. 151.

<sup>30</sup> E. F. Gautier, *Sahara the Great Desert*, (New York, 1932), p. 142.

botanical remains depicts a different environment when these sites were inhabited. Species such as *Leptadenia pyrotechnica* were identified amongst the ancient floral remains, a species which today is not found in the Western Desert outside of the oases<sup>31</sup>. It has been proposed that the area where this species was found was well placed to receive water through episodic showers in the north, whereby the water collected in a central point from the northern wadis, making growth possible for *Leptadenia* as well as other species<sup>32</sup>. This evidence is important in demonstrating that the prevailing conditions during the Old Kingdom at least generally might have been less hostile, or at least different to, the ones currently experienced in the same areas<sup>33</sup>.

#### 1.2.1.1 The History of Climatic Change in the Eastern Sahara

Commencing with the Alleröd interstadial (11, 900 to 10, 800 B.C.E) the Eastern Sahara was still void of aquatic environments and hyper-arid, with an onset of pluvial conditions between latitudes 16°N and 24°N at about 8500 B.C.E<sup>34</sup>. As a consequence, improved conditions spread over the entire Eastern Sahara, resulting in semi humid conditions in the southern part and semi-arid in the centre<sup>35</sup>. Thereafter, the conditions again deteriorate by degrees resulting in the phases of human occupation described in the next section. Kuper and Kröpelin<sup>36</sup> describe four primary phases of Eastern Saharan human occupation which are summarised as follows:

**Reoccupation Phase** (8500 to 7000 B.C.E): Reoccupation of the Eastern Sahara following onset of more favourable conditions.

**Formation Phase** (7000 to 5300 B.C.E): Human occupation well established by way of technological and economic adaptations

**Regionalisation Phase** (5300 to 3500 B.C.E): Deterioration of conditions set in once again and results in retreats of populations to ecological niches such as the Gilf el-Kebir.

**Marginalisation Phase** (3500 to 1500 B.C.E): Further desiccation, with rains ceasing even in the ecological niches such as the Gilf el-Kebir. Permanent desert occupation now moves south to areas such as Wadi Howar in Northern Sudan and Laqiya.

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<sup>31</sup> H. Riemer, F. Förster, S. Hendrickx, S. Nussbaum, B. Eichhorn, N. Pöllath, P. Schönfeld and G. Wagner, "Zwei pharaonische Wüstenstationen südwestlich von Dachla", *MDAIK* 61, (2005), p. 332.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>34</sup> R. Kuper and S. Kröpelin, "Climate-Controlled Holocene Occupation in the Sahara: Motor of Africa's Evolution", *Science* 313, Iss. 5788, (2006), p. 803.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

The period under consideration for this work focuses on this final phase, the marginalisation phase.

### 1.2.1.2 Contemporary Climatic Conditions

In the Western Desert, annual rainfall ranges from 100-200mm along the Mediterranean coast to 30mm at the latitude of Cairo to just a few millimetres in the vicinity of Kharga and Dakhla oases<sup>37</sup>. In hyper-arid regions such as the Western Desert the annual rainfall is very low and there is no seasonal rhythm – being erratic in space and time, resulting from local convectional storms and resulting in small numbers of heavy showers<sup>38</sup>. As an example, at Helwan in Egypt, 780 mm rainfall was recorded in the space of twenty years, giving a mean annual rainfall of 38 mm however a quarter of the total fell in seven storms<sup>39</sup>. Thus, hyper-arid region rainfall is characterised by a tendency towards high rainfall variability<sup>40</sup>. Many playa sediments have been subjected to radiocarbon dating which have indicated the ubiquity of an early to mid-Holocene pluvial phase, often referred to as the Neolithic pluvial<sup>41</sup>. These studies have shown a marked difference in rainfall patterns between the present and the Neolithic pluvial where areas such as the Wadi Howar, which today receives 25 to 30 mm rainfall a year, might have received as much as 450 mm between 9500 to 4500 BP<sup>42</sup>. It can be seen that this pluvial phase ends at a time just preceding the Old Kingdom and the chronological dimension under examination in this work. Studies in other areas of the Western Desert have provided further clues to the pluvial phase, with some ending just before or even continuing into the Old Kingdom and beyond<sup>43</sup>. Western Desert temperatures fall between wide extremes over a day with very cold evenings and hot days, which in August can rise to 51.1 degrees Celsius (measured at ground in sand)<sup>44</sup>. Wind and sand drift are mostly from a northerly direction<sup>45</sup>. This constant northerly

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<sup>37</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>38</sup> D. Grigg, *The Harsh Lands: a study in agricultural development*, (Bath, 1970), p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>41</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 137. Fig. 5.9 shows Kharga Depression lacustrine phase spanning 7000 to 1000 BC, for example.

<sup>44</sup> A. S. Goudie, "Weathering Processes" in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 28.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

wind has resulted in much of the significant geological phenomena of the Western Desert - including the directions of dunes and yardangs (see later).

### 1.2.2 Landscape

The Western Desert surface is composed primarily of bare rocky plateaux and high lying stony and sandy plains, with mountains found in the south-west corner at Gebel Uweinat, whose peaks rise to over 1000 metres above sea level<sup>46</sup>. In the northern and central parts of the Western Desert deep depressions are found, some of which dip 100 meters below the desert surface<sup>47</sup>. Some of these depressions contain permanent artesian water sources and it is in these depressions that are found the major oases – Farafra, Siwa, Baharia, Dakhla and Kharga as well as many minor oases. The Qattara, Siwa, Farafra, Dakhla, Baharia and Kharga depressions and several smaller basins have several elements in common – partially or entirely bounded by plateaux of limestone caprock, enlarged by cliff retreat and severe deflation, some to below sea level<sup>48</sup>. A polygenetic origin has been proposed for depressions such as the Qattara, whereby there was an initial excavation as a stream valley, followed by further modification by karstic, mass-wasting, wind deflation and fluviate processes<sup>49</sup>. Rising features in the form of yardangs and inselbergs break up the flat surface of the Western Desert. In contrast to inselbergs, which require escarpments of sufficient relief for their formation, yardangs are wind-sculpted<sup>50</sup>. The critical criterion in distinguishing yardangs from inselbergs is that the yardangs length is much greater than its width (at a ratio of 3:1), while inselbergs are irregular and almost equi-dimensional<sup>51</sup>. In addition to mud lions, yardangs eroded out of much more resistant Nubian sandstone also occur in areas such as the Kharga depression<sup>52</sup>. The plateau extending between Kharga depression and the Nile is underlain by a limestone which is furrowed by the wind into a

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<sup>46</sup> N. S. Embabi, *The Geomorphology of Egypt. Vol.1, The Nile Valley and the Western Desert*, (Cairo, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> C. S. Breed et. al., “Wind Erosion in Drylands” in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 442.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> M. J. Grolier, J. F. McCauley, C. S. Breed and N. S. Embabi, “Yardangs of the Western Desert”, *GJ* 146, no. 1, (1980), p. 86. See also J. Donner and N. S. Embabi, “The Significance of Yardangs and Ventificated Rock Outcrops in the Reconstruction of Changes in the Late Quaternary Wind Regime in the Western Desert of Egypt”, *Quaternaire*, vol. 11 no. 3-4, (2000), pp. 179-185.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

very rough topography known as “kharafish”, which consists of sharp ridged hills separated by troughs partially buried by sand, also parallel to wind direction<sup>53</sup>. The wind-sculpted yardangs have the approximate shape of an inverted boat and commonly are carved in plateau outliers in regions where winds are strongly directional<sup>54</sup>. The Western Desert incorporates the required elements of strong northerly winds (see 1.2.1) and geomorphology to permit frequent yardang development, often oriented north-south as a result. As will be seen in subsequent sections, inselbergs and yardangs also have cultural significance in that they are frequently used as a canvas for Western Desert rock art, as well as frequently being the only features in largely featureless desert – thereby providing landmarks, lookouts and places of shelter and shade. They often incorporate overhangs and niches in which to take shelter (sometimes with the addition of an artificial wall) and also provide rocks with which to build windbreaks. In addition they are also useful navigation markers, providing an indication of the north-south line as well as high platforms for the placement of *alamat* as route markers. Yardangs in the Western Desert range in size from less than a metre to a kilometre or more in length and are typically distributed in parallel arrays following the wind direction. So called “marble yardangs” are tens to hundreds of metres long and a few metres to tens of metres high and are distributed over an area of at least 35 000 km<sup>2</sup> on the Limestone Plateau north and east of the Kharga, Dakhla and Farafra depressions<sup>55</sup>. In some areas, particularly in the wast near the Libyan border, there are dune belts which run north-south, often hampering and influencing travel routes – the most significant of these being the Egyptian Sand Sea. This dune belt commences just south of Siwa oasis, continues uninterrupted for 600 km to the Gilf Kebir plateau and comprises sub-parallel arrays of large compound linear dunes<sup>56</sup>. The heights of these dunes often exceed 100 metres while their direction is primarily south-south-east<sup>57</sup>, again attesting to the predominantly northerly wind. A further noteworthy dune belt is that of the Abu Moharik which commences at Arus el Bugar, running straight across the limestone plateau into the Kharga depression and beyond<sup>58</sup>. In contrast to dune belts the Western Desert also holds vast tracts of flat, featureless sands sheets such as the Selima Sand Sheet in the southern sector. This sand sheet covers approximately 120 000 km and is a largely featureless area of gravels and fine sand interspersed

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Breed, Op. cit., p. 453.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>56</sup> A. S. Goudie, *Great Warm Deserts of the World*, (New York, 2002), p. 147.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

by some dune fields and giant ripples<sup>59</sup>. The formation of the Selima Sand Sheet has been attributed to fluvial deposition of sediments followed by aeolian modification<sup>60</sup>. The absence of significant topographic barriers that would inhibit wind transport account for the size of the sand sheet, while the coarseness of the sand accounts for the lack of significant dune development<sup>61</sup>.

From the perspective of the Western Desert inhabitants or travellers, these areas were definitely to be avoided if possible, with no availability of shade, reliable navigational aids, and protection from the wind or water sources. The south-west corner accounts for some of the highest landforms in the Western Desert. The Gilf Kebir region measures some 12 000 km<sup>2</sup> with peaks attaining over 1000 metres above sea level and Gebel Uweinat measuring 1893 m<sup>62</sup>. The Gilf takes the form of a triangle with the apex to the south and with precipitous escarpments on the west and east, its plateau sloping gradually towards the north where it finally becomes submerged in the Sand Sea<sup>63</sup>. Extensive evidence remains of at least prehistoric occupation of this area, which comes in the form of various lithics, ceramics, tracks, stone circles and petroglyphs<sup>64</sup>. An NVC presence in this area was highly probable due to the Abu Ballas trail which reached up to here (see Chapter 2). Pans and playas are arid zone basins of varying size subject to ephemeral surface water inundation, evaporite accumulation, aeolian deflation and accumulation and/or lacustrine activity<sup>65</sup>. Erosion processes such as deflation have contributed to the major structural basins such as the Qattara and Siwa depressions and are also responsible for the smaller local or subregional features such as playas with polygenetic origins being frequently cited<sup>66</sup>. Playa sediments contained within basins such as at Nabta Playa indicate that they once contained substantial quantities of water, which attracted Neolithic settlers<sup>67</sup>. Given the proximity of the end of some of these lacustrine phases to the start of the Pharaonic period

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> D. S. G. Thomas, "Sand seas and aeolian bedforms" in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 378.

<sup>62</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>63</sup> Embabi, *Op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>64</sup> R. A. Bagnold, O. H. Myers, R. F. Peel and H. A. Winkler, "An Expedition to the Gilf Kebir and 'Uweinat, 1938", *Geographical Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1939), pp. 291-294.

<sup>65</sup> P. A. Shaw and S. G. Thomas, "Pans, Playas and Salt lakes" in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 294.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>67</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

(as discussed in section 1.2.1) it is likely that these playas might also have influenced settlement activities at the commencement of the Pharaonic period as well.

### 1.2.3 Resources

While vegetation has access to constant water supplies in the Western Desert depressions, in the remaining areas in the plateaux any vegetation found is “accidental”, resulting from one-off rainfall events. Studies from the south-west corner of the Western Desert show that accidental vegetation is the only type of precipitation-dependent vegetation that can grow in such areas where rain is less than 10 mm<sup>68</sup>. While the bulk of vegetation occurs within the depression and the oases, there are some areas such as in the Gilf Kebir such as the Wadi Abd el Melik where there are stands of trees<sup>69</sup>.

Some wildlife may be found in and around the oases and depressions such as various insects, reptiles, birds (some migratory), desert foxes jerboas and gazelle<sup>70</sup>. As will be seen in Hilltop sites (see Chapter 2) these species were definitely exploited especially by those groups spending time in the desert proper or on the periphery of oases.

As noted earlier, water sources are disparate and almost exclusively concentrated in the oases and depression regions as springs. A number of the oases have large quantities of spring mounds representing ancient spring activity. In Dakhla and Kharga oases are found conical mounds up to 20 metres high and having cylindrical vents surrounded by layers of clay, ochre, sand and carbonates, depending on the oozing waters of the spring<sup>71</sup>. Qanat systems were at times used in the oases such as those at Kharga Oasis whereby long galleries were cut in the bedrock containing groundwater to collect and channel the water to fields in other areas<sup>72</sup>. The ultimate origin of these qanat systems is not certain although those in Ayn Manawir, Kharga are thought to have Persian origins<sup>73</sup>. Fakhry, however, notes that similar galleries from around Baharia could be dated to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or before due to a rock-cut 26th Dynasty tomb which was built to accommodate a nearby gallery<sup>74</sup>. The south-west corner also has some water

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<sup>68</sup> J. E. Bullard, “Vegetation and Dryland Geomorphology” in D. S. G. Thomas (ed.), *Arid Zone Geomorphology*, (West Sussex, 1997), p. 112.

<sup>69</sup> Penderel, *Op. cit.*, p. 451.

<sup>70</sup> Bagnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>71</sup> Goudie (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>72</sup> M. Wuttmann, “Ayn Manawir”, *EA*, no. 22, (2003), p. 36.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahriya and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), p. 34.

sources such as at ‘Uweinat and Gebel Arkenu within the ravines found there<sup>75</sup>. These have formed mainly through the action of episodic rainfall and topography favourable to the attraction, channelling and collection of water. Further examples of the harnessing of episodic rainfall derived water are seen at sites such as Tundaba (see Chapter 2).

Only a few uniform rock types are widely distributed in the Western Desert (mostly limestone, sandstone and shale, with isolated gyalite and lake bed deposits)<sup>76</sup>. Despite this there have been significant undertakings during the pharaonic period to access stone and mineral resources (see Chapter 2). Under certain conditions, rainwater may also collect just under the ground and percolate in varying directions as has been observed in the Wadi Hawa in the southern Western Desert<sup>77</sup>. In the same area are also found “false oases” or rain-fed oases - small patches of acacias, tundubs and dried grass which are able to survive due to the occasional rainstorm and not artesian water<sup>78</sup>.

In hyper-arid regions such as the Western Desert agriculture is impossible without irrigation, as opposed to semi-arid regions where rain fed agriculture is possible. As discussed previously, the rainfall in hyper-arid regions is highly variable and in the event of rain comes often in the form of intense showers. These heavy showers upon a surface with little vegetation mean that run off is high and there is little infiltration to the layers below<sup>79</sup>. Rainfall is therefore not an option in hyper-arid regions for any cultivation activities, leaving irrigation as the only alternative. The two main sources in the hyper-arid regions are rivers and groundwater. In Egypt, the Nile was utilised via basin irrigation until the 1840’s, where the summer floodwaters were led by canal into small bundled fields, providing only one crop per year and a 1 mm deposit of silt<sup>80</sup>. In contrast to this, in the desert to the west the only irrigation possible is via springs and their associated groundwater. There are a number of advantages in the use of groundwater – when properly harnessed, it is able to provide year-round consistent watering with no reliance on seasonal flooding. In addition, it is stored naturally, with minimal loss to evaporation, and if each spring/well serves a relatively small area canals are short resulting in

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<sup>75</sup> Penderel, *Op. cit.*, p. 451.

<sup>76</sup> C. S. Breed et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>77</sup> W.B. Kennedy Shaw, K.S. Sandford and M. Mason, “An Expedition in the Southern Libyan Desert”, *GJ* 87, no. 3, (1936), p. 202.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>79</sup> Grigg, *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.



less seepage and evaporation<sup>81</sup>. Generally it is thought that groundwater usage also militates against the problems of flooding. There are occasions, however, where this is still a problem as observed in Siwa Oasis as discussed previously. Potential disadvantages to using groundwater include the inherent salinity, which increases with depth. In terms of the potential utilisation of saline rich groundwater, human beings can tolerate a salt content of 3000 parts per million, cattle 9400 parts per million, sheep 15600 parts per million while crops require less than 700 parts per million<sup>82</sup>. The resultant accumulation of salt in the upper layers of the soil necessitates substantial excavation to remove these layers, as has been observed in Siwa Oasis where plots need to be excavated up to a metre to allow the growth of young plants<sup>83</sup>.

The principal fruits grown in contemporary times in oases such as Farafra include dates, olives, apricots, grapes, oranges, sweet lemons, citrus and pomegranates, with field crops of emmer, barley, maize and cotton<sup>84</sup>. A similar range of produce is cultivated in Baharia<sup>85</sup>. Siwa Oasis also generates a similar range of produce, however soil conditions are slightly different, which prevents the cultivation of oranges, for example<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Fakhry (1997), Op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> Fakhry (2003), Op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> Fakhry (1997), Op. cit., p. 25.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Marks in the Desert – Evidence for Human Traversal and Temporary Settlement**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the evidence for Pharaonic activity in the desert itself, outside of the oases. This evidence will be used to further enhance the understanding of the society and culture of communities spending time in, and traversing the desert.

#### **2.2 The Evidence for Roads and Tracks in the Western Desert**

There are a number of approaches and sources of information available for understanding the network of roads and tracks crossing the Western Desert. Examples of what can be considered are:

1. Roads and tracks currently in use<sup>1</sup>. Many of the roads that are currently in use in the Western Desert follow the loci of more ancient paths. An example of this is the Darb el-Ghubari, between the Dakhla and Kharga oases. Often these are based on directness of the route and other logical topographical issues such as the vicinity of passes allowing access into a depression.
2. Tracks described through historical sources. Historical sources such as the travels of Harkhuf and historical accounts of the actions of pharaohs such as Kamose provide clues as to which routes were logically taken as part of their activities.
3. Tracks indicated by purely archaeological evidence. The archaeology of ancient routes and tracks needs to take into account a variety of considerations, which might indicate the locus of an ancient path. The following looks at how these apply to the Egyptian Western Desert.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that many of the tracks considered here are based on modern trails/roads and the tracks used by later historical travellers as a starting point. Additional points are then sought to ascertain the antiquity of the trail, based often on features that were found along its length.

### **2.2.1 Physical marks or wear on the surface**

This type of evidence can only very rarely be attributed to Pharaonic period activity, since many of the routes in question experienced use over extended periods. This is especially so in routes used by camel caravans in later periods that tended to obliterate evidence from earlier times. The Pharaonic period saw the use of primarily donkeys for desert crossings and some ancient remains of their tracks have been detected, see Section 2.3.3.1.

### **2.2.2 Graffiti at regular points along the way**

There are significant quantities of Pharaonic period graffiti in the Western Desert (refer Chapter 3 for a discussion of graffiti in and around Dakhla) and are good indicators for a temporary presence or the passing through of expeditions and groups. In addition to marking the route, graffiti can also provide clues as to the motivations of those travelling along the route as well as what preoccupied the travellers on their journey. This type of evidence is well attested on such roads as the Darb el-Ghubari and Darb Ain Amur (see section 2.3.2.1). Western Desert rock art has been discussed in more detail for Dakhla Oasis (see Chapter 3), Kharga Oasis (see Chapter 4) and Hilltop sites see Section 2.4.2.

### **2.2.3 Structures/habitation sites at regular points along the way**

Way markers (“*alamat*”) are frequently seen at the tops of gebels (as piles of stones), for example, lining a particular route. Water depots such as at Abu Ballas (see section 2.4.3.1) and Temporary Rest Spots (see section 2.4.4) are also found. Hilltop sites such as those at Dakhla (see Chapter 3) and Baharia are often found at the start/end point of major routes or along the such as in Dakhla where a number of *alamat* could be seen continuing in a straight directions from Hilltop sites (although it is not yet clear when these date from)<sup>2</sup>.

### **2.2.4 Human and or animal remains at regular points along the way**

Little has been found to date in this category for Pharaonic activity. More contemporary examples of this type of evidence in the Western Desert comes from such roads as the Darb el Arbain (see 2.3.3.2) - reported to have frequent skeletal remains of camels along the way<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> H. Riemer, F. Förster, S. Hendrickx, S. Nussbaum, B. Eichhorn, N. Pöllath, P. Schönfeld and G. Wagner, “Zwei pharaonische Wüstenstationen südwestlich von Dakhla”, *MDAIK* 61, (2005), p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> L. E. Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, (Munich, 1998), p. 70.

### **2.2.5 The existence of water sources along the way**

This is among the most significant determinants for the choice of route for the Western Desert. In many cases there are options for faster, more direct routes without access to springs. In Pharaonic times the use of donkeys made access to water supplies more critical than in later periods with the introduction of the camel - so accessing oases via other oases would often be a more realistic option despite taking longer. The absence of springs or intervening oases necessitated in some instances the establishment of artificial supplies in the form of depots.

### **2.2.6 The topography of the route**

An important topographic feature relevant for entry and egress from Western desert oases is the “*naqb*” or pass that allows one to cross the escarpment resulting from oases generally being situated in geological depressions. In crossings, avoidance of sand dunes might be necessary depending on size and extent. In addition, inhospitable surfaces such as “*rusuf*” where prevailing winds remove the surface sand, exposing stone which is then carved into sharp ridges a few inches high makes travel very difficult for pack animals<sup>4</sup>. Many of the routes discussed below describe a direct line to or between these passes.

### **2.2.7 The directness of the route from one centre to the next**

Where possible, given the absence of all other encouraging factors (such as re-supply points, topography etc), the desert landscape is conducive to straight line travel to minimise travel time in a forbidding landscape. As such, many of the routes discussed below are direct, shortest distance lines from point to point.

### **2.2.8 Symbolic significance, fears and beliefs**

Motivations more difficult to detect for route layout are manifest in symbolism, cult, fears and traditions. More contemporary examples of this are areas thought to be inhabited by spirits or brigands (such as the concern of the Bedouin guides of Bayle St John when making their way south from the coast through the desert to Siwa Oasis<sup>5</sup>) that were then avoided thus extending or distorting routes from point to point. It is known that the Western Desert was rich in symbolism for Pharaonic culture as evidenced in association of gods and mythology with this region (refer Chapter 9 for details on Western Desert cult). How this might have affected travel is not yet known. Conversely, a reverence for, or special significance attached to places such as the Amun

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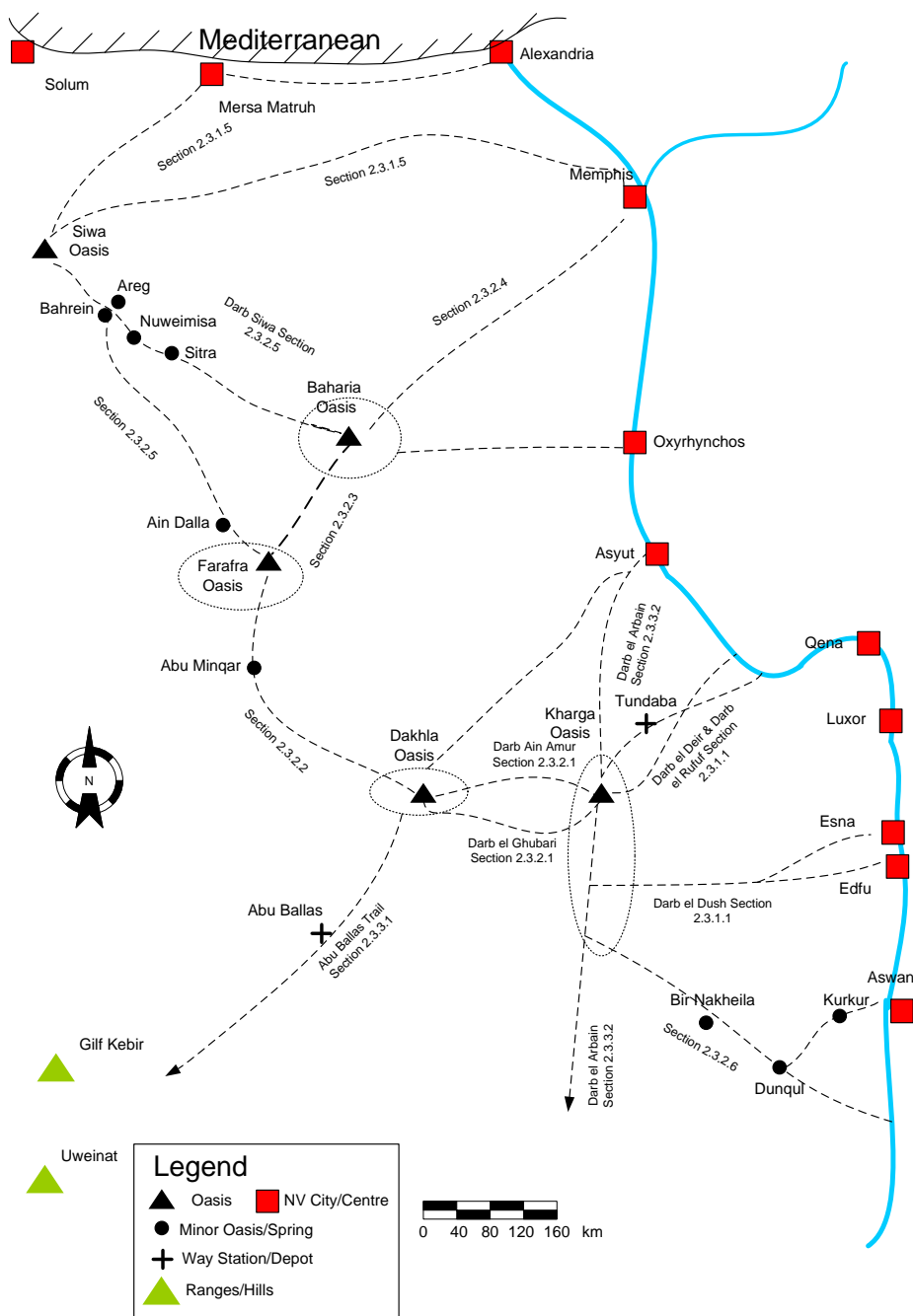
<sup>4</sup> W. J. Harding-King, “The Farafra Depression and Bu Mungar Hattia”, *GJ* 42, no. 5, (1913), p. 456.

<sup>5</sup> B. St. John, *Adventures in the Libyan Desert and the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon*, (London, 1849), p. 65.

Temple in Siwa Oasis encouraged travel through the desert even at great personal risk, such as by Alexander the Great (see Chapter 6 for details on the cult of Amun in Siwa Oasis).

### **2.3 Western Desert Roads and Tracks**

A number of tracks were in use to facilitate access to oases and other points along the Nile Valley and Western Desert generally. This section will provide an overview of the major ones. Refer Figure 2.



**Figure 2 Western Desert Roads and Tracks**

### 2.3.1 Nile Valley to Desert

A number of routes led directly from the Nile Valley to the oases and provided a quicker alternative, in some instances, to following a longer circuit over other oases. Some of these are discussed below.

### 2.3.1.1 To Kharga

Three major routes provided direct access to Kharga. The main routes are from Assiut, the Darb el Arbain (discussed in Section 2.3.3.2), from the region of Abydos/ancient Thinis and from the region of Esna/Edfu. Harkhuf's third journey commences with<sup>6</sup>:

“And when his majesty sent me the third time to Yam, I departed the Thinite district on the Oasis Road.”

Yam is believed by some to be an area equating to Kharga Oasis<sup>7</sup> (refer also to Section 2.4.3.2). Two roads emanating from the region of Abydos and known from other periods are the Darb al-Deir and Darb al-Rufuf. The Darb al-Deir is the most direct route from the Nile Valley, leading to the Naqb Abu Sighawal pass allowing entry to the oasis, and showing evidence for prehistoric up to early twentieth century use<sup>8</sup>. The Darb al-Rufuf leads to the Naqb al-Rufuf providing entry to the oasis and whose path was approximately followed by a now abandoned railway line from the early twentieth century<sup>9</sup>. This road was used extensively in the Roman period as demonstrated by water depots from the period<sup>10</sup>, with the site of Tundaba (see section 2.4.1.1) possibly indicating pharaonic use as well.

The Darb al-Dush utilises the Naqb al-Dush pass to the Kharga depression, terminating at the site of Dush. Towards the Nile Valley the road forks approximately half way with the northern branch leading towards Esna and the southern towards Edfu<sup>11</sup>. A 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty mud brick temple at the terminus of Dush (see Chapter 4) implies a possible Pharaonic Period use of the road.

The discovery of a major pharaonic way station, near Tundaba, and a further site at Abu Ziyar between Thebes and the northern (Yabsa) pass into Kharga<sup>12</sup> indicates a major road across the desert between these two points during Pharaonic times. Tundaba is also indicated on the survey of Egypt map on the Darb al-Rufuf<sup>13</sup>, where it is approximately 50 km east in a

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<sup>6</sup> H. Goedicke, “Harkhuf's Travels”, *JNES* 40, no. 1, (1981), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> G. Caton-Thompson, *Kharga Oasis in Prehistory*, (London, 1952), p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> See Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8. Path of railway is marked “Western Oasis Railway”.

<sup>10</sup> Caton-Thompson, *Op. cit.*, pl. 126.

<sup>11</sup> See Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>12</sup> J. C. Darnell, “Opening the Narrow Doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey”, in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002) p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

straight line from Yabsa pass. Interestingly, moving further east in a straight line from Tundaba, there is marked after approximately another 50km, “old wells” on the survey map - this then being the approximate quarter way out of a 150-160 km journey from the Nile Valley to Yabsa Pass. The age of the well is not known but should warrant future investigation to see if it is of the same age as Tundaba and served as part of the support network across this route.

### 2.3.1.2 To Dakhla

The direct route from the Nile Valley to Dakhla is known as the Darb el-Tawil. As an alternative to reaching Dakhla via Kharga and the Darb el-Deir it is significantly shorter<sup>14</sup>, however the route entails travel across desert only, whereas the longer route via Kharga provides further opportunities for provision along the way. This road connects the region of modern Asyut with the Wadi el Tawil entry point to the oasis, and was likely the primary artery from the Nile Valley to the Old Kingdom sites at Balat. A brief survey by the Dakhla Oasis Project of the Dakhla escarpment start/end point of the road in the Wadi el Tawil revealed surface finds including Old Kingdom material as well as remains of donkeys and a nearby “staging area” with Sheikh Muftah Culture (SMC) and NVC material present<sup>15</sup>. Two further access points link to the Darb el-Tawil from Dakhla – the westernmost branches from the Darb el-Dakhla just north of Budkuhlu<sup>16</sup> which also links to a further branch just north of Ismant. From here, there is a fork to the Darb el-Khashabi<sup>17</sup> or directly to the Darb el-Tawil. In the region of the last ascending pass, the Naqb Shushina, the road passes the site of Abu Gerara consisting of ruins<sup>18</sup>, where Harding-King investigated and described the presence of Ptolemaic period coins and ceramics<sup>19</sup>. Subsequent work here by Riemer<sup>20</sup> concentrated primarily on

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<sup>14</sup> The Darb el-Tawil is approximately 250km compared to Darb el-Deir with Darb el-Ghubari at 350 km, taken from Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>15</sup> A.. J. Mills, *Report Presented to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt, on the 2000 Season of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, (2000), viewed on 05 March 2011, <<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/index.php#reports>>, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> See Survey of Egypt Map (1941) “Dakhla” Second Edition Sheet 7.

<sup>17</sup> Which eventually joins the Darb el Tawil again, see Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>18</sup> This description appears on the Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>19</sup> W. J. Harding-King, *Mysteries of the Libyan Desert*, (London, 1925), p. 203.

<sup>20</sup> H. Riemer, “Abu Gerara: Mid-Holocene sites between Djara and Dakhla Oasis (Egypt)” in L. Krzyżaniak, K. Kroeper and M. Kobusiewicz (eds.), *Cultural Markers in the Later Prehistory of Northeastern Africa and Recent Research*, (Poznań, 2003), pp. 73-79.



prehistoric evidence, with the only evidence potentially from the pharaonic period being SMC clayton rings.

### 2.3.1.3 To Baharia

The most direct route to Baharia Oasis from the Nile Valley was the Darb al-Bahnasa, which utilises the Naqb el-Bahnasa pass in the north-east of the oasis and commences in the Nile Valley near Al-Bahnasa in the vicinity of ancient Oxyrhynchus<sup>21</sup>. This road was in use up to the 1930's. The route is approximately 190 km long and once took camels four days to traverse it<sup>22</sup>. This road as well as the Darb al-Rubi commence in Baharia near the region of el-Harra, where there is also a tall gebel located with a possible Hilltop site at its peak (see Section 2.4.2). Little in the way of archaeological pharaonic evidence is available for the route itself. Giddy provides a convincing argument regarding the actions of Kamose (as related in the second Kamose stela) to thwart communications between the Hyksos and Kush by sending a force to what she postulates to be Baharia via the Darb el-Bahnasa<sup>23</sup>. A further road leading directly to the Nile valley includes the Darb al-Qahira, commencing in the vicinity of the Giza pyramids and entering Baharia at the Naqb al-Ghurabi. This road is 340 km in length and required a camel journey of nine to ten days without natural water supplies along the way<sup>24</sup>.

### 2.3.1.4 To Farafra

The most direct route between Farafra Oasis and the Nile Valley is via the Darb Asyut. It is approximately 280 km long and closer to the Nile Valley the route branches to the districts of Beni Adi, DASHLUT and MAYR<sup>25</sup>. The route is geologically waterless and entails the crossing of obstacles such as the Abu Muharrik dune belt<sup>26</sup>. Fakhry notes that it took seven to eight days to cover with camels or donkeys and, that in his time, was still being used by Bedouin and Farafra<sup>27</sup>. While its use during the Pharaonic period cannot be ruled out – it would have required a replenishment infrastructure, the remains of which would most likely have been

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<sup>21</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> L. Giddy, *Egyptian Oases Bahariya, Dakhla, Farafra and Kharga during Pharaonic Times*, (Warminster, 1987), p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Fakhry, Op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> From Survey of Egypt Map (1946) "Asyut" Second Edition Sheet 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Fakhry, Op. cit., p. 162.

obliterated through use as a caravan trail in later periods. Access to Farafra via the other oases in the circuit would have been a logistically easier undertaking.

### 2.3.1.5 To Siwa

A number of options were available for travel from the east to Siwa Oasis. A route described already would be to travel to Baharia (see paragraph 2.3.1.3) and then from Baharia to Siwa (see paragraph 2.3.2.5). The other possibilities were along the Mediterranean coast or directly through the desert. The Mediterranean coast route (see paragraph 2.3.1.6) is the one used these days for a journey to Siwa whereby the route is followed west to Mersa Matruh, whereupon a desert road is taken south to Siwa, the shortest of which is the Masrab al-Istabl<sup>28</sup>. Alexander the Great in his visitation of the Ammonian oracle, also travelled via Mersa Matruh (Paraetionium)<sup>29</sup>. Alexander's return journey was taken directly to Memphis<sup>30</sup>, implying one of the routes that cross the desert as well as the Qattara Depression. This particular route proceeds from Siwa to Qaret Umm al-Sughayyar (Qara Oasis), through the Qattara depression to the spring of al-Mughrah and then to the Wadi Natrun<sup>31</sup>. Such a direct route from Siwa to Memphis might also have been of use during the period in Siwa where relations with the temple administration of Memphis were at their height<sup>32</sup>.

### 2.3.1.6 To the West along the Mediterranean

There is little doubt that at least by New Kingdom times a road existed parallel to, and following the Mediterranean coast line from Rakotis to at least Zawiyat Umm el-Rakham. The strongest evidence for such a road is the string of fortifications that line the route, in particular the following sites date from the reign of Ramses II.

The existence of these forts implies that a substantial road linked the forts and provided a conduit for the provision of supplies and personnel for their manning. Possibly this route also predated the forts and also served for general movements along the coast. A road described by Oliver and de Cosson could possibly be part of the road in question. The road is visible in sections, the longest being 11km, on the route from Alexandria to Abusir<sup>33</sup>. The width of the

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<sup>28</sup> A. Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis*, (Cairo, 1973), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> See classical sources such as Diodorus Siculus VIII; XVII, 49.2 or L. Fl. Arrianus, "Anabasis", 3.3-4.

<sup>30</sup> See L. Fl. Arrianus, "Anabasis", 3.3-4.

<sup>31</sup> A. Fakhry (1973), *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, *Das Ammoneion*, (Mainz, 1988), p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> F. W. Oliver and A. De Cosson, "Note on the Taenia ridge: with special references to quarries, sites and an ancient road between Alexandria and Abusir", *BSAA* 32, (1938), pp. 162-175.

road is 35 feet in some sections<sup>34</sup>, implying its use as a major artery at the time. In addition, the structure of the road is a simple flattening of the surface<sup>35</sup>.

### 2.3.2 Between Oases

A number of roads linked oases together as a network allowing oasians to move from one oasis to the next as well as NVC travellers on longer journeys.

#### 2.3.2.1 Dakhla to Kharga

Two roads link Kharga and Dakhla – the Darb el-Ghubari and Darb Ain Amur. The Darb el-Ghubari follows the southern flank of the Gebel Abu Tartur covering a distance of approximately 190 km<sup>36</sup>. The route likely saw active use during the pharaonic period (as well as well before and after this period) as attested by the copious quantity of petroglyphs found on yardangs and inselbergs along the way<sup>37</sup>. In addition, a site close to the road, 30/435-P9-3, has been interpreted as a temporary campsite for this road and incorporated a hearth and fragments of New Kingdom amphorae<sup>38</sup>. The name of the road (“road of dust”) attests to the effects of the constant north wind, which blows down over the Gebel Abu Tartur, constituting a nuisance to travellers over the millennia. Springs are only found close to the start and end points of the road<sup>39</sup>. The end point on the Dakhla side is near the Old Kingdom sites of Balat. The Darb Ain Amur is slightly shorter than the Darb al-Ghubari<sup>40</sup> and takes the traveller over the Gebel Abu Tartur through climbing, as noted by Harding-King<sup>41</sup> - thus making this alternative less attractive despite the Ain Amur spring located approximately half-way as attested by the presence of a Roman temple in the area. Winlock estimated the journey by camel across the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>36</sup> From Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>37</sup> See H. A. Winkler, *Rock Drawings of southern Upper Egypt*, vol. 2, (London, 1939) –a large part of this expedition was undertaken along the Darb el-Ghubari with petroglyphs noted along the way, see p. 7 for sites noted by Winkler on the Darb el Ghubari.

<sup>38</sup> C. A. Hope, "Oases Amphorae of the New Kingdom", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 97.

<sup>39</sup> From Survey of Egypt Map (1946) “Qena” Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Harding-King, Op. cit., p. 36.

Darb Ain Amur to be three days<sup>42</sup>. The Darb Ain Amur also likely received traffic during the pharaonic period as attested by frequent rock art sites from including hieroglyphs and depictions of pharaonic deities<sup>43</sup>. At Ain Amur there is also the possibility to link to the Darb el-Arbain via Ain Umm Dabadib, Ain Labeka and Gebel al-Jabisa.

### 2.3.2.2 Dakhla to Farafra

Fakhry refers to an “old caravan route” between Farafra and Dakhla of approximately 200 km in length, which passed Bir Dikkar, continuing along the edge of sand dunes before descending (at the Naqb al-Qasmund) into the escarpment just north of Qasr Dakhla<sup>44</sup>. Harding-King also mentions this road and in addition makes reference to one, which seems to follow the modern route, via Abu Minqar<sup>45</sup>. In either case no further evidence is available as to the antiquity of the routes; their directness and availability of water at some points make them logical choices for earlier times as well.

### 2.3.2.3 Farafra to Baharia

This route is 185 km long, requiring four days by camel or donkey<sup>46</sup>. The route is well served by natural water sources, having supplies at Al-Hayz (one day’s journey from Baharia) and then again at Ain al-Wadi (one day’s journey from Farafra)<sup>47</sup>. At Al-Hayz there are structures dating to the Roman Period<sup>48</sup> with some possible Pharaonic items in the form of a bronze seal and column drums that were uncovered there<sup>49</sup>. Roman period structures are also present at Ain al-Wadi<sup>50</sup>, suggesting at least Roman Period and possibly Pharaonic use of the road.

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<sup>42</sup> H. E. Winlock, *Ed-Dakhleh Oasis – Journal of a camel trip made in 1908*, (New York, 1936), pp. 44-52.

<sup>43</sup> S. Ikram, “Drawing the World: Petroglyphs from Kharga Oasis”, *Archéo-Nil* 19, (2009), p. 67.

<sup>44</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), p. 162.

<sup>45</sup> Harding-King, *Op. cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>46</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>49</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

#### 2.3.2.4 Baharia to al-Fayoum

This route was the second in importance to Baharia after the Darb al-Bahnasa, its length being 240 km and requiring five to six days to traverse by camel<sup>51</sup>. Its use during Pharaonic times is not yet clear.

#### 2.3.2.5 Siwa to Baharia and Farafra

The Darb Siwa is approximately 400 km long and passes the minor oases of Al-Areg, Bahrein, Sitra and Nuweimisa. This cluster begins approximately 200 km from Baharia at Sitra oasis and continues another 50 km along the road to Siwa<sup>52</sup>. The small oases therefore provide useful water provisioning beginning at approximately half way along the route. It took Steindorff nine days to travel by camel from Zetun near Siwa to Baharia<sup>53</sup>. Steindorff also noted on the way from Sitra to Baharia an ancient depot of water containers, which Kuhlmann proposes to pre-date the use of camels since such would not be required by camels<sup>54</sup>. Al-Areg oasis features a series of rock cut tombs, some decorated, from possibly Ptolemaic to Roman period styles<sup>55</sup>, with Bahrein and Nuweimisa also featuring tens of rock cut tombs<sup>56</sup>. At Bahrein is also found a small temple from the Late Period, see Chapter 7. Kuhlmann postulates that the major reason for the settlement of these oases was not for the individual productivity potential of the oases themselves, but to support the trade and caravans passing by this route<sup>57</sup>.

A further track, possibly linking Siwa to Farafra via Ain Dalla was proposed by Von der Esch<sup>58</sup>, whereby a line of *alamat* were discovered starting at the south west of Bahrein oasis and heading south east towards Ain Dalla, with an old caravan track discernible 50km leading into Ain Dalla along the same line. No further evidence is currently available as to the antiquity of this track.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> From Survey of Egypt Map (1941) "Bahariya" Second Edition Sheet 4.

<sup>53</sup> G. Steindorff, *Vorläufiger Bericht über seine im Winter 1899/1900 nach der Oase Siwe und nach Nubien unternommenen Reisen*, (Leipzig, 1900), p. 226.

<sup>54</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, *Das Ammoneion*, AV 75, (Cairo, 1988), p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> A. Fakhry, "The Tombs of el-Areg Oasis in the Libyan Desert", *ASAE* 39, (1939), p. 614.

<sup>56</sup> Kuhlmann, Op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>58</sup> H. J. Von der Esch, *Weenak – die Karawane Ruft*, (Leipzig, 1941), p. 281.

### 2.3.2.6 Kharga to Dunqul

Indirect archaeological evidence is available for a route between Kharga Oasis and Dunqul Oasis by the existence of an oasis between these two – Bir Nakheila, which is located along an almost perfectly straight line between Kharga and Kurkur such that direct travel almost certainly passed by this spring. In Bir Nakheila are ample remains of rock art and evidence of at least temporary occupation. These include a semi-hieratic inscription and depiction of a cow of Old Kingdom/Early Middle Kingdom date<sup>59</sup>, as well as ceramics of what Deborah Darnell refers to as “Libo-Nubian” (contemporary with Egyptian Predynastic through Middle Kingdom) and possible C-group wares<sup>60</sup>. Similar wares were also found at both Bir Nakheila and Kurkur<sup>61</sup>.

### 2.3.3 From the Oases to the North, South and West

#### 2.3.3.1 The Darb el Tarfawi and the “Abu Ballas Trail”

The Darb el-Tarfawi is the only southern route out of Dakhla Oasis, beginning at Mut and heading south to Bir Tarfawi and then to Merga and followed by Fasher in Sudan. A south-western branch forks from the Darb el-Tarfawi, which then continues via Abu Ballas to the Gilf Kebir and Gebel Uweynat. A string of thirty staging posts has been found along the 350 km trail from Dakhla to the Gilf Kebir<sup>62</sup>. The staging-posts (see section 2.4.3) differ in size and layout and usually feature numbers of storage amphorae as well as domestic goods indicating temporary occupation<sup>63</sup>. At either end of this route there are staging posts that have been dated to the Pharaonic period. Site 99/31 (between Abu Ballas and Dakhla) has evidence for Old Kingdom activity, while Site 00/06 (in front of the Gilf Kebir) has New Kingdom pottery<sup>64</sup>. The ceramics seem to span Old Kingdom to Ptolemaic Period<sup>65</sup>. The route between these posts is regularly marked by road markers (*alamat*) that range in size from a single stone to large cairns

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<sup>59</sup> J. C. Darnell, "Opening the Narrow Doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 150.

<sup>60</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002) p. 166.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>62</sup> R. Kuper, “By Donkey Train to Kufra? – How Mr Meri went west”, *Antiquity* 75, (2001), p. 801.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 802.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

up to two metres high<sup>66</sup>. One of these (Site 99/30) has been dated to 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or earlier<sup>67</sup>. The distances between the *alamat* are related to their visibility and landscape topography whereby they could be seen at distances of several kilometres in open plains, but at very short distances in hilly areas<sup>68</sup>. It was noted that the *alamat* follow the general bearing of the Abu Ballas trail often not using alternative routes or bypaths that might have made for easier going, leading the researchers to suggest that this was due to lack of local experience by the creators<sup>69</sup>. The fact that the *alamat* connect stations all stemming from the Old Kingdom, without younger material across this particular route, has led the researchers to conclude that these *alamat* also stem from the Old Kingdom<sup>70</sup>. In some places along the route, the researchers found it was possible to distinguish between straight-line donkey-made tracks and the grooves left by camels<sup>71</sup>, thereby providing further evidence for Pharaonic use. Kuper<sup>72</sup> has raised the possibility, earlier postulated by Almásy that the route proceeded to beyond the Gilf Kebir/Uweynat region to Kufra oasis in present-day Libya. Such a connection could in turn link to other trade networks across the Sahara (note that other scholars now believe this to be unlikely and that the route more likely headed south, see Section 2.4.3.2).

### 2.3.3.2 The Darb el Arbain and Darb el-Gaballa

The Darb el-Arbain is a north-south route, and is one of the major routes connecting sub-Saharan Africa with Egypt. The Darb el Arbain began at Kubayh in Darfur passing through Bir Natrun (1120km south of Asyut), Selima Oasis, the alum producing watering point of Shabb and then into the southern Kharga Oasis region<sup>73</sup>. From here, the road passed Qasr al-Zayyan (Ptolemaic period temple with Roman period fortifications), Qasr al-Ghueida (incorporating a

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<sup>66</sup> R. Kuper, “The Abu Ballas Trail: Pharaonic Advances into the Libyan Desert”, in Z. Hawass (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century*, Vol. 2, (Cairo, 2000), p. 375.

<sup>67</sup> Kuper (2001), *Op. cit.*, p. 802.

<sup>68</sup> H. Riemer, “Control posts and navigation system of the Pharaonic Abu Ballas Trail”, Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa (ACACIA), (2006), viewed 23rd April 2011, <[http://www.uni-koeln.de/sfb389/a/a1/download/acacia%20A1-E3\\_report%202006-1.pdf](http://www.uni-koeln.de/sfb389/a/a1/download/acacia%20A1-E3_report%202006-1.pdf)>, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Kuper (2001), *Op. cit.*, p. 802.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 801.

<sup>73</sup> R. Morkot, “The Darb el-Arbain, the Kharga Oasis and its forts, and other desert routes”, in D. M. Bailey (ed.), *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series no. 19, Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt*, (Michigan, 1996), p. 90.

Late Period temple, see Chapter 4) and Qasr al-Nasim before reaching Qasr Kharga and Hibis<sup>74</sup>. To the north-east of Hibis lies the Gebel el-Teir which is the northward continuation of the road. Along this stretch are graffiti from prehistoric times up to the Coptic and Islamic periods (see Chapter 4). Noteworthy are Pharaonic depictions of gods such as Seth and other Pharaonic themes (also see Chapter 4). Further to the north-east the route passes Roman-period settlements, forts and watchtowers before ascending out of the depression via the Naqb al-Ramlah or Naqb Yabsa<sup>75</sup> before crossing the desert to modern Assiut. This last section of the route (having a length of approximately 150 km) would have been made more difficult by the lack of natural springs along the way<sup>76</sup>. In total the road covers 1767 km and could be covered by large camel caravans in 45 days<sup>77</sup>. Minimal archaeological survey has been conducted along the length of this road to date and since much of the length of the desert is through sandy and gravel topography, there is little in the way of graffiti evidence that might be studied<sup>78</sup>. In addition, the extensive use of the road through historic times would have added to the destruction of any previous surface remains. The proximity, however, of some areas demonstrating pharaonic activity, such as Bir Nakheila (see Chapter 8) and its associated routes to Kharga might indicate that at least some sections of the Darb el-Arbain were known and used in Pharaonic times. Osing, through the connection of references to the gods Heqas and Merimutef in both the Hibis temple in Kharga and Temple at Abu Simbel, raises the possibility that the route from Manqabad to Kharga and possibly beyond to southern Nubia was in use during the reign of Ramses II and Amenophis III<sup>79</sup>.

The Darb el-Gaballa forks from the Darb el Arbain at Selima Oasis, passing through Dunqul and Kurkur Oases before reaching the Nile Valley at Aswan<sup>80</sup>. Again, since this road passes through Kurkur Oasis, which has pharaonic remains (see Chapter 8), it can be said that at least some sections were in use during Pharaonic times.

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<sup>74</sup> See Survey of Egypt Map (1946) "Qena" Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>75</sup> Morkot, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>76</sup> See Survey of Egypt Map (1946) "Qena" Second Edition Sheet 8.

<sup>77</sup> Morkot, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> J. Osing, "Notizen zu den Oasen Charga und Dachla", *GM* 92, (1986), p. 81.

<sup>80</sup> Morkot, *Op. cit.*, p. 91, fig. 4.



### 2.3.4 From the Western Desert to the West

A number of possibilities exist for departure points from the Egyptian Western Desert to Libya and the Western Sahara. The logical points are, in the north, Siwa Oasis and further south, the Uweinat/Gilf Kebir region, largely because they are linked to further oases in modern Libya (Jaghbub in the north and Kufra in the south).

#### 2.3.4.1 From Siwa Oasis West

Geographically, it is possible to travel from Siwa north-west or north then west to the coastal centre of ancient Cyrenaica. Travelling in a westerly direction, keeping to the desert, the route passes through the oases of Jaghbub and Augila. During the middle of the first millennium BC, Herodotus described the peoples and routes leading from the Nile Valley to the Western Sahara. From Herodotus<sup>81</sup> we have that there was in his time a route to the west that passed from the Ammonians (Siwa) through Augila oasis, the Garamantes, the Atarantes and the Atlantes each major leg taking 10 days. The description of this route in Herodotus points to an already well established and regularly used route during his time or even earlier. It is most likely that by the mid-first millennium BC that there was a Garamantian complex chiefdom while a true Garamantian state or kingdom developed slightly later, with the first urbanisation in Germa<sup>82</sup>. This rise of the Garamantian society coincides with a period of active "Egyptianised" activity in Siwa such as the ritual surrounding the Amun temple there, see Chapter 6. Given the contemporaneity of these two major societies at either end of the Siwa to Germa road, it is possible that it was used for contact and trade. It is possible that influences and wares from these two societies went beyond their respective centres, although to date there is no archaeological evidence to substantiate this.

#### 2.3.4.2 From Uweinat/Gilf Kebir West

In modern times there has been a route which leads from the corner of Uweinat/Gilf Kebir to the west, with the first major halting place and water source being Kufra Oasis in modern Libya. The Wadi el Gubba is one road that traversed this area, known to have been in use in historic times, with twelve days between water, no grazing and dune belts to cross<sup>83</sup>. While the south-

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<sup>81</sup> See Herodotus IV, 181-185.

<sup>82</sup> M. Liverani, "The Libyan Caravan Road in Herodotus IV.181-185", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43, no. 4, (2000), p. 511.

<sup>83</sup> W.B. Kennedy Shaw, K.S. Sandford and M. Mason, "An Expedition in the Southern Libyan Desert", *GJ* 87, No. 3, (1936), p. 207.

western corner of Egypt was never a major centre, the next major centre that would have linked up with Kufra was Dakhla Oasis via the Abu Ballas trail (see section 2.3.3.1).

## 2.4 Places of Temporary Occupation in the Desert

A number of sites have been found in the Western Desert that are generally located along known routes (or are seen as possible indicators for an ancient route) characterised by man made devices to facilitate water or provision replenishment in areas lacking natural resources or to provide shade and rest. These could include large inselbergs or yardangs with in-situ large ceramic vessels with heavy walls of the type used for goods transport, placed around the base, as well as other habitation evidence such as petroglyphs. It is likely that these sites were used as supply replenishment points for caravans and expeditions making their way along the associated routes in areas devoid of springs and natural resources.

### 2.4.1 Major Reprovisioning Stations

A major reprovisioning station is defined here as a place of re-provisioning and rest that has significant infrastructure associated with it, including wells or cisterns dug by human agency and having significant shelter infrastructure.

#### 2.4.1.1 Tundaba

The site of Tundaba is situated approximately halfway between the Theban area of the Nile Valley and the northern entrance to Kharga<sup>84</sup>. The site consists of three dry stone structures, wind break walls and a post hole possibly used to hold up a tent-like covering<sup>85</sup>. That this site served as part of the Nile Valley administration is shown by a deposit of mud seals with stamp impressions that included the words *kA* and *DfAw* ie “food and provisions” possibly referring to supplies for the keepers of this post, depictions of Bes and Taweret as well as walking *wsr* signs<sup>86</sup>. The most significant feature at this site is a cistern 15m in depth, designed to capture water run off from the surrounding depression<sup>87</sup>. This cistern is an example of a system set up to capture opportunistic rainfall - a technique used in other parts of the desert such as at Khufu 01/1 (see section 2.4.3). The cistern included access stairs as well as evidence of rope marks for hauling the water out, while ceramics within it dates the site to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intermediate Period/New

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<sup>84</sup> J. C. Darnell, "Opening the Narrow Doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 147.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

Kingdom<sup>88</sup>. Ceramics uncovered at this site indicate origin from both the Nile Valley and Kharga, showing the site was being provisioned from both sides<sup>89</sup>. Tundaba is a good example of a dedicated way station set up in an area on a straight line route from the Nile Valley and devoid of other natural resources.

#### 2.4.2 Hilltop Sites

These were covered in detail in Chapter 3, since the majority to date have been located in the region of Dakhla Oasis. They are often placed in or near the confluence of ancient routes. Possible examples of these from other oases have also been noted, for example in Baharia Oasis the high gebel in the region of el-Harra has a number of hut circles at its summit in a position that overlooks a major entry point to the oasis (see Chapter 5). A further possible example was found near one of the passes into the Kharga Oasis where a 1 m high stone wall was built over a crevice as shelter/concealment and there were associated Middle Kingdom ceramics in the vicinity<sup>90</sup>. To date, their function around Dakhla has been interpreted (Kaper & Willems) as representing watch posts established around the 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty for overlooking trade routes developing in the desert around the oasis<sup>91</sup>. Others (Riemer et. al.) agree with this hypothesis and believe that they supported the accommodation of individuals, predominantly NVC people, possibly from the military for more than just an overnight stay in order to control entry points to the oasis<sup>92</sup>. Hilltop sites found to date all seem to be placed at distances at least relatively close to the oases, albeit more recent discoveries are being made in the desert proper. An example of a remoter site is that of 99/38, which lies approximately 20 km southwest of El Gedida, Dakhla<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 169.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>91</sup> O.E. Kaper & H. Willems, "Policing the Desert: Old Kingdom Activity around the Dakhleh Oasis", in R.F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert* (2002), p. 90.

<sup>92</sup> H. Riemer, F. Förster, S. Hendrickx, S. Nussbaum, B. Eichhorn, N. Pöllath, P. Schönfeld and G. Wagner, "Zwei pharaonische Wüstenstationen südwestlich von Dachla", *MDAIK* 61, (2005), p. 344.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

### 2.4.3 Trail Depots

While Hilltop sites are situated within the desert or on the periphery of an oasis, often on or near a conspicuous geological feature such as an inselberg or yardang, there is another type of site in desert regions exhibiting similar characteristics to the former, albeit with elements that would point to a differing functional attribution. Although their true functional disposition is yet to be fully confirmed, these will be referred to as Trail Depots. While research into these respective categories of site is still only in its early phases, and more sites need to be examined in detail, the following features seem to distinguish the two based on evidence to date. Hilltop sites, as discussed earlier, are placed at distances relatively close to oases such that they could conceivably be reached from the oases within a day's walk<sup>94</sup>. Trail depots, on the other hand are most often found in remoter desert regions such as those discussed below along the Abu Ballas Trail, which stretches through the remote and waterless 350 km distance to the Gilf Kebir<sup>95</sup>. The other key difference is the type of vessels found at the respective sites. So called Trail Depots often feature large storage jars such as the Abu Ballas site, where it has been estimated that with these the site had a capacity to store at least 3000 litres of water<sup>96</sup>. Ceramics found at Hilltop sites to date do not approach this kind of capacity, with site 99/38 for example having flasks that would hold a total of 200 litres<sup>97</sup>. An example of a type of site possibly fulfilling a similar function but with no visible water depot is that of Khufu 01/1 (see 2.5.1.2) where there have been no large storage vessels located to date<sup>98</sup>. The alternative possibility provided for this site is that it represented a place that was advantageously placed and during the time under consideration received occasional heavy rainfall that could be utilised by the local ecology and passers-by<sup>99</sup>. The following sections offer further examples.

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<sup>94</sup> The aforementioned site 99/38 at a range of 20km would therefore be reached by a person walking 3 to 5km an hour in 4 to 6 hours.

<sup>95</sup> Riemer et. al. (2005), *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348. Based on Late Period flasks found at 99/38.

<sup>98</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, "Der "Wasserberg des Djedefre" (Chufu 01/1) Ein Lagerplatz mit Expeditionsinschriften der 4. Dynastie in Raum der Oase Dachla", *MDAIK* 51, (2005), p. 258.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

### 2.4.3.1 Abu Ballas

Abu Ballas is a conspicuous conical hill situated approximately 500 km west of the Nile and 200 km west-south-west of Dakhla Oasis<sup>100</sup>. When it was first discovered, it incorporated approximately 300 large storage jars arranged around its base<sup>101</sup>. The major part of this dump has so far been dated to the Old Kingdom<sup>102</sup>. Other material along the Abu Ballas trail has been dated to late Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period, Second Intermediate Period, late Eighteenth Dynasty and the Ramesside Period<sup>103</sup>. Such accumulations of large vessels likely represent a water depot although some of the jars might have contained other provisions. Given their size and weight, it is unlikely that they were taken along by expeditions but were likely refilled from either end of the route possibly by carriers with water skins<sup>104</sup>. In addition, it has been suggested by Kuhlmann that the pots were not necessarily placed there by NVC groups or do they necessarily confirm an NVC presence, but could have been left by “Libyan Desert Police” or other indigenes such as cattle herders from the south-west<sup>105</sup>. There is mounting evidence however that at least at certain times during its usage the trail was being used for activities coordinated from Ayn Asil in Dakhla<sup>106</sup>. Almásy first suggested that Abu Ballas was a caravan water depot and noted that it lay one third of the way from Dakhla to Kufra oasis in Libya, further postulating that the second depot lay in the north-western Gilf Kebir<sup>107</sup>. In addition to the pottery, the hill incorporates petroglyphs just below the summit of a man hunting a gazelle and a cow suckling its calf, both of which have been attributed to a dynastic style by Kuper<sup>108</sup>. Kuhlmann, however, believes that there is no evidence to relate the petroglyphs

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<sup>100</sup> F. Förster and R. Kuper, “Abu Ballas (Pottery Hill): Call for Information”, *Sahara* 14, (2003), p. 167.

<sup>101</sup> R. A. Bermann, “Historic problems of the Libyan Desert”, *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 83, no. 6 (1934), p. 458.

<sup>102</sup> R. Kuper, “By donkey train to Kufra? – How Mr Meri went west”, *Antiquity* 75, no. 290, (2001), p. 801.

<sup>103</sup> F. Förster, “With donkeys, jars and water bags into the Libyan Desert: the Abu Ballas Trail in the Late Old Kingdom/First Intermediate Period”, *BMSAES* 7, (2007), pp. 1-2.

<sup>104</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “The “Oasis Bypass” or the Issue of Desert Trade in Pharaonic Times”, *Tides of the Desert – Gezeiten der Wüste*, (2002), p. 150.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>106</sup> Förster (2007), *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> L. E. Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, (München, 1998), pp. 108-109.

<sup>108</sup> R. Kuper, “Sahel in Egypt: environmental change and cultural development in the Abu Ballas area, Libyan Desert”, in L. Krzyzaniak, M. Kobusiewicz and J. Alexander (eds.), *Environmental Change and*

chronologically to the pottery deposits and furthermore that the motifs are not necessarily NVC but could be C-group as well<sup>109</sup>. Further petroglyphs found more recently around the hill include a quadruped (addax?) surrounded by a ring, the outline of what appears to be a woman and a grid of rectangles<sup>110</sup>.

#### 2.4.3.2 Other Depots along the Abu Ballas Trail

As noted earlier, a string of thirty staging posts have been found along the 350 km trail from Dakhla to the Gilf Kebir and at the time of writing, many of these sites still await complete publication of their excavations and there are currently no firm conclusions as to their function<sup>111</sup>. A number of sites have been referenced to date in published material, some examples are Site 99/31 (between Abu Ballas and Dakhla, evidence for Old Kingdom activity), Site 00/06 (in front of the Gilf Kebir, New Kingdom evidence), Site 99/30 (road sign, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty or earlier) and Site 99/33 (New Kingdom)<sup>112</sup>. Several of these sites incorporate the remains of huts at the bases of the hills in the form of stone slabs and semicircles<sup>113</sup>. In addition, there are remains of domestic pottery, petroglyphs, grinding stones and fireplaces attesting to at least temporary occupation<sup>114</sup>. A group of sites (00/21, 00/24 and 00/7) represent smaller stations which might have incorporated stores of dry pressed grass amongst other finds which possibly represent stores of animal fodder to supply donkeys on the trail<sup>115</sup>. Many of the pots bear potmarks and in one case, below an assemblage of pots, were found the remains of basket ware, which possibly served for transport of the jars and was dated to 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasties<sup>116</sup>. Such an arrangement of baskets used for transporting amphorae is depicted in the tomb of

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*Human Culture in the Nile Basin and Northern Africa until the Second Millennium B.C.*, (Poznan, 1993), p. 213.

<sup>109</sup> Kuhlmann (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>110</sup> P. & P. de Flers, *Egypt Civilization in the Sands*, (Paris, 2000), pp. 215-219.

<sup>111</sup> Kuper (2001), *Op. cit.*, p. 801. For a more comprehensive treatise on these types of sites refer H. Riemer, *El Kharafish*, (Cologne, 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Kuper (2000), *Op. cit.*, p. 344 (Fig. 3).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> H. Riemer, "Control posts and navigation system of the Pharaonic Abu Ballas Trail", *Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa (ACACIA)*, (2006), viewed 23rd April 2011, <[http://www.uni-koeln.de/sfb389/a/a1/download/acacia%20A1-E3\\_report%202006-1.pdf](http://www.uni-koeln.de/sfb389/a/a1/download/acacia%20A1-E3_report%202006-1.pdf)>, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Kuper (2000), *Op. cit.*, p. 375.

Rekhmira and is labelled as carrying wine<sup>117</sup>. From the evidence to date, it is not yet certain whether the collections of jars found at these sites were used for the storage of water or other commodities. Some jars show mineral stains consistent with water evaporation, one contained barley grain, and they are often found with multiple erosion lines caused by wind blown sand, which, taken together with their orientations, indicate repeated use after lying empty for a period<sup>118</sup>. In addition, it is not certain whether these sites were set up for official state purposes or for regional commerce, and whether these sites were occupied as passers-by came or on a semi permanent basis by military or ‘customs officials’ regulating trade traffic or private road station keepers. It is likely that the trail’s use and sponsorship varied over time. Evidence is mounting that at least during the late Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period the authorities decided to install water depots at regular distances, as some of the storage jars found along here bear incised potmarks (with thirty identified to date) known from the governor’s palace at Ayn Asil<sup>119</sup>. Where the trail ultimately led is still unclear, however, current thinking is that it did not veer towards the Kufra region (due to extensive sand dune belts, see Section 2.3.4.2), making this journey unsuitable for donkeys) but likely south to the Gebel Uweinat and hence further to the area of modern Chad and Sudan<sup>120</sup>. It thus would have been an alternative to Nile Valley trails in carrying out trade with the south, with nomadic desert indigenes engaged by the NVC administration in Dakhla to act as middlemen and intermediaries in facilitating the donkey caravans through these arid regions<sup>121</sup>. The discovery of a rock inscription in the Gebel Uweinat seems to add further weight to the argument of a southern continuation of the trail. The inscription incorporates a cartouche of a king likely to be Mentuhotep Nebhepetra, together with depictions of individuals from Yam and Tekhbet in attitudes honouring the king, making offerings<sup>122</sup>. The inscription is situated in an area with other rock art of various periods, stone circles and a substantial rock terrace offering a good view of the surrounding region<sup>123</sup>. The inscription indicates that the Gebel Uweinat region was an important point along the trade routes linking Egypt and its southern African neighbours and provides further evidence about

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<sup>117</sup> Kuhlmann (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>118</sup> Förster (2007), *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> J. Clayton, A. De Trafford and M. Borda, “A Hieroglyphic Inscription found at Jebel Uweinat mentioning Yam and Tekhbet”, *Sahara* 19, (2008), p. 131.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.



the actual location of Yam as referenced in Harkhuf's Travels – as potentially in an Upper Nubian location<sup>124</sup>.

#### 2.4.3.3 Abu Ziyar

On a road between Thebes and Kharga, closer to the Thebaid, situated one third of the way to Kharga is a supply depot referred to as Abu Ziyar<sup>125</sup>. The site consists of several hundred Middle Kingdom Marl-C storage jars situated to the east of a rectangular dry stone structure together with other ceramics of Nilotic and Oasian fabrics<sup>126</sup>. Food preparation is attested at the site, however there seems to be no obvious native water source as at Tundaba. It is possible that water was replenished here in ways similar to Abu Ballas. Official associations are evidenced through mud seals and document sealings of the twelfth dynasty, in addition to ostraca – one of which references a foreman with his crew of three hundred workmen<sup>127</sup>.

#### 2.4.4 Temporary Rest Spots

Temporary rest spots, not having other resources, can be recognised archaeologically through graffiti - often in surrounding rock and scatters of material - ceramic and otherwise. In addition, the natural disposition of the place provides clues. Again, yardangs may provide relative relief in a featureless landscape by casting shade at particular times of the day and shelter from the prevailing winds. An example of such a place is a site northwest of the aforementioned site of Tundaba on a pebble-covered ancient silt deposit with ceramic scatters<sup>128</sup>. The pharaonic ceramics (mostly amphorae) cover an area of 1400 square metres but the largest concentration are found near the remains of ancient trees, forming part of a rain-fed semi-oasis on the high plateau of which this site is a part<sup>129</sup>. The concentration of ceramics around the trees has led the excavators to speculate that this site was a place of repose for travellers passing through, using

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>125</sup> J. C. Darnell, *Abu Ziyar and Tundaba*, as yet unpublished report on Abu Ziyar at, viewed 16<sup>th</sup> January 2011, <[http://www.yale.edu/egyptology/ae\\_tundaba\\_remains.htm](http://www.yale.edu/egyptology/ae_tundaba_remains.htm)>.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 171.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

the trees as shade<sup>130</sup>. An example of a temporary rest spot with no particular resources in the vicinity except for shade from a rock overhang and being on a northern access trail to Kharga is Gebel el-Teir<sup>131</sup>. This site has profuse graffiti of various ages from prehistoric to the modern era<sup>132</sup> and is a good example for the use of petroglyphs as an indicator of temporary presence or a resting place. A further possible example is that of site 30/435-P9-3 near the Darb el-Ghubari, Dakhla (see section 2.3.2.1) where a campsite was discovered on a sandstone outcrop consisting of a hearth and scattering of sherds. The sherds are consistent with transport vessels such as amphorae and might have been used for commodity transport between Dakhla and the Nile Valley<sup>133</sup>. Winlock, in his traversal of the Darb el-Ghubari, also noted “*mahatteh*” or stations, areas with complete pots or sherd scatters, some a half days’ march apart<sup>134</sup>.

The sites of Meri 06/12 and 02/50 west of Dakhla are also rest spots and demonstrate NVC activity in the desert predating the Old Kingdom, with graffiti including NVC motifs but with SMC ceramics (no NVC)<sup>135</sup>. These sites attest to a very early stage of occasional NVC expeditions to the Western Desert<sup>136</sup>, possibly with the assistance of the SMC indigenes.

#### 2.4.5 Seasonal Camps

The site of El Kharafish represents a seasonal camp outside Dakhla Oasis with a predominantly SMC presence engaged in seasonal exploitation of wild gazelle and birds<sup>137</sup> (see also Chapter 8). The site was occupied seasonally, during spring, likely at the end of the rainy season<sup>138</sup>. These SMC seasonal camps reflect the differing adaptation patterns between the local indigenes and the NVC expeditions. In the former it would have been part of a set of year round strategies

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> A. Fakhry, “The Rock Inscriptions of Gabal el-Teir at Kharga Oasis”, *ASAE* 51, (1951), p. 403.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> C. A. Hope, “Oases Amphorae of the New Kingdom”, in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 97.

<sup>134</sup> Winlock, (1936), Op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>135</sup> S. Hendrickx, H. Riemer, F. Förster and J.C. Darnell, “Late Predynastic/Early Dynastic rock art scenes of Barbary sheep hunting in Egypt’s Western Desert. From capturing wild animals to the women of the ‘Acacia House’”, in H. Riemer, F. Förster, M. Herb, and N. Pöllath, (eds.), *Desert Animals in the Eastern Sahara: Status, Economic Significance and Cultural Reflection in Antiquity*, (Cologne, 2009), p. 230.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> H. Riemer, *El Kharafish*, (Cologne, 2011), p. 289.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

for subsistence in the environment in, and around, the oasis. For the latter, it was survival as part of travel through a hostile environment, with deliberately planned resources for the duration of the trip.

## 2.5 Sites and Routes for Commercial Activity

Some expeditions were organised to sites in the Western Desert by the NVC and possibly indigenes for commercial purposes such as to obtain stone or mineral resources. Other more regular commercial activity was carried out that supplied the Nile Valley with oasian produce or vice versa. The remoter desert sites again display evidence for temporary occupation as well as of the activities conducted.

### 2.5.1 Quarries

The need to obtain stone and minerals required the NVC administrators to organise expeditions into inhospitable areas, necessitating an understanding of logistics and supply for the provisioning and organisation of workers and transport of materials back. While much of the quarrying activity was restricted to the vicinity of the Nile Valley, where staples such as limestone were available from south of Cairo to just south of Esna<sup>139</sup>, with Nubian sandstone also from south of Esna<sup>140</sup>, there were some materials that were obtained from the Western Desert – either from the oases themselves, primarily for local use or from remote areas of the desert. Examples of quarries in the oases themselves include Dakhla oasis<sup>141</sup> and Kharga oasis<sup>142</sup>. Other items obtained from the Western Desert included cobalt alums for the colouring of glass<sup>143</sup>. In order to understand the importance of the Western Desert and its resources to the

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<sup>139</sup> R. Klemm, “Steinbruch”, *Lexikon für Ägyptologie*, Vol. V, (Wiesbaden, 1984), column 1277. See also R. Klemm and D. Klemm, *Stones and Quarries in Ancient Egypt*, (London, 2008), pp. 323-325.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, column 1279.

<sup>141</sup> A number of stone structures excavated here, including at Mut el Kharab and Ain Asyl (see Chapter 3) imply local quarrying activity to obtain the raw materials such as sandstone. A number of ancient quarrying sites exist in the southern limits of Dakhla around the cliffs where the desert proper commences – these are yet to be firmly dated (personal communication: A. Zielinski and A. J. Mills, Dakhleh Oasis Project).

<sup>142</sup> Such as Basalt quarries at Gebel et-Tier, see Klemm, *Op. cit.*, column 1281.

<sup>143</sup> A. J. Shortland, “Ancient Exploitation and Use of Cobalt Alums from the Western Desert Oases of Egypt”, *Archaeometry* 48, no. 1, (2006), pp. 153-168.

NVC and the way resources were organised, two examples of sites in relatively remote areas will be considered in more detail - “Chephren’s Quarries” and “Djedefre’s Water Mountain”.

#### 2.5.1.1 “Chephren’s Quarries”

This site is situated at approximately 80km northwest, in the desert, from the town of Tushka (in the Nile Valley north of Wadi Halfa) and close to the desert road between Nakhlai and Dunqul oases<sup>144</sup>. From these quarries were obtained gneiss, amethyst and carnelian<sup>145</sup>. The dating of these activities is possible from inscribed stones found in the area mentioning Old Kingdom rulers Djedefre, Djedkara and the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty’s Amenemhat III<sup>146</sup>, as well as a block incorporating an inscription of Khufu and a stela of Sahure<sup>147</sup>. The regularity of operations can be inferred by the succession of operations under the kings of the Old Kingdom as just described. The extent and importance of these operations can be seen in the number of quarry sites and stelae here, as well possible infrastructure such as the huts on “Quartz Ridge” where stelae were also found as well as a large quantity of jars<sup>148</sup>. A copper implement (identified as a mason’s gad – used for levering blocks apart) was also found 1.6km northwest of the principal quarry, with an inscription on it “Kamu: bow watch: Southern Libyans”<sup>149</sup>. This has been interpreted as referring to the nautical model for worker organisation and that Temehu (Southern Libyans) were possibly employed in the work gangs here<sup>150</sup>. The ancient road from present-day Tushka to the quarries was logically marked with a large halfway cairn as and a quarter way cairn in addition to ancient campsites as well what were interpreted as donkey tracks<sup>151</sup>.

#### 2.5.1.2 Khufu 01/1: “Djedefre’s Water Mountain”

In the region south-west of Dakhla Oasis is a flat-topped sandstone hill known as Khufu 01/1 or “Djedefre’s Water Mountain” which displays evidence, both inscriptional and archaeological for NVC expeditions that were conducted to this region to obtain certain substances. Two

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<sup>144</sup> G. W. Murray, “The Road to Chephren’s Quarries”, *GJ* 94, no. 2, (1939), p. 98 – map on this page.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.110.

primary texts are inscribed on vertical flat surfaces on the hill. The longer text relates how the 4th Dynasty ruler Khufu commissioned two “Overseers of Recruits” (named Iyemery and Beby) to lead 400 men to collect a substance referred to as “mefat”(interpreted to be mineral powder used for paint)<sup>152</sup>. Shorter inscriptions refer to an earlier expedition by Beby with a smaller party of 200 men for the same reason, as well as various references to quarry workers or stone masons and a stylised cartouche of Djedefre – Khufu’s successor<sup>153</sup>.

That these were state-organised expeditions is indicated by the diversity of roles of the members. From the titles inscribed on the surface of the rock it can be seen that expeditions incorporated a “leader of the stonemasons”, stonemasons, scouts, “keepers and overseers of the stonemasons” and “leaders and overseers of the date processors”<sup>154</sup>. From these few roles it can be seen that there was planning applied to the organisation of the actual workers, those who escorted and guided the group through the desert and those responsible for provisioning of the group.

Evidence from the Nile Valley has been discovered to complete the picture whereby pottery fragments bearing the impression of the expedition seals were unearthed in the Giza region as well as bags containing ferric oxide (used for red paint) - apparently, the substance the expedition was to bring back from the desert<sup>155</sup>. It has been inferred that since there is a depiction of a red pharaoh smiting an enemy at “Djedefre’s Water Mountain” and red colouring in a water mountain symbol, that these were executed using the ferric oxide (or red ochre) obtained from the expeditions<sup>156</sup>. It has also been postulated that an area surveyed by them within the Great Sand Sea as they were traversing from Abu Ballas to the El Baz Crater and featuring quarries incorporating red and yellow ochre might have been the destination for the expeditions<sup>157</sup>. These quarries were extensive operations possibly involving the work of hundreds of men over considerable periods<sup>158</sup>. The distance from Abu Ballas to the ochre

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<sup>152</sup> R. Kuper and F. Förster, “Khufu’s ‘mefat’ expeditions into the Libyan Desert”, *EA* 23, (2003), p. 26.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “Der “Wasserberg des Djedefre” (Chufu 01/1) Ein Lagerplatz mit Expeditionsinschriften der 4. Dynastie in Raum der Oase Dachla”, *MDAIK* 51, (2005), pp. 259 – 266.

<sup>155</sup> From an article appearing as “Seals used on Pharaonic desert missions unearthed” in *Middle East Times International*, April 29, 2005 edition.

<sup>156</sup> G. Negro, V. de Michele and B. Piacenza, “The Lost Ochre Quarries of king Cheops and Djedefre in the Great Sand Sea (Western Desert of Egypt)”, *Sahara* 16, (2005), p. 124.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

quarries is estimated at 53 km to the west-south-west, with the proposed route being from Dakhla via Abu Ballas II (most likely site 99/31 – see earlier) and “Djedefre’s Water Mountain”<sup>159</sup>. Other evidence from “Djedefre’s Water Mountain” includes dynastic as well as prehistoric petroglyphs including a depiction of the NVC god of the Western Desert “Igai”<sup>160</sup>. There are a number of “eyelets” hewn into the natural rock apparently for the fastening of unknown items and post holes<sup>161</sup> as well as grinding stones, hearths and numerous ceramics. The ceramics are largely early Old Kingdom with the majority being from Dakhla, together with some imported Nile silt and marl as well as some SMC wares<sup>162</sup>.

### 2.5.2 Oasian Wine

It is known from both the epigraphic evidence in the Nile Valley and archaeological/epigraphic evidence in the oases that the oases were a source of wine production that supplied the Nile Valley. Amphora labels found for vessels in Dakhla refer to the “...the oasis of the south” and “the vineyard of...”<sup>163</sup>. These labels, together with the types of vessels found indicate the significance of wine production in Dakhla. This complements the picture available through Nile Valley texts, which also attest to the significance of wine production in the oases in the Ramesside period<sup>164</sup>.

### 2.5.3 Libyan Desert Glass

Libyan Desert Silica Glass (LD SG) is a natural glass consisting primarily of silica and was observed by the geographer Patrick Clayton in 1932 in the Great Sand Sea with some pieces weighing up to 26 kg<sup>165</sup>. Its use is attested in local prehistoric contexts for toolmaking however, before the pectoral of Tutankhamun, it was not confirmed in dynastic NVC use<sup>166</sup>. Other

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>160</sup> Kuper (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>161</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “Westwüste, Fundstelle Chufu 01/01”, *Rundbrief DAI Abteilung Kairo*, October, (2006), p. 35.

<sup>162</sup> Kuper (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>163</sup> S. Marchand and P. Tallet, “Ayn Asil et l’oasis de Dakhla au Nouvel Empire”, *BIFAO* 99, (1999), p. 318.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>165</sup> V. de Michele, “The Libyan Desert Glass scarab in Tutankhamen’s pectoral”, *Sahara* 10, (1998), p. 107.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

possible examples of its use are exemplified in an Old Kingdom knife in the Cairo Museum and two New Kingdom scorpions from the Elephantine Island museum<sup>167</sup>. Following gemmological tests it was determined that a scarab incorporated in a pectoral found in the tomb of king Tutankhamen was indeed fashioned from LDSG<sup>168</sup>. While the presence of a Western Desert resource such as LDSG has been taken by some as further evidence for a trade route to obtain this commodity<sup>169</sup>, there are others who maintain that such a single confirmed example in the Nile Valley context is insufficient to explain expeditions or trade networks. The rationale being that the object in Tutankhamen's pectoral was most likely a single piece that migrated with a Western Desert indigene that travelled along the Abu Ballas Trail and then traded the piece<sup>170</sup>. It is the author's opinion that there is currently insufficient evidence from both the Western Desert and the Nile Valley for any conclusive statements about the existence of official exploitation of this resource or not.

## 2.6 Summary

Of the routes covered in this chapter, it was seen that a number of these incorporate archaeological evidence highly indicative of use during the pharaonic period. These include the Darb el Rufuf, Darb el Dush, Darb el Ghubari, Darb Ain Amur, Darb Siwa, Mediterranean Coast Road and Abu Ballas Trail. Of these, we have datable evidence for usage of the Darb el Rufuf during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intermediate Period/New Kingdom at least (site of Tundaba), Darb el Dush from 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (mud brick temple from this time), Darb Siwa during at least the 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (temple of Nectanebo I at Bahrein), Mediterranean Coast road at least from the New Kingdom (Ramesside forts) and the Abu Ballas Trail (late Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period, Second Intermediate Period, late Eighteenth Dynasty and the Ramesside Period). Using these roads singly or in combination would already have been sufficient to access Kharga and Dakhla oases. It is also likely that direct routes were deployed to Dakhla such as the Darb el Tawil to Balat. It is unlikely that these roads were used as the primary route to Baharia (that is, via Kharga, Dakhla and Farafra) which raises the likelihood that a direct route, to Baharia, such as the Darb el Bahnasa, was used from the Nile Valley. In the case of Siwa, the Darb Siwa was a known route from Baharia, while the Mediterranean Coast Road or the direct route

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<sup>167</sup> Negro et. al. *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>168</sup> De Michele, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>169</sup> As in Negro et. al. *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>170</sup> Kuhlmann (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

from the Nile Valley via Qara Oasis and the Wadi Natrun to Memphis provided other alternatives.

It was seen that the earliest evidence for NVC forays into the Western Desert is available through the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty desert site of Khufu 01/1, indicating that major expeditions (200 to 400 men) were mounted at this time here to obtain certain substances, possibly ferric oxide. These were state-organised expeditions, as is indicated by the diversity of roles of the members such as the “leader of the stonemasons”, stonemasons and scouts, indicating that there was planning applied to the organisation of the actual workers. The expeditions likely traversed Dakhla and Abu Ballas II to reach Khufu 01/1 and were likely sponsored directly from the Nile Valley administration.

By the time the NVC had established major permanent settlements in Dakhla (such as at Ain el Gezareen or Ain Asyl), it seems that expeditions at least from the late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards were being administered from Dakhla itself, as seen in the Abu Ballas trail with its depots and pots bearing potmarks with similarities to those found at Ain Asyl. Tablets found at Ain Asyl also document the provisioning of officials as they traversed the desert (see Chapter 3). Routes such as the Abu Ballas trail demonstrate ample evidence for state sponsored activities along its length (through vessels with pot marks and king’s cartouche in Gebel Uweinat) at certain times. It is also not yet clear however whether the Trail Depot sites were set up originally for official state purposes or for regional commerce, and whether these sites were occupied as passers-by came or on a semi permanent basis by military or customs officials or private road station keepers. In any case, whether they were set up for state purposes by the Dakhla/NVC administration or were used and maintained by more egalitarian groups, they are indicators of a regular usage system, cooperation and possible contact between groups as evidenced by the mix of SMC and NVC ceramics at these sites.

Once the NVC were established in the oases it seems that more regular commercial activity was carried out that supplied the Nile Valley with oasian produce (such as wine and cobalt alums) or from the Nile Valley to the oases (such as Nile Valley sourced fish at Ain El Gezareen, refer Chapter 3, and Nile Valley ceramics at other oases refer Chapters 3, 4 and 5). The requirement to obtain stone and minerals required the NVC administrators to organise expeditions into inhospitable areas, necessitating an understanding of logistics and supply for the provisioning and organisation of workers and transport of materials back. While much of the quarrying activity was restricted to the vicinity of the Nile Valley there were some areas such as Chephren’s Quarries that required transport to and from deeper desert areas. Materials were also



obtained from the Western Desert –from the oases themselves, primarily for local oasian use. Examples of quarries in the oases themselves include Dakhla oasis and Kharga oasis.

Contact between the SMC and NVC would have commenced from at least the time of the early expeditions to Khufu 01/1 (the expeditions would have passed directly through SMC areas and there was a mix of NVC and SMC ceramics found at Khufu 01/1), with a subsequent disappearance of the SMC from the archaeological record around the late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (see Chapter 8). This implies a span of at least three hundred years of contact between the groups. The initial expeditions, without a permanent base at Dakhla, would have been exposed to a greater level of vulnerability in their traversals and would likely have encouraged cooperation with the indigenes and sought their knowledge of the area. As the NVC became more established over time, with permanent major settlements and increased knowledge of the landscape, they might have had less reliance on the locals. The ultimate disappearance of the SMC from the record, however, and the reasons thereof are still unclear (refer Chapter 8).

In contrast to NVC state sponsored activities, from sites such as El Kharafish we know that the SMC indigenes engaged in seasonal subsistence activities at fixed camp locations in the desert. This seasonal subsistence would have been part of a set of year round strategies for subsistence in the environment in and around the oasis. Moving from the core oasis to these camps indicates that at certain times, there were resources such as game available in a greater quantity or variety than was found in the oasis itself. At the same time, the SMC would have required knowledge on how to sustain themselves whilst at these camps with water brought in or sourced locally after rains. For the NVC expeditions, it was survival as part of travel through a hostile environment, with deliberately planned resources for the duration of the trip.

It was seen that the layout and courses of the various roads and routes covered traversing the Western Desert reflected adaptive strategies particular to arid environments. It was found that overall the course of a route was influenced by three factors:

- The directness of the route from one point to the next
- The existence of water sources along the way
- The topography of the route

The topography of the Western Desert landscape was conducive to straight line travel to minimise travel time in an arid landscape. As such, many of the routes covered were direct, shortest distance lines from point to point. An examples of this was the Darb el-Tawil which is the direct route from the Nile Valley to Dakhla and is an alternative to reaching Dakhla via

Kharga with the Darb el-Deir, being significantly shorter, however requiring travel across desert only, whereas the longer route via Kharga provided further opportunities for provision along the way. Given the options, the choice of route might have been based on the prevailing conditions such as the seasons which would have had an effect on the availability of opportunistic rainfall as well the amount of water required for the journey. Such trade offs might have led to decisions to use less risk averse routes during summer months, such as via the major oases.

Existence of water sources along the way was a significant determinant for the choice of route for the Western Desert. As was seen, in many cases there were options for faster, more direct routes without access to springs. It was seen that in Pharaonic times, donkeys made access to water supplies more critical than later on with the introduction of the camel. It was seen that roads often followed the placement of oases and springs. This is most evident in the route that links the Kharga, Dakhla and Baharia oasis circuit. A further example of this is the Darb Siwa, linking Siwa and Baharia oases with some placement of springs and minor oases along the way.

An important topographic feature relevant for entry and egress from Western Desert oases is the “*naqb*” or pass that allows one to enter oases from the escarpment since they are generally situated in geological depressions. Many of the routes discussed describe a direct line to or between these passes as was seen in routes such as the Darb el Rufuf leading from the Nile Valley to Kharga and linking the Naqb el-Rufuf as a natural entry point to the depression.

Apart from the natural disposition of the desert affecting travel, there were a number of survival strategies that were implemented by the cultures making the journeys. It was seen that in the absence of springs or intervening oases that in some instances the establishment of artificial supplies in the form of depots was carried out. Routes devoid of natural water were supplemented by depots that included food and water – as was seen on the Abu Ballas Trail with a string of depots leading from Dakhla to the Gilf Kebir. The types identified overall were major reprovisioning stations (such as Tundaba and Abu Ziyar) with accommodation infrastructure and man-made cisterns, Hilltop sites with some shelter and a focus on oversight of an area, trail depots with shelter and stores and temporary rest spots with evidence of temporary habitation due to availability of shade and so on. The level of appointment of these sites likely depended upon the importance and frequency of use. The sites were usually situated near inselbergs or yardangs to provide shade, shelter and act as a conspicuous landmark for navigation.

Additionally, to assist with navigation, way markers or *alamat* were used to indicate the course of a route and assist in navigating from one point to the next by enabling a bearing to be set from one point, especially if the marker was placed on a hill.

A further adaptation strategy could be seen in the actual administration and organisation of expeditions into the desert. These were planned enterprises having to sustain hundreds of individuals. The planning included the assignment of various roles to guide, manage and support the expedition. The administrative bureaucracy also ensured the proper provisioning and likely the optimal choice of route for the expedition. The organisation of major expeditions to the Western Desert should be seen as just another facet of an administration that was able to organise major undertakings into a variety of remote areas. As an example, copper mining activities took Pharaonic era expeditions east to as far as the Wadi Araba in the Sinai, which also featured stations on the roads leading there<sup>171</sup>.

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<sup>171</sup> B. Rothenberg, *Timna Valley of the Biblical Copper Mines*, (Lancashire, 1972), p. 201.

## Chapter 3

### Dakhla Oasis

#### 3.1 Introduction

In looking at the Pharaonic period society and culture of Dakhla Oasis, the oasis will be considered through each of its significant sites. The oasis itself will be divided into three sectors – Western, Central and Eastern. In each sector, the evidence for significant funerary and settlement areas will be examined for smaller sites as well as the major ones.

In the Western Sector the major sites are Amheida and Ain el-Gezareen, in the Central sector it is Mut el-Kharab while in the Eastern Sector Balat (Qila ed-Dabba and Ain Asil) and Ain Tirghi are the major Pharaonic period sites. In addition to the major settlement and funerary areas there are other aspects that require consideration in formulating the Pharaonic period picture of Dakhla. These are the petroglyphic localities containing both pictorial and epigraphic evidence from the period, the Hilltop sites and the SMC unit sites.

To date there is evidence available of NVC cultural interaction stretching back to Predynastic and Early Dynastic times<sup>1</sup>. The first major presence however of NVC in Dakhla is manifest in each of the sectors through smaller sites as well as the major ones of Ain el-Gezareen, Mut el-Kharab and Balat. While the work in Dakhla is far from complete and the picture of NVC occupation is a changing one, to date the late Old Kingdom sites of Balat are still seen as the regional capital and seat of the governing authority of the time.

A very clear picture emerges in Dakhla of a distribution of sites over time and a clear association of these sites with springs.

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<sup>1</sup> M. M. A. McDonald, “Dakhleh Oasis in Predynastic and Early Dynastic times: Bashendi B and the Sheikh Muftah units”, *Archéo-Nil* 12, (2002), pp. 109-120.

## 3.2 Settlement and Funerary Sites

### 3.2.1 Western Sector

#### 3.2.1.1 Individual Settlement Sites

In the northernmost part of the Western Sector, closest to the escarpment, the Dakhla Oasis Project (DOP) 1978 survey located two sites, 33/390-I5-1 and I6-2. The former site incorporated several rough stonewalls from single-roomed structures, as well as hand made and wheel made sherds<sup>2</sup>. While the wheel made pottery is dated to Dynasty VI and non-intrusive<sup>3</sup>, there are no further details on the dating of the structures. The other, I6-2 similarly featured surface scatterings of late Dynasty VI ceramics<sup>4</sup>.

Approximately 3 km directly south of I6-2 lay a cluster of three sites 33/390-I9-2, I9-3 and I9-4. Site I9-2 of these incorporates a cemetery of approximately 200 tombs cut into rock<sup>5</sup>, mainly disturbed and reused in Roman times. Evidence for pottery production in the form of kilns was recovered from the nearby I9-3 site, which covers 80 hectares and also includes traces of mud brick structures<sup>6</sup>. The site incorporates two circular mud brick kilns having a diameter of approximately 1m<sup>7</sup>. Also nearby, site I9-4 incorporates a cemetery of approximately 150 tombs and graves dug into a hill adjacent to I9-3<sup>8</sup>. Common to this cluster of sites are Old Kingdom ceramics including characteristic “Meidum” bowls and bread moulds<sup>9</sup>.

Approximately 2 km southeast of the aforementioned cluster lay site 32/390-K2-1, which incorporated another cemetery, of approximately 100 graves<sup>10</sup>. Of interest here are a series of pottery offering tables recovered from graves, which are in the tradition of ceramic

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<sup>2</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the First Season of Survey, October–December, 1978", *JSSEA IX*, (1979), p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> *Op.cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> C. A. Hope, "Dakhleh Oasis Project– Report on the Study of the Pottery and Kilns", *JSSEA IX*, (1979), p. 196.

<sup>8</sup> Mills, *Op.cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> A. J. Mills "The Dakhleh Oasis Project: A Report on the First Two Seasons", *ASAE 67*, (1982), p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> Mills (1979), *Op.cit.*, p. 172.

offering trays from the Nile Valley<sup>11</sup>. At approximately 1km southwest of K2-1 is 32/390-J3-1 which also incorporates a relatively large cemetery of 150 Dynasty VI tombs comprising rock cut chambers, shaft tombs and rectangular mud brick mastabas<sup>12</sup>.

Less than 1 km to the northeast of the previous is 32/390-K1-2, consisting of a cemetery of fifty graves dug into the sides of a fossil spring mound<sup>13</sup>. The graves are predominantly subterranean with brick lining and vaulting, contents have been dated to the Second Intermediate Period<sup>14</sup> on the basis of ceramic comparison of vessels from graves 1, 2, 3 and 4 with material of the same period from Upper and Middle Egypt<sup>15</sup>. A further 8km south the site 33/390-K9-1 comprises fifteen contiguous brick walled rooms, a group of pottery kilns with occupation debris up to 85 cm deep as well as pottery dated to the late Old Kingdom<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> A. J. Mills, "Pharaonic Egyptians in the Dakhleh Oasis", in C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills (eds.), *Reports from the Survey of the Dakhleh Oasis, Western Desert of Egypt, 1977–1987*, (1999), p.175.

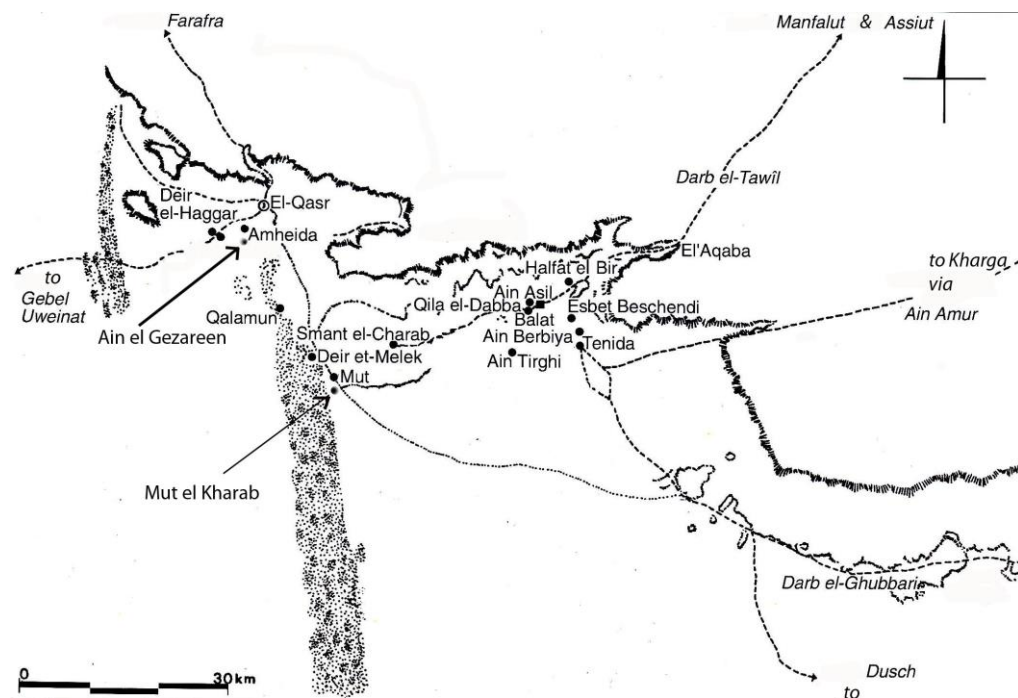
<sup>12</sup> Mills (1979), *Op.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>13</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Second Season of Survey, September–December, 1979", *JSSEA* X, (1980), p. 257.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> C. A. Hope, "Dakhleh Oasis Project – Report on the Study of the Pottery and Kilns", *JSSEA* X, (1980), p. 296.

<sup>16</sup> Mills, *Op.cit.*, p. 259.



**Figure 3 Major Sites of Dakhla Oasis**

### 3.2.1.2 Amheida

Nearby lies the site of Amheida, 33/390 - L9-1, which has revealed evidence of pharaonic occupation. Of primary interest to date is the area designated Area 4.1 where it is suspected a temple once stood. Area 4.1 is at the centre of the site, and this was where in the 2003/2004 season a collection of nine bronze statuettes of Osiris were found, to which the excavators drew comparisons with votive statuettes found in the Late Period temple of Ain el-Manawir in Kharga Oasis<sup>17</sup>. Further evidence was found in the following season, in the form of re-used temple blocks bearing the cartouches of the Dynasty XXVI kings Necho II, Psamtek II and

<sup>17</sup> R. S. Bagnall reporting on excavations at Amheida in "A Report of the Dakhleh Oasis Project during the 2003-2004 Field Season" (a report submitted to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Activities), viewed on 05 March 2011,

<<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/index.php#reports>>, p. 35.

See also M. Wuttman, L. Coulon, and F. Gombert, "An assemblage of bronze statuettes in a cult context: The temple of 'Ayn Manâwir", in M. Hill and D. Schorsch (eds.), *Gifts for the gods: Images from Egyptian temples*, (New York, 2007), pp. 167-173.

Amasis with the temple to Thoth of Set-Wah<sup>18</sup>. Evidence from Dynasty XXIII was also found in the form of blocks from the reign of King Petubastis as well as a hieratic stela from the reign of King Harsiese<sup>19</sup>. Further evidence of the Theban 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty was found in the following season in the form of a stela from the reign of Takelot III which records a donation to the temple of Thoth located here as well as the names of several priests from the temple<sup>20</sup>. This, in addition to evidence from the reign of Petubastis indicates that at least parts of the Western Desert (such as Dakhla) were under the control of the Theban 23<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty, which was previously unknown<sup>21</sup>. In addition to temple masonry, the ceramics uncovered in this area represent the Late Period (dimple bowls), Second Intermediate Period to New Kingdom (oasis amphorae, bread cones, jars and bowls) and Old Kingdom (bread moulds, Meidum ware and polished red wares)<sup>22</sup>. In addition the excavators report incised motifs on the bread moulds similar to the type found in Ain el Gezareen and Mut<sup>23</sup>.

In the flatter plain just to the east of Amheida, the site 33/390-L9-2 comprises a cemetery of 100 graves, the majority of which are pit graves (such as Grave 1), with traces of superstructure detected in some instances<sup>24</sup>. A deposit of seventeen vessels was discovered at the south side of one of these superstructures and was originally dated by the excavators to Dynasty III<sup>25</sup>. This dating is questionable, however and even Hope at the time conceded that all the vessels displayed a similar technology to 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty vessels<sup>26</sup>.

A further 3km south, the site 32/390-L2-1 contains a cemetery, which includes a Grave 3 of an adult. The funerary accompaniments consisted of a bowl, which has been likened to Nile Valley material of the First Intermediate Period<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> R.S. Bagnall, Directors Report "Excavations at Amheida 2005", viewed 05 March 2011, <<http://www.amheida.org/inc/pdf/Report2005.pdf>>, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> P. Davoli and O. Kaper, "Area 4.1" (Amhida) in A.J. Mills (ed.) *Dakhleh Oasis Project Report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the 2004-2005 Field Season*, (2005), viewed 05 March 2011, <<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/index.php#reports>>, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Mills, *Op.cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Hope, *Op.cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



### 3.2.1.3 Ain el-Gezareen

The site of Ain el-Gezareen, 32/390-K2-2 was first surveyed in the DOP 1979 season, which quickly established that it was a major Dynasty VI site (150m by 500m) with evidence for industrial activity and heavy brick walls<sup>28</sup>. Subsequent work on ceramics showed that the site dates even earlier from at least the late 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, with late 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty representation also<sup>29</sup>. This therefore represents the earliest major habitation site in the oasis to date. The site is approximately 3km south of Amheida and lies along a north-south series of fossil spring mounds. Possibly the location of the site was related to the placement of these springs. Subsequent excavations have revealed further details about the structures and activities conducted here. By the first excavation season (1996-1997) seventeen distinct spaces had been uncovered, bounded by irregular mud brick walls uncharacteristic of typical pharaonic construction<sup>30</sup>. By the 1997/1998 season, heavy walls forming a large rectangular enclosure (80m by 55m) had been discovered which enclosed the lesser structures<sup>31</sup>. Such apparently defensive structures have also been observed at Ain Asil, their real purpose – actual defence of an area or symbolic remains undetermined to date. It is possible that these served as defences of the area during initial settlement by the NVC. A structure that stands apart from the others is “Building C” which lies atop the eastern wall of the main enclosure having straight walls and square corners<sup>32</sup>. It incorporates mud plaster rendering on walls as well as paint (red and yellow) and an open court with two rows of square pillars and buttresses<sup>33</sup>. The excavators are yet to establish the purpose of this building although they have drawn parallels to a similar building excavated at Ain Asil<sup>34</sup>. It is noteworthy that the building stands in stark contrast to the rest of the structures and might have fulfilled an administrative or cult role.

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<sup>28</sup> Mills, *Op.cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>29</sup> A. J. Mills, "Another Old Kingdom Site in the Dakhleh Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> A. J. Mills, "A Note on a New Old Kingdom Site in the Dakhleh Oasis ", *JSSEA* XXV, (1995), p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> Mills (2002), *Op.cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> A.J. Mills and O.E. Kaper, "Ain el-Gazzareen: Developments in the Old Kingdom Settlement", in G. E. Bowen and C. A. Hope (eds.), *The Oasis Papers III: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Dakhleh OasisProject*, (2003), p. 127.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

A predominance of faunal remains has also been noted, including domestic cattle and goat together with indigenous gazelle, Nile oyster and Nile catfish<sup>35</sup>. The latter two provide an interesting picture of active trade here and provision from the Nile Valley. Frequent finds of Nile Valley imported fine ceramics further support this notion<sup>36</sup>

The commonest ceramic finds include heavy, Old Kingdom bread moulds together with late Dynasty VI polished bowls and storage jars<sup>37</sup> as well as the ubiquitous Meidum bowl<sup>38</sup>. There seems to have been a halt in the occupation of this site following late Dynasty VI since there are no later ceramics present<sup>39</sup>. A tentative link might be made here whereby the establishment of Ain Asil coincided with the abandonment of this site. A study of the fabrics revealed that there is significant occurrence of Nile silt which attests to the import of wares from the Nile Valley<sup>40</sup>. Other artefacts leading the excavators to deduce that there were baking facilities include grinding stones, as well as botanical remains, constituting over 90% barley and emmer – typical bread making ingredients<sup>41</sup>. Some of the aforementioned bread moulds incorporate seal impressions<sup>42</sup>, similar to a type found in the governors' palaces at Ain Asil<sup>43</sup>. In all some forty-five seal impressions were discovered with seventeen present on the bread moulds, while others were marked on seals for bags or other small objects<sup>44</sup>. Attempts have been made by the excavators to draw parallels with seal impressions recovered from Ain Asil. They have found similarities in the use of ceramic seals and the button seal usage versus

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<sup>35</sup> Mills (1995), *Op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> A. Thomson, "Preliminary remarks on the ceramic material from Ein el-Gazareen" in A. J. Mills, "Report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the Excavation activities in 2007 at the Old Kingdom Settlement at Ain Gazzareen, Dakhleh Oasis", viewed 10 April 2010, <<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/index.php#reports>>, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Mills (2002), *Op.cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> C. A. Hope reporting on ceramics from Ain el Gazzareen in "The Field Activities of the Dakhleh Oasis Project during the 2002-2003 Field Season" (a report submitted to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Activities), viewed on 10 April 2010, <<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/index.php#reports>>, pp. 9-11.

<sup>41</sup> Mills (1995), *Op.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> Consisting of two birds, an ankh and a fallen enemy figure as well as geometric designs and a lizard.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Mills and Kaper (2003), *Op.cit.*, p. 128.

cylinder seals, with button seals being predominant<sup>45</sup>. These seal impressions might indicate that the production was of an official nature.

On the edge of Ain el Gezareen is a SMC site labelled Location 404 measuring 70 by 36m<sup>46</sup>. The side of the site closer to the Old Kingdom settlement revealed a mix of late Old Kingdom ceramics together with SMC fabrics, the latter being in a higher proportion<sup>47</sup>. The seemingly contemporaneous collocation of the two settlements might imply a peaceful co-existence of the two cultures during this period.

### 3.2.2 Central Sector

#### 3.2.2.1 Individual Settlement Sites

In comparison with the Western Sector, the Central Sector contains far less Pharaonic occupation and mortuary sites. It is noteworthy however, that a number of sites which the DOP excavators classed as predominantly Neolithic (or SMC) included Old Kingdom lithic and ceramic types. Examples of these are 31/405-F7-1, 31/405-G6-1, 31/405/K10-5, 32/390-P5-1 and 32/405-A2-3<sup>48</sup>. There are a number of possible reasons for the presence of Pharaonic material in these predominantly SMC contexts: 1) the use by SMC units (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed coverage of this culture) of NVC technologies or 2) since these sites mainly correspond with spring mounds, the possibility that these were temporary occupation sites through the ages due to water availability. This second point is given further weight by such sites as 31/405-G6-1 which includes not only Pharaonic but Roman material as well<sup>49</sup>.

In the southern half of the Central Sector, a cemetery dating to the Saite Period was found at 31/405-F6-1<sup>50</sup>. This site incorporates over one hundred tombs, one of which, Tomb 2, was excavated and its ceramic content dated to early Saite Period<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> M.M.A. McDonald reporting on Holocene Prehistory in "Report submitted to the Supreme Council of Activities on the 2000/2001 Field Activities of the Dakhleh Oasis Project", viewed on 2nd February 2011, < <http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/assets/documents/dakhleh-report-2000-2001.pdf>>, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Third Season of Survey, September–December, 1980", *JSSEA* XI, (1981), pp. 178–179.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

In the northern half of the Central Sector (approximately 5km south east of Amheida) was found a small mud brick temple, 32/405-A2-1<sup>52</sup>. It is a rectangular building containing nine rooms and decorated with painted plaster<sup>53</sup>. Pottery from the site was assigned to Dynasty XXVI and after<sup>54</sup>.

### 3.2.2.2 Mut el-Kharab

This site lies slightly south of the modern centre of Mut. Initial survey of the site by the DOP of the surface remains in 1980 collected diagnostic sherds from the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom and Late Pharaonic periods<sup>55</sup>. Old Kingdom wares found at this time included red-coated polished Nile silt vessels and were found in an undisturbed context beneath the temple ruins in association with local (SMC) hand made wares<sup>56</sup>. The initial presence or possible settlement by the SMC people here might be explained by the presence of the major spring here. The subsequent settlement by the NVC was most likely for the same reasons. It is noteworthy that Mut el-Kharab in this respect is the best example in Dakhla of mixed SMC and Old Kingdom contexts<sup>57</sup>. Subsequent work has pushed the chronology even earlier with finds of ceramics that indicate activity at the site during the Early Dynastic Period, some of a type that occurs from Dynasty II onwards<sup>58</sup>.

The site is surrounded by a mud brick enclosure measuring 240 metres north-south by 180 metres east-west with walls up to 5 metres in thickness<sup>59</sup>. To the north of the site are a series of mounds, many incorporating cemeteries. Of these, Ain Marqula, revealed ceramics of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>56</sup> C.A. Hope, "Dakhleh Oasis Project – Report on the Study of the Pottery and Kilns: third Season", *JSSEA* XI (1981), p. 233.

<sup>57</sup> C. A. Hope, "Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2005", *BACE* 16 (2005), p. 53.

<sup>58</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, W. Dolling, C. Hubschmann, P. Kucera, R. Long and A. Stevens, "Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2006", *BACE* 17 (2006), p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> C. A. Hope, "Egypt and Libya: The excavations at Mut el-Kharab in Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis", *The Artefact* 24, (2001), p. 34.

Dynasties XXVI to XXVII while Humiyat B revealed ceramics ascribed to the Late Period<sup>60</sup>. Excavations in a cemetery south of the temple complex revealed the presence of a large sandstone sarcophagus within one of these tombs, from which small, roughly-made faience shabti-figures originated. Amongst the rubble that resulted from the exposure of this tomb were found fragments of pottery vessels of Late Period date, mainly of Dynasty XXVII water kegs<sup>61</sup>. This type of “oasis keg” is a unique type, constituting part of a regional style<sup>62</sup> that was manufactured in the southern oases<sup>63</sup> and is assumed to have been used for the transport of liquids and grain<sup>64</sup>.

Excavations in 2001 in trench TT4 revealed Old Kingdom wares including fine marl Meidum bowls of a type predating Dynasty VI, in association once again with SMC wares<sup>65</sup>. The dating of these wares is a significant point since, as has and will be seen, there is a predominance of late Dynasty VI wares in other sites, especially Ain Asil. Excavations in 2008 and again in 2009 furthermore revealed mud brick structures, some extending for 50m, together with hearths, pot emplacements and ash deposits – implying domestic usage, while a stone paved structure from the same time indicates a structure of greater status<sup>66</sup>. The associated ceramics consisted of SMC forms together with Nile Valley forms with the SMC dominating in quantity, all of which dated to Dynasty IV-V<sup>67</sup>.

In various places, within the site enclosure walls, structural remains and inscribed blocks from later periods have been uncovered in a number of trenches. These provide further evidence for the site chronology and the activities that occurred here. The evidence to date

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>61</sup> C. A. Hope, "The 2001–2 Excavations at Mut el-Kharab in the Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt", *The Artefact* 26, (2003), p. 67.

<sup>62</sup> C. Hubschmann, "The Oases of the Western Desert of Egypt during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods: The Study of a Regional Identity", PHD thesis, Monash University (Melbourne, 2009), p. 241.

<sup>63</sup> C. A. Hope, M. E. Eccleston, S. Marchand and D. Damell, "Kegs and Flasks from the Dakhleh Oasis", *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 6, (2000), pp. 189–190.

<sup>64</sup> S. Marchand, "Les conteneurs de transport et de stockage de l'oasis de Kharga. De la Basse Époque (XXVIIe-XXXe dynasties) à l'époque ptolémaïque" in S. Marchand and A. Marangou (eds.), *Amphores d'Égypte de la Basse Époque à l'époque arabe*, *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 8, (2007), p. 491.

<sup>65</sup> Hope (2001), *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>66</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, J. Cox, W. Dolling, J. Milner, and A. Pettman, "Report on the 2009 Excavations at Mut el-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis", *BACE* 20, (2009), p. 63.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

seems to indicate that this was at times a cult site incorporating temple structures as well. As an example, evidence from TT4 indicates that the foundation of a temple sat on top of, and cut into, the Old Kingdom deposits<sup>68</sup> implying at least a post-Old Kingdom chronology. TT6 revealed ceramic material dated to Dynasties XXV-XXVI as well as a decorated sandstone block depicting Psamtek I making offerings to Re-Horakhty and Atum<sup>69</sup>, providing further evidence for a Dynasty XXVI chronology. From TT5 were recovered offering jars and bread moulds of a type used for baking offering bread, also dated to Dynasty XXV- early XXVI<sup>70</sup>. The enclosure walls have been interpreted by the excavators as temple temenos walls and excavations in the 2004 season in trench T14 provided further evidence for their chronology. T14 revealed a layer of collapse containing quantities of intact and fragmentary ceramics dated to Dynasty XXVII<sup>71</sup>. Further excavation in this trench below this layer revealed the temenos walls at a depth of 2 metres below the surface of the site<sup>72</sup>, indicating an age pre-dating Dynasty XXVII.

The evidence for cult activity is varied but demonstrates consistent themes. Inscribed blocks uncovered that once decorated major stone structures on the site frequently display cult iconography and references. Two stelae obtained in Mut by a British officer, Lyons, in 1894 were claimed to have originated from Mut el-Kharab – the larger of the two was published by Gardiner<sup>73</sup> and references an oracle to Seth, and several Seth-priests. In TT4 an inscribed block was located containing references to a high priest and the name of Seth also<sup>74</sup>. It is noteworthy that this block features two successive versions of Seth titles, one inscribed over the other. The former, “great of strength” is attributed to between the New Kingdom and first half of the Third Intermediate Period, the latter “the great god” to Dynasty XXV or after<sup>75</sup>. In addition, the determinative was changed from a Seth animal to an anthropomorphic figure<sup>76</sup>. Excavations in

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<sup>68</sup> Hope (2001), *Op.cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>71</sup> C. A. Hope, “Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2004”, *BACE* 15, (2004), p. 30.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> A. H. Gardiner, “The Dakhleh Stela”, *JEA* 19, (1933), pp. 19-30.

<sup>74</sup> Hope (2001), *Op.cit.*, p.42.

<sup>75</sup> O. E. Kaper, “Two decorated Blocks from the Temple of Seth in Mut El-Kharab”, *BACE* 12, (2001), p. 74.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

a cemetery south of the enclosure uncovered a tomb (Tomb 2) in which the owner is identified as a priest of Seth<sup>77</sup>. The decorative scheme dated this tomb to Dynasty XXVII. Items of a votive nature were found under the paving of a two-roomed building (TT6), including figurines, one of which was a Seth animal and dated to the New Kingdom<sup>78</sup>. A pit containing a deposit of moulds for the production of an image of Seth in his winged, falcon-headed form (as seen in the Temple of Hibis in Kharga) was also found<sup>79</sup>. Stelae mentioning Seth have been variously located such as a Ramesside block incorporating a prayer to Seth and a sandstone sphinx with references to Seth<sup>80</sup>. Successive seasons have uncovered decorated blocks dating to Thutmose III, Horemheb, Ramesses II and Ramesses IV which also likely derive from religious monuments, with Amun and Seth being the principal deities<sup>81</sup>. A large sandstone block found also indicates activities during the Middle Kingdom, with a record by a governor, Sa-Igai, making additions in a shrine to the god Igai<sup>82</sup>. Note that references to Igai have also been found in Ain Asil through correspondence regarding offerings of bovines to the god<sup>83</sup>. The block provides the governor's full title of "leader of nobility, mayor, chief of priests"<sup>84</sup>, which seems conformant with the Nile Valley titles during the Middle Kingdom (with "mayor and overseer of priests") and in contrast to the previous 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty local governors whose titles differed from their Nile Valley counterparts<sup>85</sup>. The inscription also indicates that the unification occurring in the Nile Valley had impacts in Dakhla as well, and that Mut and its temple to Igai were important to the new administration, the capital possibly having been moved here and the

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<sup>77</sup> C. A. Hope, "Report on the Excavations at Mut el-Kharab and Ismant el-Kharab in 2001-2", *BACE* 13, (2002), p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> Hope (2001), *Op.cit.*, Pl. 10.

<sup>79</sup> C. A. Hope, "Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2005", *BACE* 16, (2005), p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> Hope (2001), *Op.cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> R. J. Long, "Ceramics at Mut el-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis: Evidence of a New Kingdom Temple", *BACE* 19, (2008), p. 106.

<sup>82</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, W. Dolling, E. Healey, J. Milner, "The Excavations at Mut el-Kharab Dakhleh Oasis in 2008", *BACE* 19 (2008), p. 52.

<sup>83</sup> L. Pantalacci, "La documentation épistolaire du palais des gouverneurs à Balat-‘Ayn Asil", *BIFAO* 98, (1998), p. 314.

<sup>84</sup> Hope et. al. (2008), *Op.cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

new governor having closer links to the Nile Valley as evidenced by access to more skilled artists, possibly supplied from the Memphite area<sup>86</sup>.

Despite the ceramic evidence and evidence from inscribed blocks attesting to the veneration of firstly Igai then Seth and Amun in later periods, there seems to be a gap in structural remains between the Old Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period (likely Dynasties XX1 to XXV)<sup>87</sup>.

To further evaluate the presence of a cult centre in the absence of structural remains Colin Renfrew's technique for recognising ritual activity in the archaeological context will be used to review the evidence from Mut el-Kharab within a holistic framework to independently test for the evidence for cult. Renfrew provides four archaeological indicators of ritual<sup>88</sup>: Focusing of attention, the boundary zone between this world and the next, presence of the deity and participation and offering. The evidence for each of these indicators is reviewed below. Focusing of attention proposes that ritual takes place in a spot with special natural associations – such as springs, caves, mountain tops and so on. It also proposes that the sacred zone is rich in repeated symbols. The site of Mut el-Kharab is situated on a natural spring mound<sup>89</sup>, while the site to date (as was seen earlier) makes repeated symbolic reference to the god Seth in text and representation. The boundary zone suggests that ritual may involve conspicuous display or hidden mysteries as reflected in the architecture. The great surrounding wall at Mut el-Kharab is an indicator of the exclusivity of the site and the mysteries contained within. In addition, concepts of cleanliness and pollution may be reflected in the facilities and the springs mentioned earlier may have assisted in ritual ablution. The presence of the deity focuses on the presence of cult images, ritualistic symbols, abstract forms and animal symbolism. As noted earlier, the site has revealed frequent images of deities, particularly of Igai, Seth and Amun in both iconic and animal form (in the case of Seth) as well as through textual references in inscriptions. Participation and offering proposes that there should be evidence for offering, sacrifice or investment of wealth. As noted earlier there is sufficient evidence from Mut el-Kharab for offering jars and bread moulds as well as votives. In addition, inscriptions noted earlier and

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<sup>86</sup> C. A. Hope and O.E. Kaper, "A Governor of Dakhleh Oasis in the Early Middle Kingdom", in A. Woods et. al. (eds.), *Egyptain Culture and Society Studies in Honour of Naguib Kanawati*, Vol I, (Cairo, 2010), p. 232.

<sup>87</sup> Hope et. al. (2009), *Op.cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>88</sup> C. Renfrew "The archaeology of religion", in C. Renfrew and E.B.W. Zubrow (eds.) *The Ancient Mind: elements of Cognitive Archaeology*, (Cambridge, 2000), p. 51.

<sup>89</sup> Hope (2001), *Op.cit.*, p.48.



from stelae found in the area (see below) make reference to offerings by kings and dignitaries to gods. The extent of the cult site within the walls implies investment of wealth and resources.

Two stelae which were recovered reputedly near Mut by Henry Lyons in 1894 now held in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, are known as the “Greater” and “Smaller” Dakhla stelae. The Greater Stela is concerned with the disputed ownership of wells in the district and the subsequent consultation of a Seth oracle at his approaching festival to resolve the matter<sup>90</sup>. It references a prince and governor of Wayheset, who resided in Diospolis Parva and came to restore order to the region, which has been interpreted as indicating the importance with which the central authority in the Nile Valley held maintenance of order in the oasis<sup>91</sup>. The stela is also important as it makes reference to a priest of Seth named Penubast and the existence of a local priesthood to this god.

The Smaller Stela makes further allusion to a temple to Seth. Here, Seth is depicted as a falcon with a head surmounted with a sun-disk<sup>92</sup>. The text depicts and describes an official of the oasis, Harentbia, making offerings to Seth in addition to another individual, likely a Libyan chief<sup>93</sup>. The Libyan is depicted offering to a major god, a function normally reserved for the king. Kaper<sup>94</sup> interprets this chief as a local governor of Libyan origin and that furthermore the rulers of the Third Intermediate Period looked with genuine interest to the Western Desert and its oases.

A statue, said to have originated from Mut, is inscribed with offerings made by the king for Seth, Lord of Ankh, a toponym known from only one other monument from present day El

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<sup>90</sup> A. H. Gardiner, ‘The Dakhleh Stela’, *JEA* 19, (1933), p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> O. E. Kaper and R. J. Demarée, ‘A Donation stela in the name of Takeloth III from Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis’, *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux* 39, (2005), p. 33.

<sup>92</sup> J. J. Janssen, ‘The Smaller Dakhla Stela’, *JEA* 54, (1968), p. 166.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>94</sup> O. E. Kaper, ‘Epigraphic evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period’

in: G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée and O.E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st - 24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, (2009), p.159.

Qasr<sup>95</sup>. An inscribed stela or door jamb was found near Mut incorporating the name of a governor, *Dd-ptH-jwf-anx* and tentatively ascribed to New Kingdom<sup>96</sup>.

### 3.2.3 Eastern Sector

#### 3.2.3.1 Balat

The twin sites of Qila ed-Dabba and Ain Asil are situated in the Eastern Sector of the oasis and to date constitute the most significant necropolis and settlement site in the oasis, representing at one time most likely the capital of the oasis<sup>97</sup>.

#### 3.2.3.2 Ain Asil

The settlement of Ain Asil (Spring of the Source) is situated 3km east of modern Balat and 8km north-west of Tineida, at the junction of the ancient Darb el-Tawil and Darb el-Ghubari, the major entry points of the eastern sector of the oasis. This has proved to be one of the best-preserved examples in Egypt of an Old Kingdom town, with important remains of an enclosing wall, governor's palace, a complex of ka-chapels, houses and workshops. Since 1977 the site has been investigated by a team from the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology (IFAO). The site at Ain Asil, originally a small fortified enclosure, later encompassed a rectangular area of 33 hectares, split into two separate parts. The earliest is the fortress area to the north, with a mud brick settlement extending to the south and east of this. An administrative centre for Dakhla during the reigns of Pepi I and Pepi II, most of the town appears to have been destroyed by fire at the end of the Old Kingdom and abandoned for a period. A discovery of inscribed clay tablets

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<sup>95</sup> H. Jacquet-Gordon, "A Statue from Dakhla Oasis", *MDAIK* 47, (1991), p. 176.

<sup>96</sup> J. Osing, M. Moursi, Do. Arnold, O. Neugebauer, P.A. Parker, D. Pingree and M. A. Nur el-Din, *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, (Mainz, 1982), p. 38.

<sup>97</sup> See S. Marchand and G. Soukiassian, "Balat VIII - Un habitat de la XIII dynastie – 2 Période Intermédiaire à Ayn Asil", *FIFAO* 59, (2010) ; G. Castel and L. Pantalacci, "Balat VII - Les cimetières est et ouest du mastaba de Khentika - Oasis de Dakhla" *FIFAO* 52, (2005) ; G. Soukiassian, M. Wuttman and L. Pantalacci, "Le palais des gouverneurs de l'époque de Pépy II: les sanctuaires de ka et leurs dépendances. Balat VI", *FIFAO* 46, (2002) ; G. Castel, L. Pantalacci and N. Cherpion, "Le mastaba de Khentika. Mastaba III. Balat V", *FIFAO* 40, (2001) ; M. Valloggia, "Balat IV. Le monument funéraire d'Ima-Pépy/Ima-Meryre", *FIFAO* 38, (1998), and L. Pantalacci, "L'administration royale et l'administration locale au gouvernement de Balat d'après les empreintes de sceaux", *CRIPEL* 22, (2001).

dating to Dynasty VI<sup>98</sup> provides the earliest evidence that Dakhla Oasis pursued administrative links with the Nile Valley during this time. The tablets contain names of governors of the oasis and their households in hieratic script as well as lists of distribution of goods and food supplies to the palace, valuable information that in other areas of Egypt were usually written on papyrus.

Ain Asil is a complex characterised by growth over multiple phases, commencing with a fortified enclosure measuring 170m square, with extensions made to the south consisting of a palace with an unfortified enclosure and multiple annexes<sup>99</sup>.

With respect to the palace complex, two major phases of construction were noted. Initially, a complex measuring 170m on each side and consisting of a fortified enclosure was established, contemporary with the reign of Pepi I<sup>100</sup>. This could be compared with the heavy walls forming a large rectangular enclosure (80m by 55m) as found at Ain el Gezareen (see earlier). Apparently, the Ain Asil enclosure then became too restrictive and the city developed and extended, especially towards the south, by addition of successive enclosures which are no longer fortified and whose principal feature is the palace itself<sup>101</sup>. A number of extensions have been analysed<sup>102</sup>. The first was a southern, 40m by 50m extension whose exact contents are yet to be defined. The second was a western, 38m by 55m extension comprising a Ka-Chapel (Sanctuary 4). The third extension, the southern limit of which is still to be excavated includes a central area for the palace occupying a surface area of 8000 square meters, with the northern two thirds occupied by large residential rooms. The residential part, is composed of two large houses (1 860 m<sup>2</sup>). Contiguous with this residence are, in the south, a large court (40m by 60 m) and a storage area (500m<sup>2</sup>). These houses were bordered by service rooms, bakeries and servants' rooms, while to the south was a large court and assemblage of vaulted magazines<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>98</sup> P. Posener-Krieger, "Les tablettes en terre crue de Balat", in E. Lalou (ed.) *Les tablettes à écrire de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne*, (1992), pp. 41–49. See also Pantalacci (1998), *Op. cit.*

<sup>99</sup> G. Soukiassian, "A Governor's Palace at 'Ayn Asil, Dakhla Oasis", *EA* 11, (1997), p. 15.

<sup>100</sup> G. Soukiassian, "Balat VI: Le palais des gouverneurs de l'époque de Pepy II", *FIFAO* 46, (Cairo, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Architectural parallels are yet to be found in the Nile Valley for this type of complex from the period in question, the excavators drawing the closest parallel with large 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty houses at Lahun<sup>104</sup>.

In the complex, private rooms were kept separate from administrative quarters as exemplified by numerous stamp seals found near doorways indicating the presence of administrative employees in the service of the governors<sup>105</sup>.

A promising source of evidence for provincial and local administration at Balat comes in the form of inscribed clay tablets found from various areas within the Ain Asil complex. Of particular interest is an area to the south - an administrative building composed of several rooms and of a vast court bordered with wooden columns<sup>106</sup>. Within this building was found a platform upon which were discovered a number of bone styli attributed to scribal activities in this area<sup>107</sup>. The tablets are of interest in their content – some containing accountancy details and one concerned with the provisioning of an official along the way as they made their way across the desert<sup>108</sup>. In addition, the tablets list important titles such as “noble of the king”, “chief of the attics”, priest, “personnel manager”, brewer, “wine waiter”, “chief of troops” and shepherd<sup>109</sup>. A further military title of interest uncovered is that of *ATw whAt* – a military instructor or director<sup>110</sup>. The presence of such a person at the Balat site possibly indicates a significant military presence and infrastructure here. To date the tablets have revealed no personal names that would indicate the presence of non-Egyptians at Balat<sup>111</sup>.

The Hw.wt-kA (Ka Chapels) occupy 1500 square metres of the Ain Asil complex and were supported by magazines, silos, bakeries and houses for personnel<sup>112</sup>. The governors of Ain Asil required special permission from the royal authority to construct Hw.wt-kA and the “Pepi

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<sup>104</sup> Soukiassian (1997), *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Posener-Krieger, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45. See also L. Pantalacci, “La documentation épistolaire du palais des gouverneurs à Balat-‘Ayn Asil”, *BIFAO* 98, (1998), p. 314, which lists other administrative correspondence from the palace concerning provisioning of other officials, such as “..dispatch of meat for the trip of the governor of the governorate Demiu and notification of the list of these products..”

<sup>109</sup> Posener-Krieger, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

II decree" is an example document of this process. This type of permission is not paralleled in other royal documents of the Old Kingdom, although in the decree Coptus K a person could have more than one Hwt-kA which indicates that the Hwt-kA does not specifically denote a tomb but a structure which holds land and people attached to it<sup>113</sup>.

Haeny<sup>114</sup> maintains that the evolution of use of the Hwt-kA commenced with the deceased's statue enclosed in a "serdab" chamber within the tomb's superstructure. It was soon found that this was an unreliable way of assuring a constant supply to the spirit, which was then remedied by carrying the statue to a temple where it could partake in offering already distributed there. To avoid transportation, the statue was permanently set up near the temple in a shelter - the Hwt-kA. Through the inclusion of the temple in the ritual process of the deceased it was hoped that people lower down in the social hierarchy would increase their association with the cult statue<sup>115</sup>. During the period under consideration it is known from the Nile Valley that Pepi I, his mother and Merenre each had a Hwt-kA in the provincial capital<sup>116</sup>. It is therefore unusual for the Hwt-kA of Ain Asil to be placed in the context of a palace enclosure rather than temple grounds. Possibly this was seen as a more practical measure to ensure supply to the Hwt-kA by being in the vicinity of established stores and personnel operating in the palace complex.

It can be seen that the Hwt-kA of the governors of the oasis forms a part of their palace. The sanctuary of Medou-nefer is placed in the same enclosure, which encloses the apartments, while Sanctuaries 1, 2, 3 are located in an additional enclosure, however still having access to the residential section. Only sanctuary 4, most likely older than the palace, is an independent structure. The existence of these Hwt-kA in the palace grounds, the quality of their construction and inclusions tend to give an impression of governors of the oasis as being powerful to the extent of possibly being autonomous. However, documents such as the Pepi II decree tend to argue against such a model, showing instead that these establishments were related to precedent through generations and to the function of the provincial governor. Thus, the important provincial administrators of the Nile Valley were to have equivalent monuments whose structures of which are yet to be discovered, with epigraphic evidence being the sole clue

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<sup>113</sup> H. Goedicke, "The Pepi II Decree from Dakhleh", *BIFAO* 89, (1989), p. 206.

<sup>114</sup> G. Haeny, "New Kingdom Mortuary Temples", in B. E. Shafer (ed.), *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, (Cairo, 2005), p. 126.

<sup>115</sup> J. Osing, "Ka-Haus", *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, III, (1980), column 284.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

to their existence. The servicing of the Hw.wt-kA continued through the conflagration with offering dishes found in sanctuaries 1, 2 and 3 from after this event<sup>117</sup>. An economic infrastructure supported the continued servicing of the Hw.wt-kA. Silos, bakeries and dwellings were co-located in the same area, the silos having sufficient grain capacity to provide for at least sixty people a year<sup>118</sup>. Judging by the number of dwellings in the complex, together with the number of Hw.wt-kA to be serviced it has been suggested that the amount of grain stored far exceeded the requirements of the palace, this being observed for the bakeries also<sup>119</sup>. This indicates external destinations for this produce and that therefore the palace complex served a far broader economic role in the oasis. Tablets bearing the names of high ranking officials attached to the palace have been found (for example Tablet 3487<sup>120</sup>, which lists the son of the governor Idou, chiefs of the escorts, priests, directors and foremen), listing the individuals in apparent hierarchical order, which Soukiassian suggests might represent individuals associated with the system of distribution<sup>121</sup>.

As related previously, the initial phase of occupation at Ain Asil was characterised by an area consisting of a fortified enclosure and semi-circular towers of 170 m square<sup>122</sup>. Extensions were then built to the south having more overall surface area and enclosing wall, but without the walls having the character of fortifications<sup>123</sup>. Comparisons have been made with this earlier structure to the early dynastic fortress of Elephantine, which measured 51 m square and had incorporated towers – some rounded and some polygonal – leading to the conclusion that the Ain Asil fortress was based on an Egyptian pattern and was a forerunner of Nubian forts of the Middle Kingdom<sup>124</sup>. No conclusive interpretation has been provided to date as to why there was a transition from fortified to unfortified enclosing walls over time - whether there were hostile elements earlier on in the oasis or outside, that were eventually subdued, or as part of a security measure in case these elements ever arose in this remote area.

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<sup>117</sup> G. Soukiassian, “Balat VI: Le palais des gouverneurs de l’époque de Pepy II”, *FIFAO* 46, (Cairo, 2002), p. 521.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522.

<sup>122</sup> Soukiassian (1997), *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> M. Ziermann, “Bemerkungen zu den Befestigungen des Alten Reiches in Ayn Asil und in Elephantine”, *MDAIK* 54, (1998), p. 359.

From the archaeological evidence to date, the Second Intermediate Period represents the first period of significant renewed interest after the “golden” age of the Late Old Kingdom in this area, despite the relative modesty of the settlement. This resurgence provides evidence for the importance of the oasis overall in the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. This Second Intermediate Period zone was found to the south of the Old Kingdom sanctuaries and is manifest primarily as a group of silos, a large court and ceramics. A sector of silos and bakeries was uncovered in sector G20, with round silos measuring 2.5m in diameter and attached bakeries possibly representing an independent production & storage facility or facilities attached to major residences<sup>125</sup>. The area comprises two phases with the second phase reverting to a dump with no discernible structures – the chronology of both phases being within the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>126</sup>. An area of pits to the north has been dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>127</sup>, thus providing a good coverage for the Second Intermediate Period. The “large northern court” of area G25 comprises further silos, walls (1 m height) and remains of stairs<sup>128</sup> attesting once again to the presence of major residences. During this period the Old Kingdom ruins to the north were not resettled, although some of the available materials were re-used and the southern section under consideration was also built over previous occupation layers<sup>129</sup>. Overall it would seem despite a significant settlement being apparent here at this time, the importance is reduced from previous times, which is further underpinned by the fact that the title of governor is to date not attested at this period<sup>130</sup>. Subsequent work in this area identified a Northern and Central set of structures which were interpreted to be large houses with associated grain storage facilities and bakeries, having a capacity representing a surplus in grain (which might have been used as a source of distributed payments)<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> M. Baud, “Balat/ Ayn Asil, oasis de Dakhla La ville de la Deuxième Période intermédiaire”, *BIFAO* 97, (1997), p. 20.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>131</sup> S. Marchand & G. Soukiassian, "Balat VIII, Un habitat de la XIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie, 2<sup>e</sup> période intermédiaire à Ayn Asil", *FIFAO* 59, (Cairo, 2010), p. 313.

The zone in Ain Asil found so far to be attributable to the New Kingdom is found to the south of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty palace complex<sup>132</sup>. Within this area, to date, there has been a notable absence of structural evidence<sup>133</sup>, however surveys here have uncovered rich ceramic evidence. The ceramics are characterised by frequent finds of New Kingdom amphorae, gourds and bottles having consistent, local fabrics<sup>134</sup>. The containers consistently demonstrate hard and compact fabrics implying their use for storage and transport of liquids<sup>135</sup>. Of the amphorae, two groups are discernible; those with a local oasian style as well as a style that copies Nile Valley forms<sup>136</sup>. Labels found for vessels here refer to the “...the oasis of the south” and “the vineyard of...”<sup>137</sup>. These labels, together with the types of vessels found indicate the significance of wine production during this period in Dakhla. This complements well the picture available through Nile Valley texts, which also attest to the significance of wine production in the oases in the Ramesside period<sup>138</sup>. It is not yet clear specifically what role this site at Ain Asil played in this industry, whether for the production itself or for storage and redistribution of the commodity.

### 3.2.3.3 Qila ed-Dabba

The necropolis of Qila ed-Dabba dates from the late Old Kingdom to the commencement of the First Intermediate Period. It is situated 1 km west of the Ain Asil settlement. It comprises five large mastaba complexes housing the remains of former governors of the oasis, some with relatively elaborate burial goods<sup>139</sup>. As will be seen, the mastabas belong to the governors – Ima-Pepi I (Mastaba I), Desheru (Mastaba I), Ima-Pepi II (Mastaba II), Khentika (Mastaba III), Khentikau-Pepi (Mastaba IV) and Medu-Nefer (Mastaba V).

In discussing the chronology of Qila ed-Dabba, it should be noted that in each case what is being dated is a primary structure intended for the remains of a governor together with associated secondary and nearby burials. Key examples of mastaba burials from the Qila ed-

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<sup>132</sup> S. Marchand and P. Tallet, “Ayn Asil et l’oasis de Dakhla au Nouvel Empire”, *BIFAO* 99, (1999), p. 317, Fig. 5.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> C. A. Hope, “Oases Amphorae of the New Kingdom”, in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 98.

<sup>137</sup> Marchand & Tallet, *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>139</sup> M. Vallogia, “Une coupe à décor thérimorph provenant de Balat”, *BIFAO* 93, (1993), pp. 391-402.



Dabba cemetery will be considered in turn. In the case of the mastaba complex of Medu-Nefer the dating of the primary occupant was made based on the brickwork, funerary equipment (some of which was registered in the name of King Pepi II)<sup>140</sup> to the end of the Old Kingdom<sup>141</sup>. The secondary burials of T2, T3 and T4 were attributed to a time quite close to the burial of Medu-Nefer<sup>142</sup>, while the eastern secondary burials T7 and T8 were dated to the First Intermediate Period<sup>143</sup>. The mastaba of Ima-Pepi was dated based on the epigraphic evidence to the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty between Pepi I and Pepi II<sup>144</sup>, while the North East Tombs and Southern Cemetery burials were also dated to the First Intermediate Period<sup>145</sup>. The mastaba complex of Khentika corresponds to within the reign of Pepi II<sup>146</sup>. In short, the sequence of nine governors as represented by the mastabas of Qila ed-Dabba has been placed within the reigns of Kings Pepi I to II<sup>147</sup>. The burial ground as a whole, however, when also considering secondary burials, seems to extend to the First Intermediate Period as well, as was seen in the previous examples. The site of “Kôm sud I” incorporates a late Middle Kingdom to Second Intermediate Period cemetery revealing a scarab from the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>148</sup>. The latest burials in the Qila ed-Dabba complex include an internment of cats in the vicinity of Mastaba II from the 27<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>149</sup>, and Late Period terracotta sarcophagi secondary burials in the vicinity of Mastaba III<sup>150</sup>.

In order to understand whether there are any unique features in the burial practices observed at Qila ed-Dabba, it is useful to compare to burials of similar status individuals from the Nile Valley. In particular, the burials of other governors from the late 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty could also be considered. Potential sources of comparisons come from Saqqara, where 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty

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<sup>140</sup> M. Vallogia, “Balat I: Le mastaba de Medou-Nefer”, *FIFAO* 31, vol. 1, (Cairo, 1986), p. 167.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>144</sup> M. Vallogia, “Balat IV: Le monument funéraire d’Ima-Pepy/Ima-Meryre”, *FIFAO* 38, (Cairo, 1998), p. 184.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>146</sup> G. Castel, “Balat V: Le mastaba de Khentika”, *FIFAO* 40, (2001), p. 275.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>148</sup> P. Posener-Krieger, “Travaux de l’IFAO en 1986-1987”, *BIFAO* 87, (1987), Tb. 58c & d, 59.

<sup>149</sup> L. Ginsburg, “Felis libyca balatensis: les chats du mastaba II de Balat II de Balat”, *BIFAO* 95, (1995), pp. 259-272.

<sup>150</sup> P. Posener-Krieger, “Travaux de l’IFAO en 1983-1984”, *BIFAO* 84, (1984), p. 353.

mastabas were found<sup>151</sup>. In addition, the site of Abydos incorporates some bases for comparison, particularly the mastaba of “Weni the Elder”. Weni lived during the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>152</sup>, his title, as excavated from the mastaba, being “True Governor of Upper Egypt”<sup>153</sup>. The mastaba measures 29 metres on each side, 3 metres thick and 5 metres high<sup>154</sup>. It also has the following features and attributes<sup>155</sup>:

- a. situated on a high point;
- b. incorporates a false door;
- c. incorporates a small offering chapel;
- d. construction comprising mud brick with some limestone sections;
- e. shaft and surface graves in the vicinity (Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period);
- f. Large deposit of 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty offering pottery in mastaba’s interior.

In terms of overall dimensions, the Abydos mastaba compares favourably with the average of the five constructions from Qila ed-Dabba, with Mastaba IV being the closest<sup>156</sup> (at approximately 28 by 34 metres).

Comparison of the other features listed above indicates that the mastabas at Qila ed-Dabba also included subsidiary burials such as those found in the Northern Court<sup>157</sup> and Southern Cemetery<sup>158</sup> of Mastaba I. In the case of the secondary burials, it is noteworthy that those found near the mastaba of Weni in Abydos ranged from the late Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period, which led the excavator to suggest that Weni’s grave became the focus of a

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<sup>151</sup> C.M. Firth, “Report on the Excavations of the Department of Antiquities at Saqqara (November 1929-April 1930)”, *ASAE* 30, (1930), p. 185.

<sup>152</sup> J. Richards, “Weni the Elder and his Mortuary Neighbourhood at Abydos, Egypt”, *Kelsey Museum Newsletter*, Spring 2000, (2000), p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>156</sup> From the overall plan of the site in: M. Vallogia, “Balat IV: Le monument funéraire d’Ima-Pepy/Ima-Meryre”, *FIFAO* 38, (Cairo, 1998), Fig. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Vallogia (1998), *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-36.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-66.

group cemetery and a kinship network<sup>159</sup>. A similar practice was also noted in the work on Mastaba I at Qila ed-Dabba (Ima-Pepy), where there were family and kin buried as secondary burials in the Northern Court<sup>160</sup>. The mastaba of Khentika comprises four burial chambers, one for the prime occupant, one for his alleged son, Desheru and two for what has been suggested were Khentika's wives<sup>161</sup>.

The construction of predominantly limestone with some limestone sections is also similar to Qila ed-Dabba mastabas such as that of Khentika's which comprised mud brick, limestone for some flooring and walls and sandstone for some ceilings<sup>162</sup>. The sandstone was obtained from sources close to Ain Asil, while the limestone had to be obtained from the escarpment, at least 8km away<sup>163</sup>. What also has been noted, however, is that the construction quality in some instances was lacking in the oasian mastabas such as that of Khentika which suffered from overload and insufficient wall thicknesses in some instances leading to crushed sections<sup>164</sup>. In terms of location, the mastabas of Qila ed-Dabba are situated on high points as is Mastaba I<sup>165</sup>, a further similarity to practice at Abydos.

Other aspects to consider include the internal decoration of the antechambers and burial chambers of the mastabas at Qila ed-Dabba. The tomb of Medu-Nefer (Mastaba V), for example, displays the deceased in offering scenes and ritual in a style similar to that found in the Nile Valley<sup>166</sup>. In the mastaba of Khentika, these include the typical Nile Valley themes of nautical scenes, agricultural activities (ploughing, harvest and grain silos) and hunting (hippopotamus)<sup>167</sup> as well as a banquet scene<sup>168</sup>. The style, however, as was observed about the

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<sup>159</sup> J. Richards, "The Abydos Cemeteries in the Late Old Kingdom" in Z. Hawass (ed.) *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century*, (Cairo, 2000), p. 405.

<sup>160</sup> Vallogia (1998), *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>161</sup> G. Castel, "Mastaba de Khentika: Gouverneur de l'oasis à la fin de l'Ancien Empire" in Z. Hawass (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century*, (Cairo, 2000), p. 103.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>165</sup> Vallogia (1998), *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>166</sup> M. Vallogia, "Balat I: Le mastaba de Medou-Nefer", *FIFAO* 31, vol. 1, (Cairo, 1986), p. 41.

<sup>167</sup> Castel, *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

decoration of the mastaba of Khentika (Mastaba III) has been described as “naïve” and representative of the quality of “provincial work”<sup>169</sup>.

Titles of the oasian governors as revealed at Qila ed-Dabba were formulated in consistent patterns of three parts such as pr wjA jmy-jrty, HqA wHAt, jmy-r Hmw-nTr<sup>170</sup>. In the case of Ima-Pepy the first part is concerned with remote expeditions and marks the role of a ship-owner in charge of the direction of the crews of sailors as well as "commander-in-chief" or even as "admiral"<sup>171</sup>. Further examples of this pattern are also frequently found in Mastaba V (Medu-Nefer)<sup>172</sup>. The survival of such a titlature of the governors of Dakhla could hark back to the memory of previous expeditions and possibly even the Egyptian colonisation of the oasis<sup>173</sup>. Goedicke<sup>174</sup> maintains the term is best understood as denoting “commercial pursuit enterprise” in which the role held a position of independent decision-making and in no way connected to the Egyptian administration in general or its royal aspect in particular. This title is unique here and is not found amongst the titlary of governors of the Nile Valley. This particular titlature could hint at the primary reasons for the occupation of the oasis – that it was based in economic reasons. The titles could also hint at the initial process of colonisation of this part of Dakhla where such titular aspects as "Chief of Crews," are in contrast to Nile Valley nomarchs titles such as “prince” and possibly point to a local administration which might have been military in nature<sup>175</sup>. The title of "Governor of the Oasis" harks back to that of "District Chief" attested for nomarchs for the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty in the Nile Valley, having more to do with an individual invested with power over a defined region<sup>176</sup>.

The second part refers to “governor of the oasis”, with the third being “overseer of priests”. With respect to this last title, it should be noted that “chief priest” was already being borne by individuals who were also nomarchs or the equivalent. This title has been found in

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>170</sup> For example see Valloggia (1986), *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-74.

<sup>173</sup> Valloggia (1998), *Op. Cit.*, p. 10. See also: J. Osing, M. Moursi, Do. Arnold, O. Neugebauer, P.A. Parker, D. Pingree and M. A. Nur el-Din, *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, (Mainz, 1982), p. 19, and M. Valloggia, "Les Amiraux de l'Oasis de Dakhleh", in F. Guess and F. Thill (eds.), *Melanges offerts à Jean Vercouter*, (1985), pp. 355-364.

<sup>174</sup> Goedicke, *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>175</sup> M. Valloggia, *Les Oasis D'Égypte dans l'Antiquité*, (Gollion, 2004), p. 146.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

provincial tombs of the 6th Dynasty at several Upper Egyptian sites including two from the nome containing Abydos and buried in the court cemetery at Saqqara<sup>177</sup>. Furthermore, this type of title seems to have been used predominantly in addition to other roles such as the title of the chief priest of Ra at Heliopolis being held by courtiers, princes or high officials amongst other titles<sup>178</sup>. It is also noteworthy that there is little reference to the king – which has been interpreted as indicating minimum contact with the royal palace<sup>179</sup>. The subsidiary burials of Mastaba I also revealed that some of the civil servants of the court were most likely relatives of the governor and that provincial titles such as “Inspector of the Oasis” emphasise the Egyptian character of the administrative organization of the oasis<sup>180</sup>.

### 3.2.3.4 Ain Tirghi

The site of Ain Tirghi, 31/435-D5-2, lies 8km southwest of present-day Balat. The site comprises a large cemetery with approximately two hundred graves<sup>181</sup>. The earliest finds here date to the Second Intermediate Period and include pottery, jewellery and amulets as well as kohl pots<sup>182</sup>. Pottery of the Second Intermediate Period was found in seven of the graves and mostly ascribed to the early part of that period<sup>183</sup>. Indications of long, continuous use is observed with Roman period remains and a fourth century parchment codex discovered<sup>184</sup>. The range of material uncovered here also includes Dynasty XIX, Dynasties XXI-XXII, Saite and Persian and is the only site in Dakhla apart from Mut el-Kharab indicating a continuing Egyptian presence after the Second Intermediate Period<sup>185</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> B.G. Trigger, B.J. Kemp, D. O'Connor and A.B. Lloyd, *Ancient Egypt. A Social History*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 109. See also usage of the term “overseer of priests” in D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of the Old Kingdom*, (Oxford, 2000), p. 171.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Vallogia (1998), *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>181</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Fifth Season of Survey, October, 1982 –January, 1983", *JSSEA* XIII, (1983), p. 128.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> C.A. Hope, "Dakhleh Oasis Project – Report on the Study of the Pottery: Fifth Season, 1982", *JSSEA* XIII, (1983), p. 144.

<sup>184</sup> A. J. Mills, "Recent Work of the Dakhleh Oasis Project ", *ASAE* 73, (1998), p. 85.

<sup>185</sup> R. Frey, "Dakhleh Oasis Project: Interim Report on Excavations at the 'Ein Tirghi Cemetery", *JSSEA* XVI, (1986), p. 92.

### 3.2.4 Other Eastern Sector Sites

The site of 31/435-J1-1 lies approximately 1km north-east of Ain Asil and is most likely associated with it due to the proximity. The DOP 1982/1983 survey season discovered here a brick structure, built on the side of a fossil spring mound, with several large rooms and four square mud brick pillars<sup>186</sup>. Approximately 3km due south of Ain Asil the site of 31/435-I4-1 is a denuded Old Kingdom occupation site. This site covers 200m by 350m consisting of Old Kingdom sherd and flint material as well as what the excavators thought to be pottery kilns<sup>187</sup>.

As in other sectors of Dakhla, there is again evidence of Neolithic occupation areas also having Pharaonic material present, such as 31/435-L2-4, approximately 3km east of Ain Asil. Here, a number of stone circles were found with Pharaonic sherds and mixed Neolithic flints in association<sup>188</sup>. Other sites demonstrating mixed artefacts such as this are 31/435-B4-2, 31/435-B4-3 and 31/435-B4-4. Each site demonstrates mixed Old Kingdom and Neolithic sherds and flints<sup>189</sup>. Due to their deflated states it is not certain whether the occupants at these sites were using the mixed artefacts at the same time or whether different inhabitants occupied these sites at different times. Some of these sites are associated with fossil springs, which might well be the reason for occupation by various groups over time. The proximity of these camps to Ain Asil might have been purposeful and possibly represent the desire for SMC groups to be close to main NVC centres for reasons of trade or even employment as desert guides refer Chapters 2 and 8).

### 3.3 Petroglyph Sites

The use of petrographic evidence in researching Western Desert culture during the Pharaonic period is still an evolving area and promises to provide more and varied data complementing the excavation fieldwork. Huyge<sup>190</sup> in his research of the rock art in the Upper Egyptian site of Elkab, attributed (out of 509 petroglyphs) the largest proportion to Naqada II phase (33 percent), while the Pharaonic period totalled 30.8 percent. This indicates that although slightly decreasing, during the Pharaonic period there is still active expression occurring through the

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<sup>186</sup> Mills (1983), *Op.cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> D. Huyge, "Art on the Decline? Egyptian Rock Drawings from the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods", in W. Clarysse, A. Schoors and H. Willems (eds.), *Egyptian Religion the Last Thousand Years*, Part II, (Leuven, 1998), pp. 1377-1378

petroglyphic medium. Attempts at cultural assignment of Dakhlan rock art to date have been based on relative chronology (through superimposition or degree of weathering), stylistic grounds and proximity to other, datable archaeological contexts. No attempts have been made at the time of writing to use absolute dating techniques such as radiocarbon analysis of accretions, micro erosion analysis or luminescence<sup>191</sup>. In any case, the use of such micro-analysis techniques on the surface in the Western Desert is often hampered by the high degree of weathering that goes on due to the prevailing winds. In considering the Pharaonic Period of Dakhla, the possibility arises of cultural assignment of rock art to either the SMC or NVC. To date, there have been no concrete associations made by other researchers of rock art to SMC.

The majority of rock art sites are located in areas associated with access roads to the oasis and associated with Hilltop sites (see below, these are also located primarily on these access points). Therefore there are rock art sites at the start/termination of the Darb el Tawil at Dakhleh<sup>192</sup>, the start/termination of the Darb el-Battikh<sup>193</sup>, along the Darb el-Ghubari<sup>194</sup> as well as at a number of southern approaches to the oasis<sup>195</sup>.

Depictions of the Seth animal have been identified in sites in the Eastern Sector. In the region of Halfat el-Bir<sup>196</sup> to the east of the modern village of Tenida were found two instances

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<sup>191</sup> R. Bednarik, *Rock Art Science: The Scientific Study of Palaeoart*, (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 120-137.

<sup>192</sup> Situated at the fan-out area of the Wadi el Tawil – DOP quadrant 32/435 – see C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills, "Appendix II: Index List of Archaeological Sites Surveyed by the Dakhleh Oasis Project", in C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills (eds), *Reports from the Survey of the Dakhleh Oasis 1977–1987*, (Exeter, 1999), p. 265.

<sup>193</sup> Situated at the fan-out area of the Wadi el Battikh – DOP quadrant 30/450 – see "Appendix II: Index List of Archaeological Sites Surveyed by the Dakhleh Oasis Project", in C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills (eds), *Reports from the Survey of the Dakhleh Oasis 1977–1987*, (Exeter, 1999), p. 265.

<sup>194</sup> The road linking Dakhla and Kharga Oases, see H. A Winkler, *Rock Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt II*, (London, 1939), map (unnumbered) at back of volume depicting Winkler's journey and rock art sites discovered.

<sup>195</sup> Examples include a long wadi crossing the DOP quadrants 30/420 and 31/420 from the southern desert, as well as in the 30/405 quadrant where a lowering in the scarp allows what appears to be easier access into the oasis from the desert (for sites see "Appendix II: Index List of Archaeological Sites Surveyed by the Dakhleh Oasis Project", in C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills (eds), *Reports from the Survey of the Dakhleh Oasis 1977–1987*, (Exeter, 1999), p. 265).

<sup>196</sup> Halfat el-Bir is in the south east portion of the area designated by the DOP to be 32/435.

of a seated Seth animal<sup>197</sup>. Of these, Graffito No. 19d<sup>198</sup> depicts a man making what looks like offerings to Seth who is seated on an altar smelling a lotus. This particular form is seated with the forelegs extended. This animal manifestation in a seated form has been found in other contexts in the Eastern Sector, one example is currently in store in the Ain Berbiyah store room<sup>199</sup>. A standing form of what is most likely a further Seth figure presented with a lotus was found in the north-east part of the oasis<sup>200</sup>.

Anthropomorphic figures depicted with pointed kilts and triangular torsos are found throughout the Western and Eastern Deserts. As with the other themes, there do not seem to be stylistic variations across the regions. With their torsos and kilts the figures loosely follow aspects of Egyptian artistic tradition. Examples from the vicinity of Dakhla include Halfat el-Bir and a site south east of Tenida, claimed by Giddy<sup>201</sup> to possibly be Winkler's site 68, which is highly unlikely<sup>202</sup>. Here, a number of kilted figures are depicted in the modes of herding and accompanying cattle (Graffito's No 13, 16a and 17)<sup>203</sup>. Another theme involving these figures which is relatively common is that of a single man holding what appears to be a lotus flower or similar to their nose. This theme has been observed around Dakhla with Giddy Graffito No. 15c<sup>204</sup> near Tenida, at Hilltop site 30/450-D4-2<sup>205</sup> and has also been attested in the Eastern Desert<sup>206</sup>. The significance of men smelling lotus blossoms within the parameters of Egyptian formal artistic tradition is largely aesthetic and seems to have no deeper meaning<sup>207</sup>.

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<sup>197</sup> L. Giddy, *Egyptian Oases Bahariya, Dakhla, Farafra and Kharga during Pharaonic Times*, (Warminster, 1987), p. 257.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>199</sup> Pers. Comm. Adam Zielinski (DOP).

<sup>200</sup> L. Krzyzaniak, "Dakhleh Oasis: Research on Rock Art, 1993", *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, vol. 5, (1994), p. 100.

<sup>201</sup> Giddy, *Op.cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>202</sup> Winkler's Site 68 has been rediscovered by the DOP Petroglyph unit and is actually north of the modern road in the vicinity of South East Basin. Pers. Comm. E. Kuciewicz, DOP Petroglyph Unit.

<sup>203</sup> Giddy, *Op.cit.*, p. 284.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>205</sup> O.E. Kaper & H. Willems, "Policing the Desert: Old Kingdom Activity around the Dakhleh Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert* (2002), p. 88.

<sup>206</sup> H. A Winkler, *Rock Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt I*, (London, 1938), p.18.

<sup>207</sup> H. Schaefer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, (Oxford 2002), p. 21.



Depictions of ships are ubiquitous throughout the Egyptian Eastern Desert, with some occurrences in the Western Desert as well. In the environs of Dakhla two examples have been published from Halfat El Bir. One of these is what appears to be an animal-headed boat with the head featuring on the prow (Graffito no. 8)<sup>208</sup>. Berger<sup>209</sup> has provided an account of animal-headed boats from Hierakonpolis (Hk 61) and Southern Egypt generally. By stylistic comparison, the boat from Halfat el-Bir is possibly the type with “Lines at the Back of the Head”, the lines possibly representing support lashing<sup>210</sup>. This type has also been identified in the Wadi Mia and Wadi Hammamat in the Eastern Desert<sup>211</sup>. The dating of these animal-headed boats has been ascribed in the aforementioned work to the Predynastic Period while Giddy’s interpretation is that it is Pharaonic. It is possible that this style persisted throughout these periods. A group of three boats discovered at the Hierakonpolis site Hk 64 includes one having a triangular steering oar blade (alluding to New Kingdom design) while the hull shape is of Old Kingdom form<sup>212</sup>. The second boat from Halfat el-Bir consists of single sail and rigging with a cabin in the centre (Graffito no. 9)<sup>213</sup>. These ships are found in other areas of the western desert such as areas closer to the Nile<sup>214</sup> of these ship depictions as well as in the Eastern Desert<sup>215</sup> and Sudan<sup>216</sup>. Their interpretation has been mainly speculated to be funerary<sup>217</sup> or as a consequence of observation of actual ships on the Nile<sup>218</sup>. Further insights might be gained as to the meaning

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>209</sup> M. A. Berger, “Predynastic Animal-headed Boats from Hierakonpolis and Southern Egypt”, in R. F. Friedman and B. Adams (eds.), *The Followers of Horus Studies dedicated to Michael Allen Hoffman 1944-1990*, (1992), pp. 107-119.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> R. F. Friedman, “Pebbles, Pots and Petroglyphs. Excavations at Hk64”, in R. F. Friedman and B. Adams (eds.), *The Followers of Horus*, (1992), p. 103.

<sup>213</sup> Giddy, *Op.cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>214</sup> H. A. Winkler, *Rock Drawings of Southern Upper Egypt II*, (London, 1939), p.16.

<sup>215</sup> T. Wilkinson, *Genesis of the Pharaohs*, (London, 2003), p. 147.

<sup>216</sup> P. Hellstrom, H. Langballe and O. Myers, “The Rock Drawings 2: Plates”, *Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia I/2*, (1970), Corpus V.

<sup>217</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, p. 16, Wilkinson, *Op. cit.*, p. 150 (in the case of Eastern Desert Ships) and D. Huyge, “Cosmology, Ideology and Personal Religious Practice in Ancient Egyptian Rock Art”, in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 202. See also T. Judd, *Rock Art of the Eastern Desert of Egypt, Content, comparisons, dating and significance*, (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>218</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, p. 16.

of the ships by comparison with graffiti found within temples such as at the Khonsu temple in Karnak. The depictions of boats in the temple have been interpreted as barks of particular gods based on the appearance of gods' heads at the fore and aft of most boats. Examples are barks to Khonsu and Amun<sup>219</sup>, as well as Hathor and Mut<sup>220</sup>, each with distinctive identifying prows fore and aft. It is possible that the animal headed boats mentioned earlier refer to the same phenomena and are barks for gods.

Feet and triangular markings have been found in numerous contexts around Dakhla. The feet have been attributed to various periods and their ubiquity and variety of forms in some regions of the Western Desert deserves special attention.

The feet are normally depicted as if viewed from above, as bare or with sandal straps and with various grades of execution from rough, square-sided outlines to complex depictions with articulated toenails, some exceptions are depicted as a foot print<sup>221</sup> (viewed from underneath). This particular example demonstrates the great care that was taken by the artist in some instances in the execution, where this one has been engraved on a prepared polished surface and has been created in sunken relief with carefully articulated toes and angled sides<sup>222</sup>. Huyge<sup>223</sup> maintains that foot and sandal imprints are associated with the same time span of Graeco-Roman and Christian Periods. Kaper and Willems<sup>224</sup> raise the possibility of attribution to Old Kingdom due to their presence in association with "Watchpost" sites (see below). It should be noted that similar graffiti of feet are found within man-made contexts such as temples. In particular, such depiction of feet are commonly found cut in to the roofs of Late Period temples which are meant to record that a devotee once stood praying there<sup>225</sup>. One such example is Medinet Habu, where many single and paired feet occur on the roof of the temple, some with

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<sup>219</sup> H. Jacquet-Gordon, "The Graffiti on the Khonsu Temple Roof at Karnak", *The Temple of Khonsu*, vol. 3, (Chicago, 2003), p. 59

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>221</sup> H. Riemer, F. Förster, S. Hendrickx, S. Nussbaum, B. Eichhorn, N. Pöllath, P. Schönfeld and G. Wagner, "Zwei pharaonische Wüstenstationen südwestlich von Dachla", *MDAIK* 61, (2005), tf. 46.

<sup>222</sup> Taking note of detailed execution as shown in *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> D. Huyge, "Art on the Decline? Egyptian Rock Drawings from the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods", in W. Clarysse, A. Schoors and H. Willems (eds.), *Egyptian Religion the Last Thousand Years*, Part II, (Leuven, 1998), p. 1386.

<sup>224</sup> O.E. Kaper & H. Willems, "Policing the Desert: Old Kingdom Activity around the Dakhleh Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert* (2002), p. 85.

<sup>225</sup> H. Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, (Oxford, 2002), pp. 128-129.

a short inscription within the perimeter of the feet<sup>226</sup>. The question of the possible chronology and function of these foot petroglyphs is assisted by the discovery of graffiti in the temple of Khonsu in Karnak. The temple of Khonsu was built by Ramesses III, completed and decorated by his successors of Dynasties XX and XXI and contains three hundred and thirty four graffiti on its roof structure<sup>227</sup>. Of interest here are the foot imprints that bear striking resemblances to those found in the desert around Dakhla - similar styles are seen including forms depicting bare feet as well as with sandal straps<sup>228</sup>. Most of the graffiti dates from the late New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic periods with the majority being foot outlines with or without accompanying inscriptions<sup>229</sup>. The dating of these graffiti is facilitated by the fact that they were executed within a man-made structure from the time of Ramesses III - thereby providing a good terminus post-quem. In addition, many of the graffiti incorporate inscriptions with regnal information with the majority of the feet dated by Jacquet-Gordon to groups within Dynasties XXII to XXIII and XXV/XXVI to XXX<sup>230</sup>. Some of these incorporate specific references to kings, such as Graffito No.101, which references year one of Osorkon III (Dynasty XXIII)<sup>231</sup>. As demonstrated by the titles in the inscriptions, the feet graffiti were executed by members of the temple clergy attached to the Khonsu as well as the nearby Amun temple<sup>232</sup>. Many of the feet are unaccompanied by inscriptions while some include details of the author's titles, genealogy as well as imprecation formulae<sup>233</sup>. Some examples have the author's name repeated within the actual foot<sup>234</sup>. A further example of a site where this has been observed is Hk64 (north of the Hierakonpolis concession, overlooking Wadi Tarifa), where sandal outlines were recorded signed by a certain individual "Seneb"<sup>235</sup>. It is thought that literacy amongst the authors was varied and that they executed inscriptions without the assistance of scribes<sup>236</sup>. The imprecation formulae provide clues as to the ultimate purpose of these graffiti. Many incorporate curses

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<sup>226</sup> W. F. Edgerton, "Preliminary Report on the Ancient Graffiti at Medinet Habu", *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 50, No. 2, (1934), p. 119.

<sup>227</sup> Jacquet-Gordon, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>228</sup> Refer to various examples of bare foot form and sandal strap form in *Ibid.*, pp. 13-111.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-111.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>235</sup> Friedman, *Op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>236</sup> Jacquet-Gordon, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

along the lines of (spoken by the temple god) “..as for him who erases the footprints of...I will erase his name from the benben..”<sup>237</sup>. This indicates the importance of the footprints as possibly representatives of the essence of those referred to, much like the reverence attached to utterance and writing of names in NVC. Such fundamental associations could well have transcended the temple context to the desert examples as well, so that the authors of footprints in the desert regions did so to leave a permanent manifestation of their essence in these remote regions. Whether it was done in the desert out of reverence for local divinities or the symbolism of the region (the west – afterlife) is not yet clear. The chronology of these temple feet graffiti indicates that the use of such in the desert would most likely be contemporaneous and that attribution of some examples to the Pharaonic period is now tentatively possible – and not just Graeco-Roman/Christian as Huyge has said. None of these attributions is conclusive and further research will be required to confidently date these commonly found representations.

Pubic triangles have been interpreted as representing human vulvae<sup>238</sup>, which is possible since similar shapes have been found in the anatomically correct position on anthropomorphic figures<sup>239</sup>. The dating of these vulvae remains inconclusive. Winkler assigns them to the Dynastic period<sup>240</sup>, which cannot be ruled out, however it is based on proximity of other Dynastic features at Site 68. The use of proximity for dating in this case is inappropriate since the site is not a “random”<sup>241</sup> one but is quite prominent in the area and even includes rock art of the “Early Oasis Dweller” style<sup>242</sup> as well as being in a quadrant (DOP quadrant 30/450) having many other rock art sites of varying periods and styles.

Domestic long-horned cattle are a commonly depicted animal in Dakhlan rock art and have been mostly attributed to NVC based on stylistic grounds since these creatures are commonly depicted in the funerary art of the Nile Valley and proximity<sup>243</sup>. These animals are often shown in association with humans and are often tethered or led by the humans. Again they have been found in both Eastern and Western Deserts as well. Examples from Dakhla include a

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>238</sup> Kaper & Willems, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>239</sup> As an example figure at site 32/435-L10-1, see A.J. Mills "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Fifth Season of Survey, October, 1982 –January, 1983", *JSSEA* XIII, pl. VIIc.

<sup>240</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>241</sup> Bednarik, *Op.cit.*, p. 117.

<sup>242</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, pl. XLVI. 2.

<sup>243</sup> L. Krzyzaniak, "Dakhleh Oasis Project: Interim Report on the First Season of the Recording of the Petroglyphs, January/February 1988", *JSSEA* XVII (1987), p. 190.

group of long horned cattle, one of which is tethered, from site 32/435-L10-1<sup>244</sup>. This site is located at the entrance to the Wadi el-Tawil, just northeast of the modern village of Bashendi. It is less than 1 kilometre west from, and is most likely associated with, the petroglyphs from Halfat el-Bir referenced earlier. A depiction of a man leading a tethered bull was found among stone hut circles on a Hilltop site in 30/450-G8-2<sup>245</sup>, while the largest number of these recorded in the area to date were found in site 30/450-E4-6 within what appeared to be a hut structure<sup>246</sup> and likely constituting a Hilltop site (see below). The most common interpretation of these cattle is that they represent ritual sacrifice<sup>247</sup>.

Other animals that have been attributed to NVC or earlier by Giddy include elephants, ostrich, giraffes and antelope<sup>248</sup> for the reasons of the animals existing in Pharaonic times and linking to Winkler's original assignment to the Dynastic of some of these animals<sup>249</sup>. Until further dating methods are applied it will remain difficult to assign these animals to a certain period.

Various graffiti featuring hieroglyphic texts appear in and around Dakhla, with remoter sites such as Khufu 01/1 in outlying areas (see Chapter 2). These range from single glyphs to words to entire texts. Examples of singular signs and words are at Site 68 where a name is written in half hieroglyphic – half hieratic, the name being a common one from the Middle Kingdom<sup>250</sup>. In Halfat el-Bir is found a stela incised into a rock face wherein is depicted an individual seated on a stool in front of an offering table<sup>251</sup>. This is accompanied by a text referring to the individual as “Chief of the Oasis” (*Imi-ra wechat*) and a possible name - Heki or Hekai. Two further sites deserve specific mention, one just North East of the modern village of

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<sup>244</sup> L. Krzyzaniak & K. Kroeper, "Dakhleh Oasis Project: Report on the Reconnaissance Season of the Recording of Petroglyphs, December, 1985", *JSSEA* XV (1985), p. 138 & pl. 8b.

<sup>245</sup> M.A. McDonald, "Dakhleh Oasis Project: Holocene Prehistory: Interim Report on the 1988 and 1989 seasons", *JSSEA* XX (1990), p. 47.

<sup>246</sup> L. Krzyzaniak, "Dakhleh Oasis. Research on Petroglyphs, 2000", in M. Gawlikowski and W. A. Daszewski (eds.), *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean, Reports 2000*, vol. 12, (2001), p. 251.

<sup>247</sup> D. Huyge, "Cosmology, Ideology and Personal Religious Practice in Ancient Egyptian Rock Art", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert* (2002), p. 202.

<sup>248</sup> Giddy, *Op.cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>249</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>250</sup> J. Osing, "Notizen zu den Oasen Charga und Dachla", *GM* 92, (1986), p. 82.

<sup>251</sup> A. Minault-Gout, "Une Inscription Rupestre de l'Oasis de Dakhla Située au Débouché du Darb el Tawil", in F. Guess & F. Thill (eds.), *Melanges offerts à Jean Vercouter*, (1985), pp. 267-272.

Tenida and the other 30km South-South-West of Mut. The Tenida site is situated in the area 31/435-P2<sup>252</sup> and is approximately 3 km east of the Halfat el-Bir site described earlier. It incorporates five images with accompanying hieroglyphic texts. The first of these is of the governor Ameny (according to an accompanying inscription), he faces what has been interpreted as an incense burner<sup>253</sup>. A nearby detached block depicted the “son of the governor Mery” displaying a very clear *dt*-cobra on the head and loincloth belt with two uraei which is also seen in the previous petroglyph<sup>254</sup>. A further detached block featured both Mery and Ameny, where Ameny is seated and holding a lotus to his nose, with Mery seemingly paying homage – a possible indication that this is a funerary scene with the successor paying this homage<sup>255</sup>. A similar scene, without epigraphic accompaniment, was found nearby. Again featuring seated (with lotus blossom) and standing figures in similar attire, this time with bread offering and most likely also funerary and representing Mery and Ameny<sup>256</sup>. In the same region an inscription reads, “it is with a troop of 420 men whom the governor Khentikhety-hotep reached (this place)”<sup>257</sup>. These petroglyphs and inscriptions have been dated to the Middle Kingdom<sup>258</sup> on epigraphic grounds and provide insights into the administrative character of Dakhla at this time. The use of royal iconography by governors as seen in the petroglyphic figures attests to the power and autonomy of these local rulers and the tolerance of the central administration to the provinces<sup>259</sup>. Parallels are noted with Middle Kingdom nomarchs of Middle Egypt (eg. Assiout, Meir, El-Bersheh and Béni Hassan), who at times appropriated royal elements in their depictions<sup>260</sup>.

In reviewing the evidence for culture in the Dakhla Oasis during the Pharaonic Period as manifest in the petroglyphs, the question remains as to whether some of these could be attributable to the contemporaneous SMC. To date, no attribution has been made for any of the

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<sup>252</sup> L. Krzyzaniak, “Dakhleh Oasis. Research on Petroglyphs, 1998”, *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, vol. 10, (1999), p. 132.

<sup>253</sup> M. Baud, F. Colin and P. Tallet, “Les gouverners de l’oasis de Dakhla au Moyen Empire”, *BIFAO* 99, (1999), p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

styles represented in Dakhla to SMC. The only attempt to assign Winkler's<sup>261</sup> Early Hunters, Early Oasis Dwellers and Dynastic petroglyph categorisations to the other forms of material assemblage observed in Dakhla (Masara, Bashendi, SMC and NVC) have been Dynastic Style, usually to Old Kingdom as has been discussed above, and Early Hunter and Early Oasis Dwellers tentatively assigned to Bashendi cultural unit by McDonald<sup>262</sup>. This attribution was based on a proximity case where it was argued that the richness of Bashendi sites in Southeast Basin, Eastern Dakhla must somehow imply that the rock art there is associated with that unit. It should be remembered that Southeast Basin (within the DOP 30/450 quadrant) is at the confluence of the Darb el-Battikh and Darb el-Ghubari, as well as being near a key entry point to the oasis. As such, the area would have seen a high amount of activity generally so that association of one form of evidence with another based on proximity is less justifiable. Consequently, the possibility to associate some of the non-Dynastic styles with SMC (rather than just Bashendi) remains open.

### 3.4 Hilltop Sites

It is noteworthy that a number of occupation sites have been surveyed and excavated around Dakhla that are located on the tops of hills and flat-topped gebels. Generally they consist of rectangular or oval shaped stone circles with opening, crescent-shaped stone structures, with various petroglyphs on the stones in the structures as well as on the natural stone of the host gebel (tops and bases). Ceramic remains, both NVC and SMC, are also found. These sites will be referred to specifically in this work as "Hilltop sites". These Hilltop sites have received specific attention in Kaper & Willems<sup>263</sup>, in which they are referred to as "watchposts", the implication being that the sites performed a military function of observation of the major routes entering the oasis.

The largest cluster of these sites is within the DOP 30/450 quadrant<sup>264</sup> in the southeast part of the oasis. These are situated at the terminus for the Darb el-Battikh and where it meets the Darb el-Ghubari. On the southern edge of the oasis three sites constitute what could be termed a southern cluster. The westernmost of these is site 30/405-L1-1. This site lies

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<sup>261</sup> Winkler, *Op.cit.*, pp. 12-34.

<sup>262</sup> M.M.A. McDonald "Dakhleh Oasis Project: Holocene Prehistory: Interim Report on the 1988 and 1989 Seasons", *JSSEA* XX, (1990), p. 45.

<sup>263</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op. cit.*, pp. 79-94.

<sup>264</sup> Including Winkler's Site 68 and sites 30/450-F9-1, 30/450-G8-2, 30/450-E4-1, 30/450-C4-1, 30/450-D4-2 and 30/450-D4-6 see Kaper & Willems *Op.cit.*, pp 81-82 and 90.

approximately 3km south east of present day Mut and is situated at the border of the small scarp separating the oasis and the desert proper<sup>265</sup>. Roughly in line with this site and to the east are two further sites 30/420-F3-1 and 30/420-H3-1<sup>266</sup>, these are situated at the start of a long wadi running north-south constituting a natural conduit for traffic entering the oasis from the desert. Within this wadi are found two further Hilltop sites – 31/420-H10-3 and 30/420-G2-1<sup>267</sup>. Finally, there are two Hilltop sites situated at the entrance to the Wadi el-Tawil (start of Darb el-Tawil), named 32/435-L10-3<sup>268</sup> and 32/435-TBN<sup>269</sup>, again in area that would have received a high amount of traffic judging by nearby petroglyph sites as discussed earlier when considering Halfat el-Bir and the 32/435 quadrant. It seems from the placement of these Hilltop sites that they are usually in areas associated with other petroglyph sites and where major trails pass through. A pair of more remote sites is situated 15 to 20km southwest of El-Gedida identified by the (Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa) ACACIA project as 99/38 and 99/39<sup>270</sup>. These sites lie among a series of other sandstone hills and flank a small 80m wide entrance to the oasian level<sup>271</sup>. The ACACIA investigators argue for a strategic position for these sites for the reasons that from this region it is possible to see Gebel Edmonstone and the green lines of the oasian cultivation<sup>272</sup> and that a number of *alamat* could be seen continuing in a north-easterly direction from the Hilltop sites (although it is not yet clear when these date from)<sup>273</sup>.

Generally speaking, the Hilltop sites are characterised by a number of stone huts on the tops that are horseshoe shaped and face south or southeast with no evidence for roofing<sup>274</sup> thereby

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<sup>265</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Third Season of Survey, September–December, 1980", *JSSEA* XI, (1981), p. 180.

<sup>266</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op.cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>267</sup> O.E. Kaper reporting on Old Kingdom Studies and Watch-post Hilltop Sites, see A. J. Mills, *Report to the Supreme Council of Activities on the 2000/2001 Field Activities of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, (2001), viewed on 05 March 2011,

<<http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/assets/documents/dakhleh-report-2000-2001.pdf>>, p. 16.

<sup>268</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op.cit.*

<sup>269</sup> Kaper, *Op.cit.*

<sup>270</sup> Riemer (2005), *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op.cit.*



providing protection from the prevailing winds<sup>275</sup>. Of the Hilltop sites surveyed by the DOP, some have received detailed attention and have had detailed excavation performed – two of these will be considered here, sites 30/450-G8-2 and 30/450-D4-2. In addition, the two sites examined in detail by ACACIA - 99/38 and 99/39 will also be considered. Site 30/450-G8-2 incorporates three hut circles - one single celled and two double celled<sup>276</sup>. Noteworthy are finds of both NVC wares as well as SMC wares<sup>277</sup>, short sections of stick and seal impressions<sup>278</sup> and sections of leather, rawhide (gazelle), twine and ground ochre<sup>279</sup>. McDonald suggests that, based on the material evidence, this Hilltop site could have been a hunting station or leather-working or tannery site and that the residents could possibly have been SMC based on the wares<sup>280</sup>. Approximately 5km northwest of the aforementioned site is 30/450-D4-2. This site incorporates four hut circles (A, B, C and D), each single celled and semi-circular<sup>281</sup>. The finds from this site included wood (tamarisk), cow and hare remains as well as ceramics from Old Kingdom NVC (including Meidum bowls)<sup>282</sup>. McDonald in commenting on the chipped stone industry noted a major difference to site 30/450-G8-2 in the paucity of scrapers and awl-like tools in favour of denticulates indicating a narrower range of activity here<sup>283</sup>. A broad analysis of the lithics from seven of these sites showed that the assemblages found differ significantly from other occupation sites. For example, the Hilltop sites contain very few sickle blades in comparison to sites such as Ain el-Gazzareen, have differing proportions of raw material types used and frequent re-use and retouch of earlier tools<sup>284</sup>.

The sites 99/38 and 99/39 demonstrate occupational evidence from the Old Kingdom and Late Period. These two phases are interesting in that there is some correlation to phases of

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<sup>275</sup> To the present day a visit to these sites shows that these places are frequently windy with a northerly wind prevailing much of the time.

<sup>276</sup> McDonald, *Op.cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op.cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>284</sup> M. Kobusiewicz, "Flints" in A.J. Mills (ed.) Dakhleh Oasis Project Report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the 2004-2005 Field Season, (2005), viewed on 05 March 2011,

< <http://arts.monash.edu.au/archaeology/excavations/dakhleh/assets/documents/dakhleh-report-2004-2005.pdf>>, pp. 21-22.

occupation noted for a “Hilltop site 12” in the northeast of Dakhla that also featured major occupation phases in both the Old Kingdom and Late Periods, with abandonment thereafter<sup>285</sup>. In terms of structural remains, the hill 99/38 incorporates three areas of occupation – a dry stone wall with simple chambers, a natural stone ring with man-made enhancements and a rock overhang with man made enhancements. The chambered wall comprises four simple chambers and is situated at the southern end of the hill facing, on the side protected from the northerly wind and facing north<sup>286</sup>. The presence of olive pips (radio-carbon dated to 700-500 BC) and of at least twelve Late Period flasks indicates occupation at least to the Late Period<sup>287</sup>. The natural stone ring is situated on the southern side of 99/38, forming a natural 3m by 2m area with enhancing walls added by human agency<sup>288</sup>. Some of the surrounding blocks feature petroglyphs and a hieroglyphic inscription (discussed below). This area again demonstrates occupation during the Late Period as evidenced by Late Period flasks/kegs and two sandstone headrests<sup>289</sup>. Excavation of the sediment in this area revealed stone tools, ceramic sherds, carved beads and fireplaces, which through the ceramics and carbon dating indicate Old Kingdom, possibly 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty occupation<sup>290</sup>. Clayton ring fragments were also found in the sediment and in a nearby niche<sup>291</sup>. The rock overhang consists of a natural depression in the hill, the terrace of which has been enclosed by a man made dry stonewall. Within the demarcated area was also found a sandstone headrest as well as red polished ceramic sherds dated between 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to First Intermediate Period<sup>292</sup>. In addition, the remains of charcoal attest to fireplace(s) under the overhang and a petroglyph appears on the rear wall of the overhang, indicating occupation over days or weeks by individuals likely seeking protection from the sand, wind and sun<sup>293</sup>. The adjoining hill 99/39, has far less habitation evidence, incorporating two crescent shaped walls<sup>294</sup> as has been noted in other Hilltop sites (discussed earlier) and which most likely acted as windbreaks as in the other sites. It would seem likely that original habitation preference would have been given to the areas of hill 99/38 that had natural protective features (the natural wall

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<sup>285</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op.cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>286</sup> Riemer et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 299.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

and rock overhang) – and these indeed both also had Old Kingdom remains and that features such as the crescent walls catered to extra individuals of the group who could not be accommodated in hill 99/38 for space. Faunal remains from the site indicated prevalence for wild species in the diet of the inhabitants<sup>295</sup>, indicating that there might have been a requirement for food self sufficiency here.

The Hilltop sites commonly incorporate petroglyphs including sandals, human feet, hunting scenes, mammals, birds, men, pubic triangles and rows of notches<sup>296</sup>. Some of these themes are further adhered to in the recently documented Hilltop site 99/38 which also incorporates a human foot<sup>297</sup>, hunting scene<sup>298</sup>, animals and birds<sup>299</sup> kilted men<sup>300</sup> and pubic triangle<sup>301</sup>. Specifically, the site referenced earlier, 30/450-G8-2, includes Dynastic incised figures of a man with a tethered bull<sup>302</sup>, while site 30/450-D4-2 includes men, feet, pubic triangles, animals (birds, cattle and a lion), a hunting scene and a kilted dynastic man (interpreted by Kaper and Willems to be the portrait of a soldier)<sup>303</sup>. Since some of the petroglyphs are carved on stones constituting hut structures, a form of “art mobilier” is also present as witnessed at 30/420-F3-1 where images of a gazelle and hound were found<sup>304</sup>. Religious iconography was found in association with one of the more recently discovered sites, 30/420-G2-1, where four images of the god Seth were uncovered<sup>305</sup>. The Hilltop site 99/38 featured an inscription using hieroglyphs, sections of which are difficult to transliterate, leading to interpretations for the latter half base on various speculations. The only portion of the inscription upon which there is agreement is “oh Amun Lord of...”<sup>306</sup>, possibly representing a display of personal piety of one of the occupants of the site. A number of Hilltop sites demonstrate rows of carved notches

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>296</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>297</sup> Riemer et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

<sup>302</sup> McDonald, *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>303</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>304</sup> M. R. Kleindienst, C.S. Churcher, M.M.A. McDonald and H.P. Schwarcz, "Geography, Geology, Geochronology and Geoarchaeology of the Dakhleh Oasis Region: An Interim Report", in C. S. Churcher and A. J. Mills (eds), *Reports from the Survey of the Dakhleh Oasis 1977–1987*, (Exeter, 1999), p. 43.

<sup>305</sup> Kaper, *Op.cit.*

<sup>306</sup> Riemer et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 321.

executed on the rocks<sup>307</sup>. These strokes have been interpreted as a counting system by Kaper and Willems and they have generalised that the system consists of short strokes with every tenth being longer<sup>308</sup>. The only other such markings where the stroke length varies have been found on clay tablets from Ain Asil, (for example Tablet 3446, a clay tablet fired hard by the conflagration, where every tenth stroke is lengthened)<sup>309</sup> and amongst other rock art in the Sahaba region of Sudan<sup>310</sup>.

Kaper and Willems argue that these Hilltop sites are most likely military watchposts that monitored and perhaps guarded traffic on the primary routes into the oasis. Their reasoning is based on the following<sup>311</sup>:

1. The sites are usually in positions affording a good overview of the surrounding countryside;
2. The sites are placed primarily on major routes entering and leaving the oasis;
3. Seal impressions from site 30/450-D4-2 indicate that the occupants were integrated into the administration;
4. Some of the sites incorporate hearths having no faunal inclusions – implying food was brought in;
5. The kilted anthropomorphic petroglyph from 30/450-D4-2 depicts a soldier on the basis of the dress, accompanying gear and 'hieroglyph.

It is suggested that further survey for these types of sites and more detailed investigation of individual sites will be required before their military attribution should be fully accepted. Some inconsistencies still remain with the military interpretation – for example, the role of site 30/450-G8-2 which is more likely to have been for the processing of gazelle hides (see earlier). Although it should also be kept in mind that individuals manning such posts could have sought ways to pass the time, through such activities as the making of tanned hides or the beads that were found in site 99/38<sup>312</sup>. What also remains unexplained currently is the prevalence of Clayton Ring deposits, SMC ceramics and a possible SMC presence at these sites, as at 99/38 and 99/39<sup>313</sup>. Although it is known that there was a chronological crossover between SMC and

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<sup>307</sup> Kaper and Willems, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>309</sup> G. Soukiassian, "Balat VI: Le palais des gouverneurs de l'époque de Pepy II", *FIFAO* 46, (Cairo, 2002), p. 339.

<sup>310</sup> P. Hellstrom, H. Langballe and O. Myers, "The Rock Drawings 2: Plates", *Scandinavian Joint Expedition to Sudanese Nubia* 1/2, (1970), Corpus X102.

<sup>311</sup> Kaper & Willems, *Op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>312</sup> Riemer et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

NVC up to the late Old Kingdom, it is possible that the sites were used by SMC people before the NVC occupation for reasons as yet to be confirmed. It has also been postulated that the SMC people were possibly operating together with the NVC occupiers of the Hilltop sites as indigenous desert guides in a way similar to Bedouin of later times<sup>314</sup>. In general, it currently cannot be ruled out that these sites might have served a variety of functions – including commercial activities in connection with the access routes and caravans using them.

### 3.5 Summary

The Dakhla Oasis region has supported a number of various communities throughout its long history of occupation. During the Pharaonic period it supported primarily NVC communities with the position, significance and size of these communities changing over time. The presence of indigenes is detectable at the start of the NVC occupation while other cultural groups such as the SMC have left small traces of their presence as well. The presence of each of these groups will be reviewed in turn.

A number of NVC sites from west to east Dakhla have offered archaeological material evidence of varying amounts representing various periods. The evidence covers settlement, funerary and temporary occupation/presence. While Early Dynastic ceramics have been uncovered in sites such as Mut el-Kharab, the earliest clear evidence of major NVC settlements is that of Ain el Gezareen - dating at least to the late 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and possibly Mut el Kharab which features 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty remains. It is not yet clear how the Early Dynastic material came to Mut el-Kharab, whether with early NVC missions through here or via trade carried out by the SMC with the Nile Valley. Balat, incorporating Qila ed-Dabba and Ain Asil, then predominates from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (where it apparently peaked), with a more or less continuous, albeit reduced presence to the Late Period. Amheida and its immediate surrounds have revealed a moderate amount of material for most of the main periods under consideration. Ain Tirghi demonstrates occupation from the Second Intermediate Period (this, the most major evidence to date) on through to the Late Period. The moderate resurgence of activity at Ain Asil also during this period might indicate a period of renewed interest during the Second Intermediate Period.

The social and administrative structure of these NVC sites demonstrates close links with the approaches to provincial administration in the Nile Valley. Seals and seal impressions have been found in both Ain el Gezareen and Ain Asil attesting to the state ownership and state sponsored production. Numbers of silos and bakeries had been in operation that were storing

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<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

and producing far in excess of the needs of the local community (as in Ain Asil). This indicates external destinations for this produce and that therefore the Ain Asil palace complex served a far broader economic role in the oasis. The major sites of Balat, Ain el Gezareen and Mut all reveal bread moulds with similar incised motifs, indicating that this type of standardised production was widespread in the oasis. Wine production also seems to have been conducted during New Kingdom times as evidenced through amphorae and labels for Ain Asil.

It is likely that the major centres in Dakhla played a role in the conduct of expeditions to the west (such as to Khufu 01/1) and south along the Abu Ballas trail (see Chapter 3) due to its proximity to these areas as being the closest administrative centre, although currently there is no direct evidence for such. In addition, textual evidence from Ain Asil refers to provisioning of an official along the way as they made their way across the desert.

The structures used in the earlier sites of Ain el Gezareen and the earlier phase of Ain Asil include heavy surrounding walls forming large rectangular enclosures interpreted to be defensive. The key issue regarding these walls is whether they were built with the expectation of hostilities taking place in these areas. Massive mastabas in Qila ed-Dabba, palatial structures and administrative quarters at Ain Asil are further indicative of an NVC state-sponsored enterprise having been established in Dakhla.

During the Old Kingdom, governors resided here who simultaneously held significant powers, having their own Hwt-ka establishments in the palace grounds, and having been granted permission for these by the king. They were in effect very similar to NVC provincial governors, having similar elements in their titles, with the exception of what has been variously interpreted as “admiral” or “commander in chief” at the start of the title. This may show that the role harks back to expeditions led through the desert.. Petroglyphic inscriptions referring to Middle Kingdom governors include royal iconography - further highlighting their power and relative autonomy, while also paralleling the Middle Kingdom nomarchs of Middle Egypt with this iconography. Also from the Middle Kingdom, a reference to a governor on a sandstone block from Mut El-Kharab includes titles conformant with Nile Valley titles of the time and in contrast to the previous 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty local governors whose titles differed from their Nile Valley counterparts. Other evidence for a local administration comes from the Third Intermediate Period and 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty where the Smaller Dakhla Stela and a Stela from Amheida reference a Libyan chief who is thought to be a local governor acting under a Libyan Dynastic Nile Valley central administration which looked with great interest upon order in the oases. Further evidence for public servants can be seen in the use of scribes and tablets bearing the names of high

ranking officials attached to the palace listing the son of the governor, chiefs of the escorts, priests, directors and foremen.

Hilltop sites were in use during at least Old Kingdom and Late Period times for purposes as yet to be fully confirmed. To date it has been suggested that they were used to monitor the major routes leading in and out of the oasis by NVC state-sponsored and provisioned groups.

Settlements in Dakhla from a very early stage (5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty at least) were in constant contact with the Nile Valley and received product and produce from it. Imports in Ain el Gezareen were seen to include Nile oyster, Nile catfish as well as Nile Valley produced ceramics. It seems that there was also contact of some type prior to this, either directly or indirectly between the SMC indigenes and the Nile Valley as revealed by finds of Early Dynastic ceramics in Dakhla.

A very clear picture emerges in Dakhla of a distribution of sites over time and a clear association of these sites with spring sites. Ain el Gezareen, Ayn Asil and Mut el Kharab, along with the smaller sites discussed earlier all featured springs nearby. These sources were likely a key determinant for the choice of the original settlements. As was seen, the Greater Dakhla Stela is concerned with the disputed ownership of wells in the district so it is seen that springs and wells were items of great importance in the oasis and could be responsible for territorial disputes.

The culture as expressed by the NVC or egyptianised groups in the oasis followed mainly the norms of Nile Valley practice with some elements modified or slightly different based on the physical environment, the symbolism of the environment, the influence of NVC individuals present in this isolated community and to a limited degree, contact with indigenes and other non-NVC cultures. The symbolic associations of this region in NVC cosmology resulted in dedication and preference for certain gods associated with the deserts and oases. Consequently, a temple dedicated to the god Seth is found here as well as rock art depictions. The god Igai also receives references in Mut el-Kharab (Middle Kingdom) and Ayn Asil (late Old Kingdom) (see Chapter 9 for further details on these gods and Western Desert cult). It is noteworthy that the god also appears in an area of the desert that would have been accessed from Dakhla (Khufu 01/1, refer Chapter 2). It would seem that Igai's prominence in Dakhla commenced relatively early in the Oasis' history, to be then replaced by Seth in post Middle Kingdom times.

As observed in other oasian outposts some examples of the execution and style of decorative elements in tombs and official structures is seen to be of a lesser quality than that of

similar work in the Nile Valley as an example, - the decoration of Mastaba III in Qila ed-Dabba has been described as “naïve” and representative of the quality of “provincial work”. This might indicate the work of local artisans.

The Dakhla NVC pursued its own pottery manufacture, producing distinctive styles similar to Nile Valley types and fabrics such as what has been identified as B23 used for New Kingdom amphorae<sup>315</sup>. The enigmatic oasis kegs were products of the southern oases including Dakhla and were assumed to have been used for the transport of liquids and grain. That two of the main indigenous products of the oasis were containers to facilitate transport of liquids and other goods over long distances comes as no surprise. Such vessels were important to Dakhla for trade and import/export as well as for the provisioning of expeditions through the desert.

The substantial quantity of NVC-produced rock art in Dakhla is testament to the fact that significant portions of the local population, or travellers en-route to Dakhla, were engaged in cultural expression using the most immediate available means when in remote areas. This ranged from personal inscriptions or graffiti executed by individuals to more official inscriptions of governors and high officials. This rock art was often executed as a part of groups engaged in the conduct of expeditions and occupation of Hilltop sites.

The earliest sites detected thus far in Dakhla oasis are those of the prehistoric indigenous cultures of Masara, Bashendi and SMC. For the period under consideration the earliest settlement sites are those of the SMC (see Chapter 8 for a detailed overview of the SMC). The SMC sites are concentrated mainly in the central lowlands of the oasis, with the settlement patterns indicating year-round occupation through temporary campsites. As detailed in Chapter 8, SMC might have been either a mixed economy group, or a nomadic group, with the second option looking more likely.

There is evidence for SMC interaction with the NVC largely in the form of finds of their respective ceramics in each other's contexts. These contexts range from SMC material in major NVC contexts such as Mut el-Kharab, NVC material in smaller SMC sites and a mix of NVC and SMC at minor sites such as Hilltop sites. It is not yet clear whether these co-located finds are indicative of 1) co-habitation of SMC and NVC; 2) trade and exchange between the groups; 3) independent access by both groups to a common resource (such as springs). Hope<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> C. A. Hope, "Oases Amphorae of the New Kingdom", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 95.

<sup>316</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, W. Dolling, C. Hubschmann, P. Kucera, R. Long and A. Stevens, "Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2006", *BACE* 17 (2006), p. 38.



has suggested in the case of Mut el-Kharab that Early Dynastic Nile Valley ceramics found there might have arrived via Oasis dweller's trading missions to the Nile Valley. The disappearance of an independent SMC presence (as seen through the lack of distinct SMC material culture) during the NVC Late Old Kingdom period has not been explained to date and might have been a result of being 1) culturally subsumed by NVC; 2) had been made extinct or; 3) being potentially nomadic, moved to areas not yet archaeologically surveyed. As postulated in Chapter 8 it is possible that some SMC individuals acted in the role of desert guides or similar.

Much has been written about the connection of the "Libyans" to the Western Desert and their possible presence in the oases. The Smaller Dakhla Stela makes reference to a Libyan chief, sDHTy, of the SA-iwn group making offerings to Seth, while a further stela from Amheida has provided further light on sDHTy of the SAm-iwn, recording a donation to the temple of Thoth (see Chapter 8 for a detailed overview of the Libyans and their general presence in the Western Desert). The appearance of the Libyan chief on a second stela such as this accounts for the significance and influence of the Libyan presence in Dakhla at the time. It must be remembered however that there is currently no material evidence attributable to a Libyan cultural presence and that these Libyan chiefs might have been posted as governors as part of the administrative process of the Libyan Dynasties in the Nile Valley and Delta (see Chapter 8 for a detailed explanation).

Other possible cultural presences in Dakhla are manifest in ceramics of Pan-Grave and Kerma culture. It is not yet clear whether these represent imports or the presence of groups such as the Medjay during the Second Intermediate Period (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed explanation).

## Chapter 4

### Kharga Oasis

#### 4.1 Introduction

Kharga is the southern-most of the oases of the Western Desert, is relatively close to the Nile Valley when compared to the other major oases and interestingly is one that has to date revealed only a relatively small amount of evidence for Pharaonic occupation within the main centre, but with growing evidence emerging in the areas peripheral to the centre<sup>1</sup>. The key Pharaonic sites in Kharga Oasis are depicted in Figure 4.

It is thought that Kharga was still a relatively lawless area up to the start of the Middle Kingdom, and not fully integrated into the NVC state of the 12th Dynasty, as evidenced by the stelae of Dediku and Kay<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See S. Ikram "Drawing the World: Petroglyphs from Kharga Oasis", *ArchéoNil* 19 (2009), pp. 67-82; S. Ikram, "Nile Currents," *KMT: A Modern Journal of Egyptology* 13, (2002), pp. 8-13; S. Ikram, "A Desert zoo: An exploration of meaning and reality of animals in the rock art of Kharga Oasis", in H. Riemer, F. Förster, M. Herb & N. Pöllath (eds.), *Desert animals in the eastern Sahara: Status, economic significance, and cultural reflection in antiquity. Proceedings of an Interdisciplinary ACACIA Workshop held at the University of Cologne December 14-15, 2007, Colloquium Africanum 4. Köln: Heinrich-Barth-Institut* (2009), pp. 263-291; L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2005-2006", *BIFAO* 106, (2006), pp. 394-400; L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2006-2007", *BIFAO* 107, (2007), pp. 303-308; L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale 2007-2008", *BIFAO* 108, (2008), pp. 429-438; L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2008-2009", *BIFAO* 109, (2009), pp. 587-593 and D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), pp. 156-177.

<sup>2</sup> J. C. Darnell, "The Route of Eleventh Dynasty Expansion into Nubia", *ZÄS* 131, (2004), p. 25.

## 4.2 Key Pharaonic Sites

### 4.2.1 District of Hibis

The inscriptions of the Hibis temple refer to the name of the old city “Hibe”, which has also received many references by the classical authors<sup>3</sup>. This was once the most significant town in the oasis and the likely residence of the governors<sup>4</sup>.

#### 4.2.1.1 Hibis Temple

Psametik II was the founder of the temple of Hibis and due most likely to its administrative links with Thebes it was dedicated to the triad of Amun, Mut and Khonsu, with substantial installations for the cult of Osiris<sup>5</sup>. The temple was originally situated on a lake, measured 19.5m by 26m and its decorations were concluded under Darius I and possibly Darius II<sup>6</sup>. The temple underwent several phases of development, with successive additions made during the Pharaonic Period by Psamtek II, Hakoris, Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II. The structure as it stands is approached through an avenue of sphinxes, followed by a 12m sandstone portal which then passes through the temenos, but which now longer stands<sup>7</sup>. This temenos was erected in the Ptolemaic era<sup>8</sup> and the first Pharaonic element encountered is a portico added to the front of the temple by Nectanebo I<sup>9</sup>. This portico consists of ten columns with four types of capitals, with the columns at the front and sides connected by screen walls<sup>10</sup>. The next section is an extension to the original temple most likely from the time of Hakoris<sup>11</sup>. This is a hypostyle hall in front of the pronaos, with four by three columns having palm- and bell-shaped capitals<sup>12</sup>. The structure following consists of pronaos, hypostyle hall and sanctuaries most likely from the time of Psametik II<sup>13</sup>. In addition, during early excavations of the temple by Winlock, a fragment of an

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<sup>3</sup> W. D. van Wijngaarden, “Der Hibistempel in der Oase El-Chargeh”, *ZÄS* 79, (1954), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, (Oxford, 1999), p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Wijngaarden, *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> E. Cruz-Urbe, “The Hibis Temple Project 1984-85 Field season, Preliminary Report”, *JSSEA* 23, (1986), p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

offering bowl was found dedicated in the reign of Apries, possibly as temple furniture<sup>14</sup>. Previously it was thought that the temple foundation dated from the Persian period<sup>15</sup>. Evidence has been mounting however for an earlier assignment to the original structure through such evidence as the cartouches of Darius being painted in and not carved in some sections<sup>16</sup>.

The Saite period was characterized by political and economic recovery of Egypt which favoured a dynamic building program and new stylistic features, the pronaos is an example of a distinct style developing in the Saite period<sup>17</sup>.

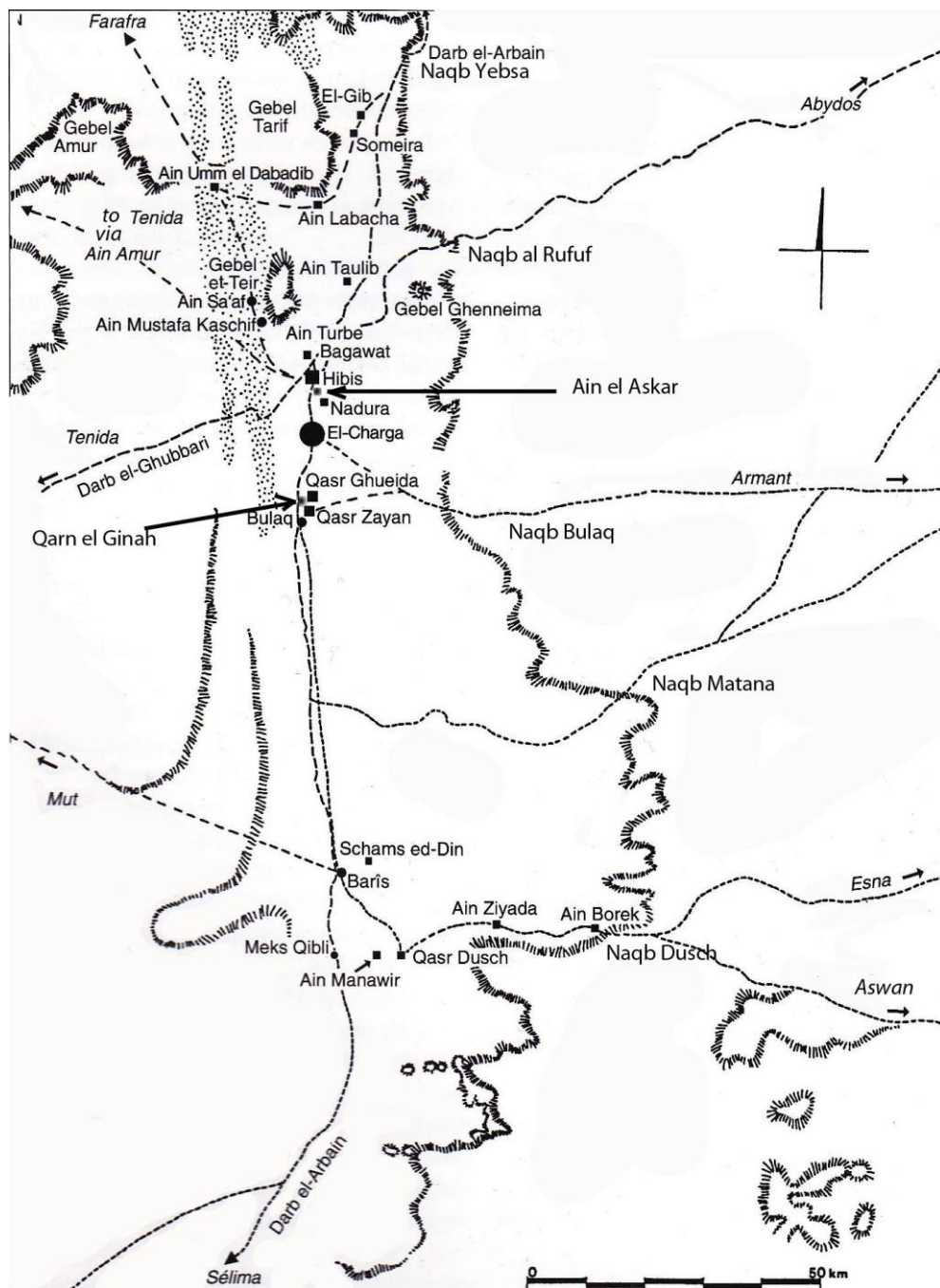
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<sup>14</sup> H.E. Winlock, "The Egyptian Expedition", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 5, no. 10, (1910), p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Wijngaarden, *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Cruz-Uribe, *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.



**Figure 4 Key sites in Kharga Oasis**

Early attempts at assigning the temple to a particular deity resulted in conclusions about it being dedicated to Amun of Hibis in his multitude of forms (Amun of Hibis, Amun-Re of Karnak etc.), subsequent analyses have shown however that this is far too simplistic and that there are a

multitude of deities and deity-groups represented here<sup>18</sup>. The Hibis sanctuary, for example, has no single scene to focus on, instead there are over 700 deities being offered to by the king, giving the impression that the temple is dedicated to all the gods<sup>19</sup>. The west wall of the sanctuary indicated the importance of the Theban cult of Amen-Re and was thus given the position where it was the focus of the sanctuary – this did not imply however that the other deities were subservient<sup>20</sup>. This focus is further testament to the special relationship between Kharga and the Theban cult centre. Overall, the temple was dedicated to Amun of Hibis with significant references to Theban cult and ritual such as the Theban Amun-Mut-Khonsu triad as well as the complex intertwining of Amun-Re and Osiris, found in late New Kingdom Thebes<sup>21</sup>. The references to multiple deities has been explained as representations of geographically distinct areas and the gods found within those areas, that is, individual nomes<sup>22</sup>.

#### 4.2.1.2 Settlement, Cemeteries and other Structures

It is generally agreed that the ancient town of Hibis was located around the temple and gradually extended north over time<sup>23</sup>. It seems that the cemeteries of this settlement were located north of the temple and excavations by the local Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) Inspectorate and Metropolitan Museum of Art have exposed series of Late Period tombs in the area between Hibis and el-Bagawat<sup>24</sup>. Excavations around the Hibis temple itself also revealed that the temple was surrounded on the north, west and south by a variety of structures which have not been excavated to date and lie under the cultivation<sup>25</sup>. This is further testament to the extent of the site of Hibis and its status as a major centre in the oasis. The area of Ain el Askar is south of

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<sup>18</sup> Cruz-Urbe, *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> E. Cruz-Urbe, *Hibis Temple Project*, vol. 1, (Texas, 1988), p. 193.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>23</sup> E. Cruz-Urbe, P. Piccione and J. Westerfield, “Kharga Oasis Coptic Graffiti Project Preliminary Report of the 2005 Field Season”, *JSSEA* 31, (2004), p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Note also that at the time of writing these excavations have not been formally published (Pers. Comm. Eugene Cruz-Urbe).

<sup>25</sup> E. Cruz-Urbe (1986), *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

Hibis and has been excavated by the local Kharga antiquities inspectorate. The inspectorate has uncovered a pharaonic necropolis of Middle Kingdom date<sup>26</sup>.

#### 4.2.2 Qarn el-Ginah

Surveys in this area have revealed extensive deposits of New Kingdom oasis wares in various loci, including a mould-made amphora and amphorae of Canaanite form<sup>27</sup>. In addition, pan-grave sherds and rock art depicting kilted figures with feathers in their hair<sup>28</sup> possibly attest to the presence of Medjay in the area. The mix of Pharaonic and pan-grave material in this place suggest the passing of caravans, with policing of these as they entered the oasis along the central eastern escarpment and proceeded north and south along the Darn el Arbain<sup>29</sup> (refer Chapter 2).

#### 4.2.3 Gebel Ghueita and Qasr Ghueita

Surveys in the vicinity of the Qasr Ghueita temple complex have found large deposits of pharaonic ceramics ranging from the Middle to New Kingdoms. The majority of the wares were made of local oasis-made fabrics, with 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty forms dominating<sup>30</sup>. The density of pottery in this relatively small area seems to indicate a previous settlement here, while the predominance of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty wares indicates growth during this period in the oasis<sup>31</sup>. More recently, an area known as Umm Mawagir<sup>32</sup> has been uncovered in this area, dating to the Second Intermediate Period and consisting of dense litters of ceramic bread mould, mud brick structures, clay figurines, ostrich shell beads and Medjay ceramics. Darnell has surmised so far that this was an administrative centre associated with the functioning of the northern Girga road to Thebes<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> D. Darnell, *Op. cit.*, p. 172. Note also that at the time of writing these excavations have not been formally published (pers. comm. Eugene Cruz-Uribe).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> H. Pringle "The Lost City", *Yale Alumni Magazine*, vol. 74, no. 1, (2010), viewed 23rd May 2011, <[http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2010\\_09/index.html](http://www.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/2010_09/index.html)>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

The Amun temple in Qasr Ghueita stems most likely from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and is of a similar type to the Ain el-Muftilla chapels in Baharia<sup>34</sup> (see Chapter 5). The temple measures 10.6m by 19m and consists of a pylon at the front, followed by a four columned hall, behind which is the transversal hall of the offering table which in turn has three sanctuaries opening to it<sup>35</sup>.

#### 4.2.4 Dush and Ayn Manawir Area

The site of Dush is situated approximately 95km south of central Kharga. It is well known for its Roman period occupation and fortress at Qasr el-Dush – which possibly dates back to Ptolemaic times, and also incorporates a temple to Isis, Serapis and Horus<sup>36</sup>. The position of Dush, close to the Darb el Arbain and at the terminus of the desert roads from Edfu, Kurkur and Bir Nakheila<sup>37</sup> indicate its status as a terminus on the trade route leading up into Kharga. Given its position and activity on the roads leading into it during the Pharaonic period (see Chapter 2), it would seem likely that there was also an occupation of Dush during the Pharaonic period. During the 27th Dynasty a mud brick temple dedicated to Osiris-iw was built at the site of Ayn Manawir in this area, measuring 30m long and 18m wide. Excavation of this temple has yielded numerous bronze statues<sup>38</sup> of the god as well as a large quantity of demotic ostraca<sup>39</sup>. The temple itself interestingly follows a plan and structure similar to the Amun Temple at Aghourmi in Siwa<sup>40</sup>. It was primarily consecrated to Osiris-iw (“Osiris has come”) and also to Isis “who is in Dush” and Amun of Hibis<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>37</sup> R. Morkot, “The Darb el-Arbain, The Kharga Oasis and its forts and other desert routes”, in D. M. Bailey (ed.), *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series #19, Archaeological Research in Roman Egypt*, (Michigan, 1996), Fig. 4.

<sup>38</sup> M. Wuttmann, L. Coulon and F. Gombert, “An Assemblage of Bronze Statuettes in a Cult Context: The Temple of ‘Ayn Manâwir ’”, in M. Hill (ed.), *Gifts for the Gods. Images from Egyptian Temples*, (2007), pp. 167-173.

<sup>39</sup> M. Wuttmann, B. Bousquet, M. Chauveau, P. Dils, S. Marchand, A. Schweitzer and L. Volay “Premier rapport préliminaire des travaux sur le site de 'Ayn Manaewîr (Oasis de Kharga)”, *BIFAO* 96, (1996), pp. 121 – 181.

<sup>40</sup> F. Colin, “Les Fondateurs du Sanctuaire d’Amon à Siwa (Désert Libyque) Autour d’un Bronze de Donation Inédit”, in: W. Clarysse, A. Schoors & H. Willems (eds), *Egyptian religion: The last thousand*



The area was inhabited by hunter-gatherers at the end of the Palaeolithic who settled around artesian wells present at the time, which dried up over time, with humans reappearing on a fulltime basis during the First Persian Period, when it was possible to construct qanats as a persistent water source<sup>42</sup>. Surveys conducted in the surrounding regions of Dush, Ayn Manawir and Baris uncovered sites that included Epipalaeolithic, Neolithic, Predynastic or Old Kingdom periods and some dating to 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC<sup>43</sup>. Of particular interest is a site KS179 situated 6 km southwest of Dush, indicating SMC presence through a large ovoid jar and Clayton Ring, during the early SMC phase<sup>44</sup>.

Structures at the site also included a service building attached to the temple and two groups of houses around it with excavations revealing ceramics vessels, faience gourds and amulets, glass mosaic plaques and bronze ex-votos representing Osiris<sup>45</sup>. The temple in addition revealed faunal remains of caprines, ox and several wild species, the bones indicating that they were food waste of the users of the temple, such as the priests, for a domestic or ritual use<sup>46</sup>. The ostraca provide important insights into water resource management in the area. Some ostraca feature contracts dealing with transactions between individuals for days or fractions of days of water usage from particular qanats, suggesting that ownership of water through qanats was equivalent to landed property<sup>47</sup>.

#### 4.2.5 Access Points and Areas on the Periphery of the Oasis

##### 4.2.5.1 Passes into the Oasis Depression

A number of the passes that facilitate access from the desert plateau into the Kharga depression show signs of use over a long period and due to their undisturbed state in relation to areas within Kharga itself also provide useful evidence as to the cultures inhabiting the oasis.

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years. *Studies dedicated to the memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, vol. 2, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 85, (Leuven, 1998), p. 336.

<sup>41</sup> M. Chauveau, "The demotic ostraca of Ayn Manawir", *EA* 22 (2003), p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> M. Wuttman, "Ayn Manawir", *EA* 22 (2003), p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'IFAO en 2005-2006", *BIFAO* 106, (2006), p. 399.

<sup>44</sup> B. Midant-Reynes and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'IFAO en 2009-2010", *BIFAO* 110, (2010), p. 360.

<sup>45</sup> Wuttman, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> L. Pantalacci, "Travaux de l'IFAO en 2004-2005", *BIFAO* 105, (2005), p. 472.

<sup>47</sup> Chauveau, *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

#### 4.2.5.1.1 Yebsa Pass

Yebsa pass is one of the northern passes being placed to the east, midway between the Darb el Arbain access point and the Refuf pass<sup>48</sup>. While no definitively pharaonic material was found here, there is an abundance of material from Predynastic to Proto-dynastic periods, including what D. Darnell refers to as Libo-Nubian wares, mat-impressed sherds and Nile Valley imports<sup>49</sup>. This could mean that during the Pharaonic period there was a preference for the use of other passes such as the Refuf pass.

#### 4.2.5.1.2 Matana Pass

Matana is an ancient pass rediscovered by Caton-Thompson situated in the south east<sup>50</sup>. Here was found a 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty bowl in red polished ware<sup>51</sup>. In addition, Clayton Rings were found here, one incised with a bird<sup>52</sup>.

#### 4.2.5.2 Gebel el-Teir

The district of Gebel el-Teir is a large multi-location quarry, north of Hibis, where no formal excavations have yet been conducted<sup>53</sup>. Gebel el-Teir forms part of one of the northern access routes to the oasis (see Chapter 2, paragraph 2.3.3.2). Fakhry classified three sites having rock drawing and texts from various periods including what he interpreted to be pharaonic. In his judgment, the inscriptions and drawings fall between the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and end of the Ptolemaic Period<sup>54</sup>. The depictions include primarily cultic themes with gods such as Amun-Re, a Horus spearing a gazelle (symbolizing Seth) in the presence of an ithyphallic Amun, a winged ram deity with an Atef-crown, and a Seth figure holding an Ankh-sign featuring<sup>55</sup>. Texts include

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<sup>48</sup> G. Caton-Thompson, *Kharga Oasis in Prehistory*, (London, 1952), Pl. 126.

<sup>49</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> Caton-Thompson, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Cruz-Urbe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> A. Fakhry, "The Rock Inscriptions of Gabal el-Teir at Kharga Oasis", *ASAE* 51, (1951), p. 415.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

names as well as an inscriptions reading: “Amun of Hibis, may he give life. The double prosperity of the two lands, the lord of the oasis”<sup>56</sup>.

Subsequent analysis of a representation of the god Igai here indicates a possibly earlier chronology for the site whereby the foreign lands determinative and the writing of “oasis”, taken together, imply a New Kingdom date<sup>57</sup>. A nearby hieratic inscription naming a scribe uses a name known from Old to Middle Kingdom periods, while the form of hieratic is consistent with Middle to New Kingdom periods<sup>58</sup> and therefore represents amongst the earliest NVC graffiti in the oasis.

#### 4.2.5.3 Between Ain Amur and Umm el-Dabadib

The Northern Kharga Oasis Survey has uncovered a number of sites incorporating petroglyphs from Prehistoric to Pharaonic times. An example of a site which lies on the Darb Ain Amur (refer Chapter 2) is “Split Rock” which features hieroglyphs and Pharaonic figures with kilts<sup>59</sup>. Also found in the region are the ubiquitous pubic triangles<sup>60</sup> often found in sites around Dakhla oasis (see Chapter 3) showing a connection between Dakhla and Kharga in this regard. In addition, hieroglyphic inscriptions (reputed to be New Kingdom)<sup>61</sup> and some possible Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period inscriptions have been found<sup>62</sup>. Depictions of Seth similar to a type found around Dakhla oasis as rock art (see Chapter 3), where it is depicted as a four-legged Seth-animal sitting in its haunches with forelegs straight, have also been found<sup>63</sup>. In addition to Seth, images of Amun and Tawesret also appear<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> J. Osing, “Notizen zu den Oasen Charga und Dachla”, *GM*, vol. 92, (1986), p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> S. Ikram “Drawing the World: Petroglyphs from Kharga Oasis”, *ArchéoNil* 19, (2009), p. 75.

<sup>60</sup> Interview of Salima Ikram by Archaeology Magazine, S. Ikram, “Rock the Oasis”, *Archaeology*, (2006), (conducted March 13 2006), viewed 10 November 2010, <[www.archaeology.org/online/interviews/ikram/](http://www.archaeology.org/online/interviews/ikram/)>, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> S. Ikram and C. Rossi, “North Kharga Oasis Survey 2004 Preliminary Report: Ain el-Dabashiya and Darb Ain Amur”, *MDAIK* 63, (2007), p. 179.

<sup>63</sup> Image showing two Seth animals, Ikram (2006) Op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> Ikram (2009) Op. cit., p. 67.

### 4.3 Summary

While future, more comprehensive archaeological surveys of Kharga itself will undoubtedly provide a more complete picture, to date the evidence shows a significant NVC presence within the actual oasis at least during the New Kingdom to Late Period. Earlier evidence is found around the periphery of the oasis with Early Dynastic objects from the passes, trails leading into the oasis and to the north, none of these indicating actual settlements. The New Kingdom also marks a significant presence through the ceramics. Consistent with the other oases, the Late Period is well represented through 26th Dynasty cult structures such as the Hibis Temple (featuring further addition up to 30th Dynasty) and the Qasr Ghueita temple to Amun<sup>65</sup>, with a 27th Dynasty temple as far south as Dush. Given its relative proximity to Dakhla Oasis linked by the Darb el-Ghubari, and its position on a major route from the Nile Valley to Dakhla, it is likely that Kharga maintained some type of NVC presence during the same periods as Dakhla.

While to date no specific references have been found in Kharga referring to an actual governor, it seems that Hibis was the seat of the administration, at least during the Late Period, pursuing links with the Theban cult centre. It was a major site dominating the area, demonstrating a number of funerary and possible settlement sites around the temple.

Some evidence is available for the unique cult practices at Kharga, mostly from the Late Period. Foremost stands the Hibis Temple and its dedication to a local manifestation of Amun (Amun of Hibis – the “Lord of the Oasis”) as well as the Theban Triad indicating links to the Theban cult centre. A further link with Thebes is demonstrated with the substantial installations to the Osiris cult in the Hibis Temple, as well as through the Osiris chapel further south in Dush. Consistent with Dakhla and Baharia, and the associated western desert symbolism, references to Seth are also found here both in the Hibis Temple and graffiti in and around the oasis. This again demonstrates the need and desire of the local community to pay homage to the gods having a local symbolism and significance.

Other cultural markers for Kharga include the presence of a local ceramic industry, producing wares with local fabrics but in NVC styles. In terms of ethnic diversity at Kharga, there would seem to be an SMC presence, at least on the periphery of the oasis (as evidenced by Clayton Rings). Pan grave ceramics from Qarn el-Ginah attest to the presence of these Nubian nomads.

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<sup>65</sup> Indeed it is possible that earlier temples were the precursors of these as well.

The use of qanats in places where artesian sources were no longer available, such as at Ayn Manawir, with an attendant system of ownership and contracts for distribution, are testament to the unique survival practices adopted by the inhabitants.

## Chapter 5

### Baharia Oasis

#### 5.1 Introduction

Baharia is the northern-most of the oases of the Western Desert. The earliest pharaonic period evidence from the oasis derives from the Old Kingdom in the necropolis at Qaret el-Tub. The Middle Kingdom is attested with a scarab containing the damaged name of King Senusret purchased by Fakhry in the region<sup>1</sup> and also in the site of El Harra, a major peak near the entry points of the oasis revealing slabs with inscriptions from this period. The 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty is also represented at Qaret el-Tub. New Kingdom evidence has been revealed at the site of Qaret Hilwah where a governor's tomb is situated and in a small necropolis at Qaret el-Tub. Thereafter, the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty is well represented in the oasis as seen in sites such as Qaret el Subi, Qasr Salim, Ain Muftillah El Qasr and Qasr Allam. Key sites are depicted in Figure 5.

#### 5.2 Key Pharaonic Sites

##### 5.2.1 Qaret Qasr Selim

To the north of Ain el-Hubaga and east of el-Bawiti on a ridge lies Qarat Qasr Selim, where Fakhry originally discovered four tombs dating to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, two of which were decorated. The first of the two decorated tombs belonged to Djedamun-ef-anekh. The second tomb belonged to Djedamun-ef-anekh's son Bannentiu.

##### 5.2.1.1 Tomb of Djedamun-ef-anekh

This tomb is cut into the surface of the ridge, is accessed through a 4.95 metre deep shaft, with nothing remaining of the chapel superstructure<sup>2</sup>. The original burial chamber comprised an approximately square chamber, with imperfect corners and a roof supported by four decorated rock cut columns with papyriform capitals<sup>3</sup>. The entrance to the chamber, walls, columns and

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<sup>1</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahariya and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahria Oasis*, vol. 1, (Cairo, 1942), p. 49.

ceiling are covered in a layer of plaster and painted<sup>4</sup>. The tomb dates from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>5</sup> and all walls are decorated with religious scenes including false doors, the owner offering to various gods, afterlife scenes and protection of the mummy<sup>6</sup>, typical of NVC depictions. As with other tombs of this period in Baharia there is a predominance of depictions of Thoth<sup>7</sup>, which Fakhry believed was due to Thoth's manifestation as a moon god and the significance of the moon to desert groups as a chronological as well as navigational aid<sup>8</sup>. It is noteworthy that the name of Djedamun-ef-ankh is never accompanied by titles in the tomb<sup>9</sup>, despite the tomb's relatively generous proportions and high quality decoration. This has been interpreted as implying that the owner was neither attached to a secular administrative nor priestly role and that he and his family (for example his son, Bannentiu in the neighbouring tomb) were members of a class that were relatively affluent, possibly merchants<sup>10</sup>. Another, less likely possibility is that the owner was part of a class of specialised craftsmen such as tomb builders or other professions that were well paid due to their specialisation.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

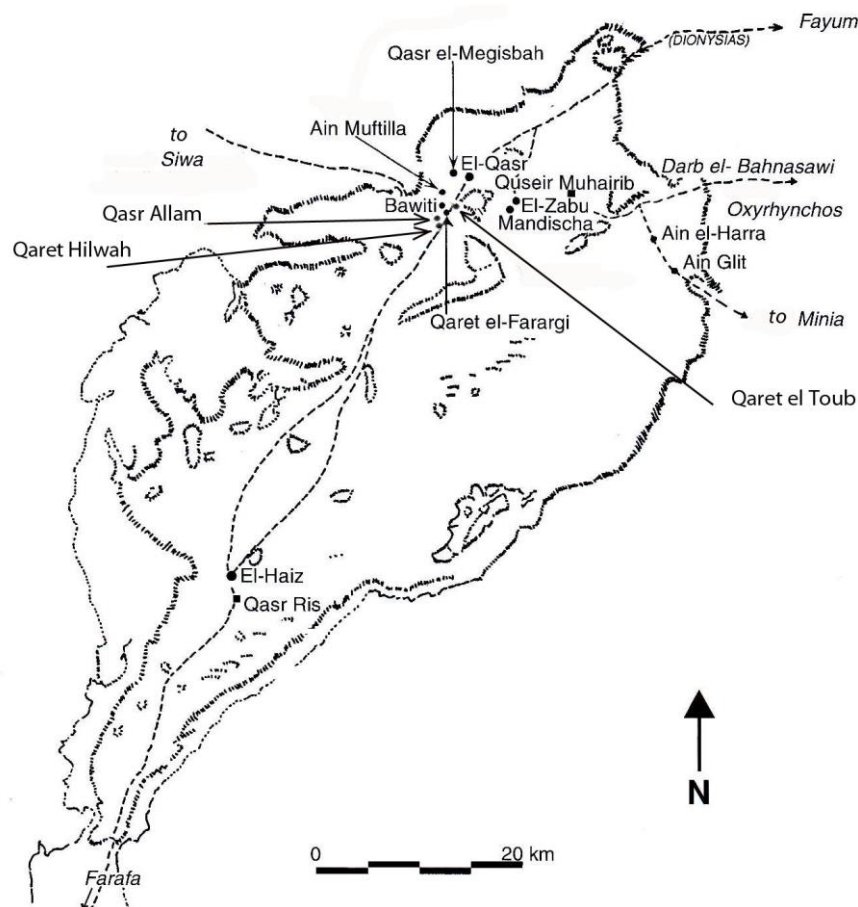
<sup>6</sup> Fakhry (2003), Op.cit., p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> Fakhry (1942), Op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 5 Key sites in Baharia Oasis.**

#### 5.2.1.2 Tomb of Bannentiu

This tomb lies approximately 15 metres to the west of the previous tomb of Djedamun-ef-ankh and also lacks the remains of a chapel<sup>11</sup>. This tomb is of greater proportions and more richly decorated than that of his neighbouring father Djedamun-ef-ankh<sup>12</sup>. The tomb comprises a pillared hall and three side chambers of which only the one facing the entrance is inscribed - this being the principal one<sup>13</sup>. As in other tombs from this period in Baharia, many of the scenes are typical of those depicted in tombs of NVC, so the focus will be on the elements, which seem to be unique to Baharia. The pre-eminence of the moon (as was seen with Thoth associations in other tombs in Baharia) is once again demonstrated in a scene from the north wall depicting

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> Z. Hawass, *Valley of the Golden Mummies*, (London, 2000), p.188.

<sup>13</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, p. 66.



Khonsu within a moon disc and the Ogdoad below it<sup>14</sup>. As in other tombs in Baharia, the Meret goddesses are depicted here and play an unusually prominent role in the oasis. It has been suggested by Fakhry that their usual association with the inundation and that the logical connection with water might somehow be connected with the criticality of springs and water resources in the desert<sup>15</sup>. In the inner chamber is a depiction of the god Ha, “Lord of the West”, a god with particular association with the Western Desert, holding a spear ready to defend the tomb owner’s body from violation<sup>16</sup>.

### 5.2.2 Qaret el-Subi

In another ridge in the vicinity of el-Qasr Fakhry discovered a further three tombs dating to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The three tombs belonged to the individuals Ped’ashtar, Thaty and Ta-Neferet-Bastet. Subsequently the SCA also uncovered the tomb of Zed-Khonsu-ef-anekh here.

#### 5.2.2.1 Tomb of Ped’ashtar

This tomb, originally surmounted by a chapel, is accessed through a shaft and consists of a four-pillared hall with vaulted ceiling and three small chambers<sup>17</sup>. The original stone sarcophagus was well carved with typical NVC scenes depicting the hours of day and night and the forty-two deities of the judgement hall<sup>18</sup>. Ped’ashtar was a high priest of Khonsu and a priest of Horus as well as grandfather of the governor Zed- Khonsu-ef-anekh, who lived during the reign of Apries<sup>19</sup>. The scenes on all the walls are of a funerary and religious character similar to other tombs in Baharia as well as with tombs, temples sarcophagi and papyri of the Late Period<sup>20</sup>. The decorations are of a relatively high quality and were executed by skilled artists<sup>21</sup>. The typical scenes of judgement<sup>22</sup> and verses from the Book of the Dead<sup>23</sup> also feature here. An unusual feature appears on the south wall where the goddess Meret takes the place of one of the sisters

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>17</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

of Osiris (Isis and Nephtys). This replacement also occurs, together with the goddess Oadjit in the tombs of Thaty and Bannentiu, which seems to be a characteristic peculiar to Baharia<sup>24</sup>.

#### 5.2.2.2 Tomb of Thaty

The tomb of Thaty is situated in the same ridge just behind that of Ped'ashtar. The scenes on the walls of the three chambers are of a religious nature again typical of NVC, with the Judgement Hall of Osiris, the journey of the sun-bark and the journey of the moon featuring<sup>25</sup>. A scene often referred to in this tomb is that of Thaty's wife, Ta-Nefret-Bastet who wears a fringed robe and scarf, apparently not reflective of NVC traditions. The earlier interpretation by Fakhry was that this type of dress represented external Libyan influence<sup>26</sup>, which he then modified to the influence being Greek or Phoenician<sup>27</sup>, owing to the growing numbers of foreign merchants from these regions arriving in the Late Period. The latter explanation is also accepted by Hawass<sup>28</sup>. While these possibilities cannot be ruled out, it is also possible that the mode of dress also represents a local, oasian style.

#### 5.2.2.3 Tomb of Ta-Nefert-Bastet

The tomb of Ta-Nefert-Bastet (Thaty's wife) is cut behind that of Thaty and is incomplete<sup>29</sup>. The finished portion of the tomb features the occupant in the presence of Osiris, Isis and Nephtys, dressed in robes, that Fakhry believed were a foreign style<sup>30</sup>.

#### 5.2.2.4 Tomb of Djed-Khonsu-ef-Ankh

The presence of this tomb was suspected but never found by Fakhry, with the SCA finding and excavating this tomb in 2000. Of most significance was the large 12 ton, limestone sarcophagus housing the governor's body<sup>31</sup>. Further layers within the outer shell were opened, including an inner layer of Egyptian alabaster, with a wooden coffin innermost<sup>32</sup>. In addition six gold amulets

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op.cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>28</sup> Hawass, *Op.cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> D. Alexander, "The Man who would be King", *Geographical* 72, Iss. 9, (2000), p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

were found together with canopic jars and pottery<sup>33</sup>. Of particular note is the fact that the massive sarcophagus was constructed of limestone, which was most likely, sourced from the royal quarries of Torah, implying a journey down the Nile and across 300km of desert<sup>34</sup>. The tombs of the governor, his father, Padi-Iset and his wife, Naes, are connected through a maze of other chambers to the other tombs in Qaret el-Subi discussed earlier<sup>35</sup>. The burial chamber of Naes is situated north of the governor's and an inscription on the sides of 224 ushabtis near the sarcophagus attested to her being the governor's wife<sup>36</sup>. The woman was covered in a burial shroud of gems and gold as well as having gold fingertips and toe covers with the gold objects of a particularly fine quality<sup>37</sup>. The method and accretions of burial here are testimony to the relative power and influence of this oasian governor of the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

### 5.2.3 Temple of Apries, El Qasr

Within El Qasr village Fakhry described the remains of portions of a temple. It is composed primarily of a series of walls and the remains of a chamber<sup>38</sup>. The chamber opened east, measuring approximately 7 m by 2.4 m, executed in quality limestone masonry and having an inscribed ceiling<sup>39</sup>. This ceiling text indicates that the temple was dedicated to Amun-Re Lord of the Great Mountain, a manifestation of Amen that Fakhry believed was worshipped in Baharia<sup>40</sup>. The text also indicates that the temple was dedicated by two priests of Khonsu and the governor Zed-Khonsu-ef-ankh<sup>41</sup>. In the grounds of the temple remains were also found two Egyptian alabaster statues which also dated to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The first statue depicts Zed-Khonsu-ef-ankh crouching and wrapped in a cloak with inscriptions depicting deities and his titles which besides governorship included priestly offices such as the second prophet of Amun<sup>42</sup>. The second statue consists of the legs and feet of a seated figure, which Fakhry

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Z. Hawass, "Egypt's Hidden Tombs Revealed", *National Geographic*, September edition, (2001), p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahria Oasis*, vol. 2, (Cairo, 1942), p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> A further reference to this manifestation of Amun was also found on a statue of Bast found in the first chapel of Ain el Muftillah - see Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Fakhry (2003), Op.cit., p. 79.

believes represents King Amasis, with kneeling representations of the governor Zed-Khonsu-ef-anekh on either side, which Fakhry takes (together with his pre-eminence in Ain Muftillah) as evidence for the relative liberty and independence the oasian governors experienced in relation to their Nile Valley colleagues<sup>43</sup>.

#### 5.2.4 Temple of El Bawiti

This temple is located at Qarat el-Subi in a residential area of el Bawiti. Fakhry believes it includes the remains of the funerary chapel of Zed-Khonsu-ef-anekh<sup>44</sup>, as well as an independent chapel in honour of King Amasis<sup>45</sup>. The remains consist of a number of chambers constituting part of a temple, with a principal entrance leading to the main part of the temple and an entrance to a separate chapel, adorned with a representation of King Amasis as a sphinx<sup>46</sup>. A number of inscriptions were found on the walls including texts taken from the Book of the Dead<sup>47</sup> together with other traditional prayers and lists of offerings to be presented<sup>48</sup>. The only evidence found linking Zed-Khonsu-ef-anekh directly with this complex was a loose sandstone block found here bearing his name and the upper part of his body<sup>49</sup>.

#### 5.2.5 Ain Muftilla

Approximately 3km west of el-Qasr, Ain Muftilla is a spring in the vicinity of which Fakhry originally excavated four chapels covered in religious scenes and various deities dating to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Subsequent investigations by the SCA in 1977 determined that the “chapels” were actually part of a larger temple complex<sup>50</sup>. All the chapels date from the same period and were built by the second-priest and governor of Baharia, Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh in the reign of King Amasis<sup>51</sup>. The context for this site is very favourable being situated on a wide flat plain with nearby springs<sup>52</sup>. All four chapels are constructed of stone with sunken, painted reliefs<sup>53</sup>. The

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<sup>43</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahria Oasis*, vol. 2, (Cairo, 1942), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op.cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>46</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op.cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>49</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> Hawass, *Op.cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>51</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>52</sup> Observed by author on visits to Ain el-Muftillah.

so-called first chapel is the largest, consisting of two halls and two small rooms, initial excavations of which revealed no artifacts inside, but some ceremonial objects near the entrance<sup>54</sup>. The scenes concern themselves primarily with depictions of the king and governor in poses of offering to various deities. The majority of the deities are standard NVC, however there are also references to gods particularly venerated in the western desert such as Ha – “Ha of the west” and Thoth – “Thoth the Great God, honoured in Baharia”<sup>55</sup>. The place where the gods are honoured also varies in the texts between “in Baharia” and “in the Oasis”, such as “Khonsu-Thoth, the Great God, honoured in the Oasis”<sup>56</sup>.

A key aspect of this site is its arrangement of deities that allow associations with other cult centres such that the appearance of Mahes and Bastet demonstrate relations with Bubastis, similarly with Amun, Mut, Khonsu and Montu with Thebes; Herishef, Hathor and Somtous with Heracleopolis; and Thoth and Nehmetaway with Hermopolis<sup>57</sup>. The principal god of the monument is Osiris of Ta - oubkhet, on sacred territory belonging likely in part to Bastet as well<sup>58</sup>. The other divinities, particularly those originating from Heracleopolis, Thebes and Bubastis, seem strategically placed around Osiris to protect him<sup>59</sup>. The arrangement of divinities in association with Herishef (Theban triad, Thoth –Nehmetaway and Hathor) demonstrates links with the Amun temple of Siwa (although the model adopted here seems closer to the Heracleopolitan one than to Siwa), while the writing of Herishef uses the same conventions as in Siwa<sup>60</sup>. Indeed, Colin<sup>61</sup> suggests that the temples at Siwa, Baharia and Heracleopolis were part of an associated cult network, linked by the ancient road connecting Baharia with the

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<sup>53</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>57</sup> F. Labrique, “Le catalogue divin de 'Ayn el-Mouftella : jeux de miroir autour de ‘celui qui est dans ce temple’”, *BIFAO* 104, (2004), p. 351.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352. Note that a town of Ta-oubkhet is as yet unknown, it is likely a town within the oasis, see Fakhry (1942), *Op.cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>61</sup> F. Colin, “Les Fondateurs du Sanctuaire d’Amon à Siwa (Désert Libyque) Autour d’un Bronze de Donation Inédit”, in: W. Clarysse, A. Schoors & H. Willems (eds), *Egyptian religion: The last thousand years. Studies dedicated to the memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, vol. 2, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 85, (Leuven, 1998), p. 339.

Fayum region (that is, the Darb al-Qahira, see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1.3) a road which was traversed by Steindorff in 1899 and was still in use at that time<sup>62</sup>.

The first chapel also relates how Sheben-Khonsu was the brother of Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh and preceded him as governor while Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh was the second prophet of Amun and how later Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh became governor<sup>63</sup>. This phenomenon of governors stemming from the same line was also observed at Ain Asyl, Dakhla (see Chapter 3) and shows that the local administration of the oases was based on family and heritage rather than on the objective choice of the central administration. The quality of construction and relative sophistication of this group of chapels demonstrates that the governor had significant resources at his disposal. The titles of the two governors are the same, being “the prince, the governor of the Oasis”<sup>64</sup>.

The third chapel was most likely dedicated to the Bes, as indicated by depictions within<sup>65</sup>. The chapel is noteworthy for the monumental representations of Bes on all the walls, the figures being the height of the ceiling<sup>66</sup>, and likely represents a special cult dedicated to him. While the Egyptians revered Bes since the New Kingdom, temples to him are rare in the Nile Valley<sup>67</sup>, and this might indicate a practice peculiar to Baharia.

### 5.2.6 Qaret el-Toub

Qaret el-Toub is situated just to the west of the centre of el-Qasr. It comprises a necropolis of the Pharaonic Period (6th Dynasty to First Intermediate Period, 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and Third Intermediate Period) as well as a Roman Period fortress.

Qaret el-Toub is situated in a district in relative close proximity to other sites under consideration such as Qasr ‘Allam, Ain el-Muftillah and Qaret Hilwah at the junction of roads leading to other areas in the North West, North-East and South<sup>68</sup>. A number of tombs were investigated, together with surface material, in the 1999 excavations by the IFAO (identifying

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<sup>62</sup> G. Steindorff, *Durch die Libysche Wüste zur Amonsoase*, (Leipzig, 1904), p. 160.

<sup>63</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156 – for titles of Sheben Khonsu, and p. 163 for titles of Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>66</sup> Fakhry (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> F. Colin, D. Laisney, S. Marchand, “Qaret el-Toub: un fort romain et une nécropole pharaonique”, *BIFAO* 100, (2000), p. 146.

T1 to T5), most of these however were badly disturbed with uncertainties as to which datable artifacts corresponded with which respective area or tomb<sup>69</sup>.

Tomb T10 is an example of a subterranean tomb incorporating ceramics and accompaniments with parallels with the burnt levels and immediate post-conflagration of the palace of Ayn-Asil, and in the western mastaba of Khentika in Dakhla, dating this to the late Old Kingdom/Early First Intermediate Period<sup>70</sup>. A further noteworthy parallel exists with Dakhla in this instance, whereby Baharia Oasis (Djesdjes) is referred to in the tomb of Khentika<sup>71</sup>. This funerary evidence represents the only Old Kingdom structure found within Baharia to date. The Middle Kingdom is attested in the area through surface finds, while the end of the Third intermediate Period/Late Period is indicated through terra cotta sarcophagi and funerary accompaniments contemporary with the occupation of the site of Qasr Allam<sup>72</sup>.

Other material excavated to date corresponds with the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty/Second Intermediate Period and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>73</sup>. An examination of finds stored by the local inspectorate from here showed that ceramic coffins, some of which were anthropoid were in use here and were made of local fabrics<sup>74</sup>. In addition a number of intact vessels were studied, which were most likely from tombs T1 to T4 but with no information to associate with individual tombs and dating from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>75</sup>. Examples identified include spouted bowls from the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as well as large storage pots from the same period and all in local fabrics<sup>76</sup>. In addition to local wares there is also the presence of imported vessels such as the Tell el Yahudiyyeh wares<sup>77</sup> from the northeast. The presence of

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>70</sup> L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2005-2006", *BIFAO* 106, (2006), p. 407.

<sup>71</sup> C. A. Hope, "Egypt and 'Libya' to the End of the Old Kingdom: A View from Dakhleh Oasis", in Z. Hawass and J. Richards (eds.), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt Essays in Honor of David B. O'Connor*, Vol. 1, (Cairo, 2007), p. 404.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* See also L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2008-2009", *BIFAO* 109, (2009), p. 602 regarding graves with Third Intermediate Period pots as accompaniments.

<sup>73</sup> Colin et al. (2000), *Op. cit.*, 168.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

these wares has been used to suggest that there might have been a direct trade link between the Hyksos who occupied regions in the Eastern Delta of the Nile and that the inhabitants thus were linked as collaborators of the Hyksos and that this explains the punitive expedition under Kamose<sup>78</sup> and Baharia. Significant finds of amphora fragments, again of local manufacture, around the surfaces of tombs<sup>79</sup>, attest to the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty activities here and the likelihood that they were used to transport commodities such as wine as is illustrated in the tomb of Amenhotep, at Qaret Hilwah. These amphorae are comparable in morphology and technique to examples from Malkata, Karnak North and Theban tomb TT253<sup>80</sup>.

### 5.2.7 Qasr 'Allam

Qasr Allam is situated approximately 1 km north-east of Qaret Hilwah (below) within a series of ridges 2km west of the current centre Al-Qasr. The site is characterised by a dominant mud-brick fortress from the Roman Period<sup>81</sup>, and since Fakhry's times the site has also revealed evidence from the Pharaonic Late Period as discovered through work by the IFAO. The majority of pharaonic artifacts excavated to date are from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>82</sup>. Excavations have revealed three primary areas of interest - Sector 1 consisting of a dwelling, (structures in Sector 1 have also been dated back to end Third Intermediate Period to Late Period<sup>83</sup>), while Sectors 2 and 7 comprise storerooms and courtyards, with Sector 7 being the oldest group of buildings<sup>84</sup>. Bread moulds, sealings (twenty of which are stamped with hieroglyphs and several being of the Menkheperre type)<sup>85</sup> indicate that this site was engaged in the administrative storage of goods and possibly existed to collect economic resources from the district. In refuse pits and destruction layers were found various fragmentary terracotta figurines of naked women with emphasis on breasts and pubic triangle and a female head wearing a wig<sup>86</sup>, possibly representing

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<sup>78</sup> F. Colin, "Kamose et les Hyksos dans l'oasis de Djesdjes", *BIFAO*, vol. 105, (2005), pp. 35-45.

<sup>79</sup> Colin, Laisney & Marchand, *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>80</sup> C. A. Hope, "Oases Amphorae of the New Kingdom", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 100.

<sup>81</sup> Fakhry, (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>82</sup> F. Colin, "Qasr Allam: a Twenty-Sixth Dynasty settlement", *EA* 24, (2004), p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 2005-2006", *BIFAO* 106, (2006), p. 404.

<sup>84</sup> Colin, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> F. Labrique and F. Colin Frédéric. "Recherches de terrain en Égypte. Chronique", *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 29, no. 2, (2003), p. 170.



votive fertility offerings as part of cult activity<sup>87</sup>. A number of finds here have cult associations, including seals with reference to a goddess and an ostrakon referring to a cult of Great Horus<sup>88</sup>. In addition, stamped amphora with the name of Horus suggests a vessel of offering to the god, there is however insufficient evidence so far to attribute the site to primarily cult activity<sup>89</sup>. Half fired ceramic fragments found here also suggest waste (from manufacture rejects) and therefore the existence of a workshop installed on the site<sup>90</sup>. The structures identified to date are those for service, production, storage and habitation with the activities controlled by an administration (as evidenced by seals) and likely linked to a “Domain of Amun” in Bahariya (as evidenced by stamps)<sup>91</sup>. This “Domain of Amun” (marked as “pr-imn” on the seals) is likely to include Qasr Allam itself<sup>92</sup>. Funerary usage of the area is indicated with the discovery of sixty six burials in a cemetery located in the ruins of buildings belonging to the “Domain of Amun” featuring an overrepresentation of children as well as some dogs associated with some children, and an ox<sup>93</sup>. Some of the animal remains were likely food offerings, while the canids in association with children seem to have been accorded the same funerary respect as the humans<sup>94</sup>. The dating of these is somewhere between Late Period and Hellenistic Period<sup>95</sup>. Given the number and types of buildings, together with stamps bearing references to deities and their dominions and workshops it seems likely that Qasr ‘Allam was part of the economy and logistics of an important religious centre. It is therefore likely that the site of Qasr Allam included a temple of Amun with associated service buildings and storage, together with accommodation for priests and officials, these all under the direct control of the local governor, a predecessor of the builder of Ain Muftillah<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> As is at times found at other sites such as in temples to Osiris, see M. Marlar “Sex as a Votive Offering at the Osiris Temple” 2007 in Z. Hawass and J. Richards (eds.), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt: essays in honor of David B. O'Connor*, vol. 1, (2007), pp. 111-120.

<sup>88</sup> L. Pantalacci, “Travaux de l’IFAO en 2004-2005”, *BIFAO*, vol. 105, (2005), p. 476.

<sup>89</sup> Colin, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>90</sup> Pantalacci and Denoix (2006), *Op. cit.*, p. 405.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>92</sup> L. Pantalacci and S. Denoix, “Travaux de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale en 2008-2009”, *BIFAO*, vol. 109, (2009), p. 600.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 602-603.

<sup>94</sup> B. Midant-Reynes and S. Denoix, “Travaux de l’IFAO en 2009-2010”, *BIFAO* 110, (2010), p. 331.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> B. Mathieu, “Travaux de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale en 2003-2004”, *BIFAO* 104, (2004), pp. 626-627.

### 5.2.8 Qaret Hilwah

A tomb for the governor Amenhotep is situated in a small necropolis approximately 3 km south of el-Qasr, dating from between the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty to first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasties, and cut in to a ridge together with other, un-inscribed tombs<sup>97</sup>. The tomb opens to the east consisting of two chambers and a forecourt. The first chamber is rectangular and once had two columns supporting a roof, while the second chamber is larger and once had four columns<sup>98</sup>. Three side chambers feature, two on the left side when facing through the entrance and one on the right. The two left chambers have two rooms each with one of them marked by an inscription on a lintel over the entrance<sup>99</sup>. It has been surmised that this particular room represented the burial chamber for the governor and his wife, while the others might have served for storage or subsidiary burial<sup>100</sup>. The tomb's decoration follows a generally regular pattern with the governor, his wife, officials and workers engaged in scenes of daily life, funeral scenes, religious scenes and offering scenes<sup>101</sup>. When first excavated by Steindorff, the tomb revealed artifacts including pottery coffins, vessel fragments, scarabs, jewellery, Osiris figures and a bronze mirror<sup>102</sup>, this repertoire being relatively typical NVC burial equipment<sup>103</sup>. In Fakhry's opinion there is not a single scene in the tomb, which is not representative of NVC, including the clothing, victual as well as funerary and banquet scenes<sup>104</sup>. Van Siclen, however, highlights subtle differences in the tomb's construction with Nile Valley parallels. He sees differences in three areas: firstly the two columned halls are seen only in more elaborate Nile Valley tombs, secondly, the main burial chamber is prominently indicated (whereas in the Nile Valley this was normally kept hidden) and thirdly, placement of two mastabas is unusual<sup>105</sup>. The occupant's title was the "governor of the northern oasis"<sup>106</sup> or simply "governor of the oasis" in other passages<sup>107</sup>, and it is possible that the governor was a native of the oasis<sup>108</sup>, judging by

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<sup>97</sup> Fakhry, (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>98</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>99</sup> Scene 17, see C.C. van Siclen III, *Wall Scenes from the Tomb of Amenhotep (Huy) Governor of Bahria Oasis*, (Texas, 1981), p. 27.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>105</sup> Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

references in the inscriptions<sup>109</sup>. It is also possible that Amenhotep was non-resident and fulfilled his duties as a circuit official, as was deployed in foreign territories such as Nubia and Palestine<sup>110</sup>. Both Fakhry and Van Siclen suspect that the artisans who worked on this tomb originated from the Nile Valley<sup>111</sup>, although there is no proof of this and the mediocrity of some of the work (some of the reliefs look as if they were simply scratched into the stone)<sup>112</sup> might indicate otherwise. In terms of references to the rest of the governor's administration, there is a Menna, whose title is not mentioned, and a scribe of the treasury Pendua, as well as servants<sup>113</sup>. That the governor oversaw production here is exemplified in the scenes of wine storage<sup>114</sup> and grain production and packing, with some of the produce destined for Egypt<sup>115</sup>.

Surveys in the surrounding areas uncovered the entrances to a further eleven tombs<sup>116</sup>, with a large mud brick structure detected on the northern summit of the ridge possibly predating the tomb of Amenhotep<sup>117</sup>. The survey included a brief examination of pottery finds, the bulk of which was described as types similar to pottery found in 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Amarna<sup>118</sup>.

Subsequent excavations by the SCA in 1999 uncovered a second, larger tomb nearby featuring ten rectangular columns and painted scenes, which Hawass believes to be older than that of Amenhotep's, despite a lack of inscription of the owner's name<sup>119</sup>. In addition, three

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<sup>108</sup> Fakhry (1942), *Op. cit.*, p. 41, although Van Siclen disagrees, Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 34, citing insufficient evidence for this.

<sup>109</sup> This is based on Fakhry's observation of frequent references to "Amenhotep of the Northern Oasis". Note that this might not necessarily refer to birthplace, Van Siclen (see Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 34) denies that there is any clear evidence of Amenhotep's oasian origins.

<sup>110</sup> C. R. Higginbotham, "Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine", in B. Halpern, M.H.E Weippert, Th. P.J. van den Hout and I. Winter (eds.), *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, (2000), p.136.

<sup>111</sup> Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 32 and Fakhry (2003), *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>112</sup> Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34. Fakhry maintains that Menna is the governor's son, see Fakhry (1942), *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>114</sup> Van Siclen, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>116</sup> S. L. Gosline, *Bahariya Oasis Expedition Season Report for 1988 Part 1: Survey of Qarat Hilwah*, (Texas, 1990), p. 25.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>119</sup> Hawass, *Op. cit.*, p. 185.

chapels were uncovered surrounding Amenhotep's tomb which the excavators believe could constitute part of a larger temple complex<sup>120</sup>.

### 5.2.9 El Harra

The site of El-Harra is situated approximately 14km east of Bawiti in the higher reaches of a large gebel. A series of inscribed blocks were found placed along a small natural wadi, originally discovered by Fakhry<sup>121</sup>. At the summit of this gebel were also found a series of simple stone structures, with over twenty half circles, circles, cairns and tumuli covering a crescent shaped area known as zones 3 and 4<sup>122</sup>. While further excavation will be required in future to ascertain further functional and chronology details, the half circle structures face the prevailing winds in the area and are placed in a position with a good view of the surrounding area and situated at one of the entry points to the oasis<sup>123</sup>. These structures might have a similar function to the Hilltop sites found within and in the vicinity of Dakhla oasis, where crescent shaped structures are also found on the summits of gebels (see Chapter 3). Just below this summit is an area consisting of two wadis and a series of underground caverns. The main wadi of interest (wadi 1) featured a number of inscriptions on blocks at the various points. At the northern end of this wadi was found, in the midst of a rock fall, two blocks bearing the title HAty hbj - the governor Hebi<sup>124</sup>. The inscriptions have been dated to the Middle Kingdom, based on the title and the style of the name<sup>125</sup>. It is noteworthy that inscriptions have also been found referring to Middle Kingdom governors in the Dakhla Oasis region<sup>126</sup> (also see Chapter 3). A further inscription naming HAty hbj was found further down the main wadi on its eastern embankment. This inscription, reading "the governor Hebi, created for Maat, justified", was executed in a large prominent script and is thought to be a public declaration of some sort<sup>127</sup>. In the centre of the main wadi, opposite the entrances to the underground caverns was found a rock

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> A. Fakhry, "Search for Texts in the Western Desert" in *Textes et langages de l'Égypte pharaonique, Hommages à Jean-François Champollion, vol. II*, (Cairo, 1973), p. 213.

<sup>122</sup> G. Castel and P. Tallet, "Les Inscriptions d'El-Harra, oasis de Bahareya", *BIFAO* 101, (2001), p. 104.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> M. Baud, F. Colin and P. Tallet, "Les gouverneurs de l'oasis de Dakhla au Moyen Empire", *BIFAO* 99, (1999), pp. 1-19.

<sup>127</sup> Castel and Tallet, Op. cit., p. 110.

with a dedication by the individual Senebtify to Opet, identifying himself as the “butler of the storerooms”<sup>128</sup>. On the same slab as the previous inscription was found a further inscription, this time by the individual Nehetet, who is depicted bearing a staff in one hand and what has been suggested is a lotus in the other<sup>129</sup>. The individual has a title, being the xtmw kf3-jb n prwj-HD - “the seal keeper worthy of confidence of the Double Treasury”<sup>130</sup>. Further inscriptions located in the main wadi include one, which is a mix of hieroglyphic and hieratic, naming the scribe Shenebenou and a name Kesi on the same rock<sup>131</sup>.

The titles of Senebtify and Nehetet (wdpw and xtmw) have been placed at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, and have been found in reference to expeditions to the Wadi el-Houdi and Wadi Hammamat<sup>132</sup>, so it is possible that these individuals came to this area under the pretext of a state-organised expedition. There is most likely a temporal distinction between the former and the inscriptions of governor Hebi, with that of Hebi most likely later<sup>133</sup>. The positions of the inscriptions around the area of the cavern openings most likely delimited wells in the area<sup>134</sup> and hint at the existence of a local government seated in Baharia in the late 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. It is still not entirely clear whether the interest in this area was based on the acquisition of an unknown mineral resource or whether it was represented a significant water resource for travellers entering the oasis from the desert. In addition, the stone structures found above the main wadi at the summit of the gebel have not yet been shown to be associated or contemporary with the inscriptions. What is clear is that this site is situated at a strategic point constituting the north-easterly entry point to the oasis from the plateau and that these structures might have had a similar purpose to those found at strategic points around the Dakhla oasis.

### 5.2.10 El Hayez

The Czech Institute of Egyptology has conducted a number of surveys of the El-Hayez area situated in the southernmost part of the Baharia oasis. The primary objective was to provide an overall archaeological map presenting the principal sites. To date the finds have been largely

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

Prehistoric and Roman Period<sup>135</sup>. One site was located by surface survey (Ain al-Ghard al-Awiat), that suggested a possible pharaonic age on basis of the lithics and ceramics<sup>136</sup>. This site lies close to Baharia's eastern escarpment descent point and includes mud brick structures, beer jars and Meidum ware sherds indicating an Old Kingdom presence<sup>137</sup>.

### 5.3 Summary

It was seen that the earliest pharaonic period evidence from the oasis derives from the late Old Kingdom where funerary evidence was found at the site of Qaret el Toub. Thereafter the Middle Kingdom is represented in the site of El Harra, a major peak near the entry points of the oasis revealing slabs with inscriptions of governors and officials, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty necropolis at Qaret el-Tub (which also extends to the Second Intermediate Period and 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty). A New Kingdom presence is further attested at the site of Qaret Hilwah where a governor's tomb is situated. Thereafter, the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty is well represented in the oasis as seen in sites such as Qaret el Subi, Qasr Salim, Ain Muftillah El Qasr and Qasr Allam.

The first significant evidence for the presence of an administration in Baharia stems from the Middle Kingdom with the El Harra inscriptions, referring to a governor Hebi, likely a local governor, in an area that possibly delimited ancient wells found here. During the New Kingdom a governor Amenhotep, possibly a native of Baharia and with titles of "Governor of the Northern Oasis" or "Governor of the Oasis", had a tomb built here. The tomb shows that an NVC style administration existed here at this time with attendant officials and bureaucracy who oversaw the measurement and storage of goods (wine and grain), the grain being destined for the Nile Valley. The administration of Late Period Baharia was characterised by powerful governors such as Zed Khonsu-ef-ankh who was able to amass resources and wealth for major public works around the oasis including the Chapels of Ain el Muftillah, Temple of Apries, and Temple of el Bawiti while enabling a rich burial for himself and his wife that included both the work of artisans and stone from the Nile Valley. The role of governor as well as other key roles in the administration was occupied by members of the same family whereby Sheben-Khonsu was the brother of Zed-Khonsu-ef-'ankh and preceded him as governor and Ped'ashtar was a

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<sup>135</sup> M. Bárta, V. Brůna, J. Svoboda and M. Verner, "El-Hayez, Bahariya Oasis, Egypt. 1st survey report by the Czech Institute of Egyptology", *Přehled výzkumů* 44, (2002), p. 13.

<sup>136</sup> M. Bárta, V. Brůna, J. Svoboda, M. Verner, V. Černý and J. Musil, *Report on the survey and trial excavations of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, carried in the area of El-Hayez, Baharia oasis ( 2nd season, 6.3. – 31. 3. 2004 )*, (Prague, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>137</sup> Pers. Comm., Miroslav Barta 18 July 2007.

high priest of Khonsu and a priest of Horus as well as grandfather of the governor Zed-Khonsu-ef-ankh. This shows that the local administration of the oases was based on family and heritage rather than on the objective choice of the central administration. The governor himself also held important priestly offices including the second prophet of Amun – one of the most important. Both Sheben-Khonsu and his brother of Zed-Khonsu-ef-‘ankh, bore the titles of “the prince, the governor of the Oasis”.

Further, from Late Period Qasr Allam, come bread moulds and seals indicating that this site was engaged in the administrative production and storage of goods and likely existed to collect economic resources from the district. Structures have also been identified likely functioning as workshops, and others for service, production, storage and habitation with activities controlled by an administration (as evidenced by the seals) and likely linked to a “Domain of Amun”. Given the number and types of buildings, together with stamps bearing references to deities and their dominions and workshops it seems likely that Qasr ‘Allam was part of the economy and logistics of an important religious centre.

Links with other districts are demonstrated during the late Old Kingdom with the Nile Valley and possibly Ain Asyl, Dakhla, with funerary equipment of a similar material culture from Qaret el Toub. Tell el Yahudiyyeh wares indicate a trade network that included goods from the Hyksos provinces during the Second Intermediate Period. Scenes from governor Amenhotep’s tomb, along with amphora fragments also from Qaret el Toub point to wine production during the New Kingdom, a product that was also likely exported to the Nile Valley.

The cultural attributes of Baharia, as manifest in its archaeology, demonstrates once again a largely NVC base with subtle local variations. It was seen that in tombs walls are decorated with religious scenes typical of NVC depictions, however with a certain reduction in quality of execution and a naivety of style which was also seen in some tombs in Qila ed-Dabba, Dakhla (see Chapter 3). Ceramics were produced based on NVC styles but often of local manufacture such as spouted bowls from the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as well as large storage pots from the same period and all in local fabrics as well as 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty amphora fragments.

From the perspective of cult practice, it was seen that in Baharia there was a general continuity with what was practiced in the Nile Valley, with a particular local focus on some deities and relationships with certain cult centres in the Nile valley. Thoth and Ha feature in this focus. “Thoth the Great God, honoured in Baharia” possibly demonstrated a pre-eminence of the moon (as was seen with Thoth associations in tombs and temples in Baharia) due to its importance in night traversal of the desert. The Meret goddesses play an unusually prominent

role in the oasis where it was suggested that their usual association with the inundation and that the logical connection with all important water would somehow be connected with the criticality of springs and water resources in the desert. Ha is also depicted in tombs as “Lord of the West”, a god with particular association with the Western Desert. In the chapels of Ain Muftillah it was seen that the majority of the deities are standard NVC, however there are also references to gods particularly venerated in the western desert such as Ha – “Ha of the west” and Thoth. At Ain Muftillah it was observed that the arrangement of deities allowed associations with other cult centres such that the appearance of Mahes and Bastet demonstrate relations with Bubastis, similarly with Amun, Mut, Khonsu and Montu with Thebes; Herishef, Hathor and Somtous with Heracleopolis; and Thoth and Nehmetaway with Hermopolis. The arrangement of divinities in association with Herishef (Theban triad, Thoth –Nehmetaway and Hathor) demonstrates links with the Amun temple of Siwa (although the model adopted here seems closer to the Heracleopolitan one than to Siwa), while the writing of Herishef uses the same conventions as in Siwa.



## Chapter 6

### Siwa Oasis

#### 6.1 Introduction

Siwa is the western-most of the oases of the Western Desert situated near the border with modern day Libya. Siwa is situated in a depression approximately 82km long from east to west, with the surrounding plateau being on average 200m above sea level and the floor 18.5 m below sea level<sup>1</sup>. In addition there are several salt lakes in Siwa, the largest being lake al-Zaytun, which extends for 25km and has an average width of 5km<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to prehistoric sites in the vicinity<sup>3</sup>, the earliest pharaonic period evidence from the oasis derives from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as in the site of the Amun Temple , a major temple complex perched on the hill of Aghurmi. Other pre-Ptolemaic period sites include the temple of Umm ‘Ubaydah in the vicinity of Aghurmi and a possible 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tomb from a cemetery at Gebel el-Mawta. Key sites are depicted in Figure 6.

#### 6.2 Key Pharaonic Sites

This chapter will look in further detail at the key sites of the Amun temple, the temple of Umm Ubaydah and the necropolis of Gebel el-Mawta.

##### 6.2.1 The Amun Temple

The Amun temple complex is situated atop a hill in a region of Siwa called Aghurmi. The temple was renowned in classical times for maintaining an oracle, which was reputedly consulted by Alexander the Great<sup>4</sup>. Classical sources such as Diodor also report that the complex originally consisted of three zones – a palatial zone, a temple zone and a military

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<sup>1</sup> N. S. Embabi, *The Geomorphology of Egypt. Vol.1, The Nile Valley and the Western Desert*, (Cairo, 2004), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See for example A. De Cosson, “Notes on the Bahren, Nuwemisah and El-A’reg Oases in the Libyan Desert”, *JEA* 23, (1937), p.229. See also C. B. M. McBurney, *The Stone Age of Northern Africa*, (Middlesex, 1960), p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> A. Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis*, (Cairo, 1973), p. 143.

barracks<sup>5</sup>. What remains of the temple opens to the south, incorporates two halls, a sanctuary the entrance of which is on the main axis and a corridor on the east side which continues behind the sanctuary<sup>6</sup>. The function of this eastern corridor is as yet unclear with Fakhry suggesting a possible use for storage of sacred objects or use as the voice of the oracle<sup>7</sup>. Kuhlmann refuting both these suggestions believing, in the case of the oracle, that there is no evidence for such a practice in Egypt before Roman times<sup>8</sup>.

The only portion of the temple incorporating inscriptions is the sanctuary, measuring 3.3m and 6.1m deep<sup>9</sup>. The inscriptions depict the pharaoh Amasis (from a cartouche before him) making offerings of wine to deities on the east wall including Amun or Harsaphis, Khonsu, Mahesa as well as other gods who could not be identified<sup>10</sup>. This cartouche was previously used as a tentative indicator that this temple dates at least to the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, however the date was further confirmed with the find of a stone fragment bearing the cartouche of Amasis found in a pile of decorative fragments associated with the temple<sup>11</sup>. The deities on the west wall have been variously interpreted by Fakhry<sup>12</sup>, Colin<sup>13</sup> and finally Kuhlmann who names the deities as Amun, Mut, Onuris, Tefnut, Harsaphis (equivalent to Herishef), Thoth and Nehmetaway<sup>14</sup>. Further on the west wall, a figure, Sethirdis, crowned by two feathers offers to the gods with inscriptions referring to him as “Chief of the Desert Dwellers”, the feathers signifying his foreign nature<sup>15</sup>.

The existence of a palace zone has been confirmed archaeologically with the excavation to the west of the temple of a complex consisting of three small chambers linked via a common hall which might have served as sleeping quarters<sup>16</sup>. The main entrance to this complex was to the

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<sup>5</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, *Das Ammoneion*, (Mainz, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>11</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “Siwa: Ammoneion”, *Rundbrief DAI Abteilung Kairo*, September, (2004), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>13</sup> F. Colin, “Ammon, Parammon, Poséidon, Héra et Libye à Siwa”, *BIFAO* 97, (1997), pp. 97 -108.

<sup>14</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “Gleanings from the Texts in the Sanctuary of Amun at Aghurmi (Siwa Oasis)”, *MDAIK* 57, (2001), p. 198.

<sup>15</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>16</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “Siwa”, *Rundbrief DAI Abteilung Kairo*, September, (2003), p. 22.



that this structure is part of the military barracks alluded to earlier from the description by Diodor<sup>23</sup>.

The walls and masonry of the palace and structure around the spring are not indicative of classical Greek work and could date earlier (archaic)<sup>24</sup>. The irregularity of the constructions could be indicating an adaptation to local conditions, that is, to incorporate the bedrock of the hill and Egyptian traditions of use of mortar<sup>25</sup>. What is Greek in nature are the blocks' length and height<sup>26</sup>. Other Greek influences can be seen in the Doric columns, the oversized, steep cavetto topping the temple, the vertical outer wall surfaces, the missing torus at the outside corners of the temple, the flat niche surrounding the central gate of the sanctuary, a lintel with downward sloping lateral joints and the rounded corbels for the support of the sanctuary roof<sup>27</sup>.

Directly south of the temple structure was once a sacred well with a ritual way connecting the two. The well was reinforced with stone blocks of quality masonry and could be reached by descending steps in two flights<sup>28</sup>. The well lay below the temple and would have been connected by stairs - excavations to date have found no stairs but the excavated foundations of three large terraces in the bedrock that would have supported some type of stair structure of masonry<sup>29</sup>.

### 6.2.2 The Temple of Umm Ubaydah

Just south of the Amun temple is situated the temple of Umm Ubaydah, having an almost perfect alignment from the entry gates of the Amun temple to its former gates<sup>30</sup>. This alignment suggests that there was once a dromos that connected the two temples for ritual purposes<sup>31</sup>. What remains of a 30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty temple to Amun is a collection of blocks with one wall still standing<sup>32</sup>. The temple was deliberately destroyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however earlier explorers

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Kuhlmann (2005), Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, (Oxford, 1999), p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> Fakhry, Op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>29</sup> Kuhlmann (2005), Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Kuhlmann (1988), Op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> Fakhry, Op. cit., p. 165.

(Von Minutoli<sup>33</sup> and Cailliaud<sup>34</sup>) made sketches which can be used to understand the basic structure, and indicate that the original temple faced north and was surrounded by two square girdle walls, incorporating a pronaos, sanctuary and pillared hall<sup>35</sup>. The walls also enclosed priests' dwellings and perhaps the stables for the sacred ram of Amun<sup>36</sup>. The temple house measured 7.8m by 37.5m and consisted of two to three antechambers with the 26.5m long sanctuary behind it, and an entrance kiosk in front of the façade probably from the time of Nectanebo II<sup>37</sup>.

The architecture and decoration reflect typically NVC traditions, through the masonry and use of stone roof beams, displaying none of the Greek influences of the Late Period<sup>38</sup>. Amongst the sketches are also depicted two cartouches which have been interpreted to be those of Nectanebo II, which Fakhry believes denotes the temple's chronology<sup>39</sup>. The cartouches alone do not provide sufficient evidence for the construction date, as the temple could be earlier, with the names inscribed on later temple additions as occurs in other temples in Egypt<sup>40</sup>. Kuhlmann furthermore believes that the temple reaches back at least to the 26th Dynasty, if not to the first settlement of Siwa by NVC<sup>41</sup>. The inscriptions on the standing wall are divided into four registers and depict an opening of the mouth ceremony, a ruler kneeling before Amun-Re and a number of gods including Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Seth, Geb and Nut<sup>42</sup>. The ruler's name is "Wenamun", he wears an ostrich feather and his title is "The Great Chief of the Desert", with his father bearing the same title<sup>43</sup>. Amongst the walls that are now demolished, Von Minutoli's drawings depict Wenamun also standing before a deity with a feather on the head, possibly referring to a foreign god<sup>44</sup>. A burial crypt has been located within the temple grounds

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<sup>33</sup> H. Freiherr von Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der lybischen Wüste und nach Ober-Ägypten in den Jahren 1820 und 1821*, (Berlin, 1824).

<sup>34</sup> F. Cailliaud, *Voyage à l'Oasis de Syouah*, (Paris, 1823).

<sup>35</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Kuhlmann (1988), *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>40</sup> Kuhlmann (1988), *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

consisting of burial chambers and decorated fragments of destroyed alabaster sarcophagi sufficient for two internments, most likely for the family of Wenamun (texts referring to Wenamun's "opening of the mouth" had already hinted at the existence of this tomb in the temple precinct)<sup>45</sup>.

### 6.2.3 The Necropolis of Gebel el-Mawta

Gebel el-Mawta is a conical hill situated approximately 1.5km from the modern centre of Siwa. It is honeycombed with rock-cut tombs all over its sides. Many of the tombs are small one or two chamber constructions, with others having several chambers and columns. The older tombs here date from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and the Ptolemaic Period and these were often re-used in Roman times<sup>46</sup>. Of particular note is the tomb of Niperparthot, which is the largest in the cemetery, having a court, six side chambers and a small burial chamber at the end and possibly dates from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>47</sup>. The owner, Niperparthot, had a primary title "Prophet of Osiris", alluding to the existence of a temple to Osiris in the area<sup>48</sup>.

## 6.3 Relations of Siwa to the Nile Valley

The level of autonomy of the Western Desert Oases from the Nile Valley is a topic that has been covered for other oases in this work and it was seen that in such cases as Baharia and Dakhla that governors authorised by the Nile Valley administration presided over these places. It was seen furthermore, that many of the institutions of regional NVC governorship were retained by oasian governors, in some cases with slight differences. It seems that Siwa differed from the other oases in this respect, so this section will deal with relations regarding both the secular and religious administration of the Nile Valley. The relationship of Siwa to the Nile Valley and indeed other regions and its relative autonomy can be viewed in terms of its political and administrative independence as well as its cultural uniqueness and autonomy.

Siwa's administrative autonomy may be seen in the role and status of the rulers of Siwa, which may be gleaned from titles conferred upon them (in the case of Siwa, available from both classical literary and from monuments on the sites) as well as how they are graphically depicted on monuments. From classical sources it is seen how Siwan kings were referred to in the Greek

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<sup>45</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, "Siwa", *Rundbrief DAI Abteilung Kairo*, October, (2006), pp. 31-32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>48</sup> Fakhry, *Op. cit.*, p. 179.

as βασιλεῦς<sup>49</sup> (king) and that as an example, the accompanying title for Sethirdis of njswt bjtj<sup>50</sup> (King of Upper and Lower Egypt) also provides a king's role from the Egyptian perspective. This, among other factors has led Kuhlmann to conclude that it is most likely that Siwa was never actually garrisoned by the Egyptians and lived under its own administration, pursuing its own independent cultural and political course but oriented towards the Egyptian model<sup>51</sup>. In addition to the titles, depictions of Siwan kings such as Sethirdis are shown in a symmetrical fashion, with the NVC pharaoh offering to the gods and constituting a functional parallel<sup>52</sup>. To date we have three occurrences constituting separate test points where simultaneous depiction of the Nile Valley king with a foreign, non-NVC king is seen (as shown by the feather-diadem), ranging from Amasis (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty - Ammoneion ) to Nectanebo I (30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, see Chapter 7 – temple in Al Bahrein) and Nectanebo II (30<sup>th</sup> Dynasty – Umm Ubaydah). This would indicate a consistency in the oasis of the local rule while the political situation in the Nile Valley had experienced many changes and upheavals over this extended period.

The question as to whether Siwa was culturally autonomous also needs to be considered. From the available evidence, it would seem that NVC cultural infiltration during the period under study was seemingly significant and widespread. What remains is an examination of the depth and breadth of this infiltration and the evidence for an indigenous element that is recognisable through the NVC “cultural noise”. Such evidence could have made itself known through cult practices such as the Amun cult performed here; in particular, the ram-headed manifestation worshipped in Siwa has received some attention. It has been suggested that this ram-headed manifestation relates back to an earlier period, prior to the arrival of NVC influence, where the worship of a ram-headed, “pan-Saharan” deity was practiced<sup>53</sup>. Fakhry also proposed that a scene from Umm Ubaydah where Wenamun makes offering to a god seated inside a shrine who, as Wenamun, wears a feather in his hair represents a deity of Libyan origin<sup>54</sup>. Kuhlmann refutes both of these possibilities and believes that there is no evidence to show the existence of a previous local cult in Siwa and that all cult evidence to date can be

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<sup>49</sup> Herodotus, Book II section 32.

<sup>50</sup> A. Fakhry, *The Egyptian Deserts: Siwa Oasis. Its History and Antiquities*, (Cairo, 1944), p. 91.

<sup>51</sup> Kuhlmann (1988), *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 111-116.

<sup>54</sup> Fakhry (1973), *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

linked back to an NVC origin<sup>55</sup>. While material culture evidence is lacking to enable further comment on the physical presence of NVC individuals at Siwa, the temple inscriptions provide some limited insights. Here, it can be seen that the literacy of local scribes/craftsmen as reflected in hieroglyphic inscriptions, are of poor grammatical quality and are in some instances almost unreadable<sup>56</sup>.

The question remains then - why was there such a cultural and political alignment if this did not occur by force?

Kuhlmann believes that many of the NVC institutions seen in Siwa are as a direct result of the relationships with the dominant temple administrations in the Nile Valley at the time – both from Thebes as well as from Memphis. Within this framework, the Nile Valley ensured the inclusion of the Oasian king in the cult (but not ordained), which in turn ensured the maintenance of the cult and the use of prime resources and real estate in the oasis for cult use<sup>57</sup>. What is not clear are:

1. The reasons and incentives for the oasian kings to support this relationship;
2. The reasons for NVC cultural infiltration generally;
3. The reasons for the Nile Valley temple administration to want to support and encourage the continuity of cult practice at Siwa;

The reasons for the adoption of cultural elements from the NVC by the local indigenes could be seen as having similar motivations to the Nubian Kerman and Napatan cultures where strong NVC elements were maintained even during these periods of relative autonomy, indicating an internal desire to follow the cultural leads of the north<sup>58</sup>. The association with a complex and long-lived culture such as the NVC might have brought with it a certain prestige and an expectation of a better life for the Siwans – parallels in other times are seen in the Romanisation of barbarian neighbours, for example. In this way the cultural infiltration would be seen as a “pull” rather than a “push”.

Such a cultural infiltration also assumes at least peaceful contact at some time between the Siwans and NVC. The establishment and maintenance of a cult centre to Amun would then be the furthest projection of NVC cultural influence, the power of the god and the keeping at bay of the forces of chaos and maintenance of order.

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<sup>55</sup> Kuhlmann (1988), *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.



## 6.4 Summary

The occupation of Siwa stretches from prehistoric times, with the earliest pharaonic period evidence from the oasis deriving from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Siwa's administrative autonomy is seen in the role and status of the native rulers of Siwa, which may be gleaned from titles conferred upon them as well as how they are graphically depicted on monuments, with Siwan kings such as Sethirdis shown in a symmetrical fashion with the NVC pharaoh offering to the gods and constituting a functional parallel. Other rulers such as Wenamun, bear titles such as "The Great Chief of the Desert", with the father bearing the same title, who also built temples at Al Bahrein (see Chapter 7). To date three occurrences have been noted where simultaneous depiction of the Nile Valley king with a foreign, non-NVC king is seen. This indicates a consistency in the oasis of the local rule while the political situation in the Nile Valley had experienced many changes and upheavals over this extended period.

Culturally and stylistically, the architecture and decoration of monuments such as the Ammoneion and tombs reflect typically NVC traditions, through the masonry and use of stone roof beams, displaying none of the Greek influences of the Late Period. The reasons for the adoption of cultural elements from the NVC by the local indigenes could be seen as having similar motivations to the Nubian Kerman and Napatan cultures where strong NVC elements were maintained even during these periods of relative autonomy, indicating an internal desire to follow the cultural leads of the north. The association with a complex and long-lived culture such as the NVC might have brought with it a certain prestige and an expectation of a better life for the Siwans – parallels in other times are seen in the Romanisation of barbarian neighbours.

While much of the restoration and excavation work in Siwa over the years has been dedicated to the precinct of the Ammoneion and temple of Umm Ubaydah, it would seem that other monuments stood in the area as seen in the tomb of Niperpathot, whose occupant had a primary title "Prophet of Osiris", alluding to the existence of a temple to Osiris in the area.

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<sup>58</sup> S. T. Smith, *Wretched Kush*, (London, 2003), p. 95.

## Chapter 7

### The Minor Oases and Springs

#### 7.1 Introduction

The category of Minor Oases and Springs was established for this work to differentiate smaller oases and springs from other oases and exploitable desert features/resources, as having a particular style of human occupation and use for desert travellers. This category of desert feature is generally sparsely vegetated and occupied, with insufficient resources to sustain larger groups fulltime. In order to properly understand these; a selection of small oases and springs that feature archaeological remains has been taken from the Egyptian North West corner and South East corner of the area under study.

#### 7.2 The North Western Minor Oases

East of Siwa, following the Darb Siwa on the way to Baharia Oasis extends a chain of small, nowadays uninhabited oases that show evidence for a presence in the past. The oases along the Darb Siwa - Al Areg, Al Bahrein, Sitra and Nuweimisa are relatively close to one another, approximately a days' walk apart. The oases are manifest as lakes and salt marshes with the total area of lakes covering approximately 20 square km and marshes 5000 square km<sup>1</sup>. Given the high amount of evaporation in this area it is most likely that the lakes are fed from subterranean sources<sup>2</sup>. From As-Sitra to Baharia is approximately 200km of waterless desert. Steindorff, when travelling between As-Sitra and Baharia, came across an ancient water depot consisting of ceramic vessels - which would have been used for donkey caravans along here as camels would have no need for such<sup>3</sup>, thus implying possible pre-Roman era use.

##### 7.2.1 Timayra, Tibaghabagh and Gara

Gara is a small oasis located 130km northeast of Siwa and is a major provisioning point when using the northeast track to the Mediterranean. It is currently inhabited with a small community. Whilst no antiquities of pharaonic age have been located here to date, there are scattered rock-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Ball, "Problems of the Libyan Desert (Continued), *GJ* 70 no. 2 (1927), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kuhlmann referring to Steindorff's travels in K. P. Kuhlmann, *Das Ammoneion*, (Mainz, 1988), p. 89.

cut tombs<sup>4</sup>, likely from the Roman period, demonstrating habitation at least back to this period. On the way to Gara from Siwa is an intermittent spring, Timayra, approximately 80km north east of Siwa. This is now uninhabited but likely supported a small group in antiquity as evidenced by a small temple and rock-cut tombs<sup>5</sup>. Tibaghabagh is a further satellite to Siwa found 80km east, which also features a number of springs scattered over a wider area<sup>6</sup>. Uninhabited now, rock cut tombs<sup>7</sup> and petroglyphs in the surrounding hills<sup>8</sup> attest to a human presence in antiquity.

### 7.2.2 Al Areg

Al Areg is the first of these oases that a traveller encounters moving in the direction of Baharia from Siwa and requires approximately 2.5 to 3 days at human walking pace to reach<sup>9</sup>. It lies in a small depression, which includes a small area of grasses and stunted palms. A relatively significant necropolis is found here that incorporates at least 86 graves, the primary burial area being in the south-east of the depression in the walls of the escarpment<sup>10</sup>. Mummification was practiced here, and the use of gold painted masks and the general decoration of mummies has prompted Kuhlmann to date the burials to the Ptolemaic period<sup>11</sup>. The majority of the tombs are undecorated and the most significant of the group is Fakhry's Tomb 15. The tomb consists of one large and one small chamber and includes depictions of Osiris, Anubis, winged sun-disk and the goddess Nut flanked by two cows<sup>12</sup>. The tomb was dated by Fakhry to between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC<sup>13</sup>. The find of a Late Period temple in the neighbouring Al Bahrein oasis (see section 7.2.3) might indicate an earlier occupation and use of resources here as well.

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<sup>4</sup> A. Al Dumairy, *Siwa past and present*, (Alexandria, 2005), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> As observed by author.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Al Dumairy, *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> As experienced by author.

<sup>10</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>12</sup> A. Fakhry, "The Tombs of El Areg Oasis in the Libyan Desert", *ASAE* 39, (1939), p. 617.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

### 7.2.3 Al Bahrein

Al Bahrein is situated on the other side of the present Darb Siwa and to the east approximately a days' walk from Al Areg<sup>14</sup>. It is an important last water source on the direct southern trail from Siwa to Farafra, the next source being Ain Dalla, which is almost 200km further south. Two long salt lakes are situated here surrounded by vegetation, palm trees and sand dunes<sup>15</sup>. The necropolis here is situated north east of the westernmost of the twin lakes, distributed over two hills, incorporating at least 50 graves<sup>16</sup>. Recently, a small temple was excavated here from the reign of Nectanebo I, which potentially throws new light on the chronology of use and occupation of this and other oases in this group. The temple was built with blocks of local limestone of poor quality obtained from a nearby quarry<sup>17</sup>. The remaining construction is 20 m long by 8.5m wide, having a hypostyle hall (added during the Graeco-Roman period), whose roof was supported by six columns, of 1m diameter, originally decorated with painted plaster<sup>18</sup>. The interior of the three cellae in the sanctuary were decorated during the reign of Nectanebo I, whose double cartouche is preserved on several reliefs<sup>19</sup>. The hieroglyphic inscriptions reveal that the original name of the area was *Imsppt* and indicate that the shrine was dedicated to the god Amun-Ra, who bears here the local epithet of "the one who makes strong" (*ir-nekhet*)<sup>20</sup>. Other gods referenced here include Ptah, Tefnut, Thoth, Osiris and Herishef<sup>21</sup>. In addition, what the excavators suggested could be a Libyan king is depicted wearing the Libyan feather diadem<sup>22</sup>. The scenes in the sanctuary seem to follow the geographical orientation of the two domains: the eastern pharaoh, whose power extends from the valley of the Nile to the Great Oasis and a western "Libyan" ruler, depicted in the usual fashion with headband supporting a

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<sup>14</sup> From author's experience.

<sup>15</sup> C. Dalrymple Belgrave, *Siwa the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon*, (London, 1922), p. 184.

<sup>16</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>17</sup> P. Gallo, *CMAIA - Relazione della campagna archeologica 2003 dell'Università degli Studi di Torino (BAHREIN)* - Prof. Paolo Gallo, viewed 11 March 2011, <<http://www.archaeogate.org/egittologia/article/55/1/cmaia-relazione-della-campagna-archeologica-2003-dellun.html>>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* The cult of Herishef was also noted in Siwa and in Baharia Oasis (see Chapter 5).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

feather, who reigned over the deserts of the West<sup>23</sup>. The Libyan ruler, Wenamun, has a number of titles, which offer useful insights into his relative role and status. Amongst these are the following<sup>24</sup>:

"The King of Upper and Lower Egypt"

"The Horus strong arm, one who submits"

"The powerful of the two deserts of Chou"

"The great leader of deserts, Wenamun"

This is a significant demonstration of the status of this local ruler, who depicts himself opposite the Nile Valley king offering to the deities and even proclaims himself to be a king of the two lands. There seems to be a shift away from the concept of a local ruler who is associated with a specific oasis (refer, for example, the Chapter 5 where we have for Baharia the "Governor of the Oasis") to an individual who seems to have sovereignty over the "deserts". The ruler also bears the accoutrements symbolizing his association with the west and is therefore a local to the area.

This arrangement of Nile Valley ruler and non-NVC king depicted within the same temple is also seen in Siwa in the Ammoneion and the temple of Umm Ubaydah (see Chapter 6). It was also seen in Chapter 6, that the Umm Ubaydah temple referred to "The Great Chief of the Desert", Wenamun. It is possible that the two individuals are the same; however the depiction at Al Bahrein is far bolder in its claims for the status of Wenamun. It is possible that the two temples depict two stages in Wenamun's career<sup>25</sup>.

This discovery is the most significant made to date in this group of oases and indicates that significant activities indeed took place here in pre-Ptolemaic times. The presence of a temple highlights the importance of the Darb Siwa and is consistent with the period which is characterized by high quality and ubiquitous artistic, literary and construction output, where Nectanebo I inaugurated a program of restoration and embellishment of virtually all temples in Egypt<sup>26</sup>. Given the proximity to the other small oases in this district, it would seem that they were at least known and in use at this time as well, if not inhabited.

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<sup>23</sup> P. Gallo, "Ounamon, roi de l'oasis libyenne d'El-Bahrein", *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie*, (Paris, 2006), p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>26</sup> N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 377.

### 7.2.4 Nuweimisa and Sitra

Nuweimisa Oasis lies to the east of Bahrein and incorporates two small salt lakes with sand dunes on the southern side and a low sandstone escarpment to the north<sup>27</sup>. The escarpment is the primary burial area, which incorporates at least 40 graves<sup>28</sup>. Sitra lies to the east of both Bahrein and Nuweimisa and has the largest lake of the group, measuring 5 km east to west and 3km north to south<sup>29</sup>. To date there are no published sources referencing archaeological evidence here attributable to the Pharaonic period. It is likely that these two oases also were in use at the same time as Al Areg and Al Bahrein due to their proximity.

## 7.3 The South Eastern Minor Oases

This group of small oases comprised of Bir Nakheila, Kurkur and Dunqul are of a type where the water sources are fed by percolation from occasional rainfall<sup>30</sup>, as opposed to being fed from artesian sources as in the major oases and the minor ones discussed above in the North West.

### 7.3.1 Bir Nakheila

Bir Nakheila is situated approximately 180 km west of the Nile, being just to the south east of Kharga and the northernmost of a trio which also includes Dunqul and Kurkur. Increasingly evidence for a Pharaonic presence has been noted here starting with graffiti first described by Fakhry<sup>31</sup>. The text is pecked on a block of hard chalk and is a mix of regular hieroglyphs with five hieratic characters mentioning name and titles of an individual xnti-Xtii-Htp<sup>32</sup> and his mother. From the names it is possible that the work dates from Middle Kingdom to 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty<sup>33</sup>. Subsequent investigations have revealed further depictions and graffiti from a range of periods. These include Predynastic depictions of hunters and giraffes as well as a depiction dated to Old Kingdom to Middle Kingdom of a cow and hieroglyphs hrw nfr 'n ("a good day

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<sup>27</sup> A. De Cosson, "Notes on the Bahren, Nuwemisah and El-A'reg Oases in the Libyan desert", *JEA* 23, (1937), p. 227.

<sup>28</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>29</sup> W. Abed, *The Other Egypt*, (Cairo, 1998), p. 220.

<sup>30</sup> J. Ball, "Problems of the Libyan Desert (Continued)", *GJ* 70 no. 2 (1927), p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> A. Fakhry, "The Search for Texts in the Western Desert", *Textes et Languages de l'Egypte pharaonique. Hommage à Jean Francois Champollion, vol. II*, (Cairo, 1973), p.216.

<sup>32</sup> J. Osing, M. Moursi, Do. Arnold, O. Neugebauer, P.A. Parker, D. Pingree and M. A. Nur el-Din, *Denkmäler der Oase Dachla aus dem Nachlass von Ahmed Fakhry*, (Mainz, 1982), p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

of going back”)<sup>34</sup>. Initial surveys of ceramic evidence here found the largest deposits near the most significant palm grove in the area suggesting gravitation towards the main water source which must have been in the same position over the time<sup>35</sup>. The largest concentration of ceramics is of what D. Darnell refers to as “Libo-Nubian” contemporary with Egyptian Predynastic through Middle Kingdom<sup>36</sup>. A type recovered at Bir Nakheila had similarities with A-group/Sudanese traditions<sup>37</sup> leading D. Darnell to postulate that “Libo-Nubian” groups inhabiting the area between Kharga and the Nile are related to Abkan and A-group cultures<sup>38</sup>. Other material recovered here includes C-Group and “Saharan” style ceramics<sup>39</sup>.

### 7.3.2 Kurkur

Kurkur is situated approximately 55km west of the Nile and unlike the great oases considered so far such as Baharia and Dakhla, Kurkur is not a closed depression of aeolian origin, but a vegetated gorge where the wadi intersects an aquifer resulting in water seepage supporting vegetation and some brackish wells<sup>40</sup>. In historical times, the oasis served as a watering place for camel caravans on the Darb el-Bitan, which then joined the Darb el-Arbain as well as caravan routes from the Nile Valley<sup>41</sup>, only ever seeing temporary occupation during these times<sup>42</sup>. Recent surveys here have uncovered increasing evidence for a Pharaonic presence. At least 16 separate loci have been identified with material of Pharaonic date including fragments of a New Kingdom jar and amphora as well as Nubian pottery from Middle Kingdom to New Kingdom and C-group and Kerma sherds<sup>43</sup>. Earlier surveys found a predominance of Paleolithic, Neolithic and C-group artifacts<sup>44</sup> attesting to the great span of occupation here. In

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<sup>34</sup> J. C. Darnell, "Opening the Narrow Doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 150.

<sup>35</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel of the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road: Ceramic Evidence from the Routes between the Nile and Kharga Oasis", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 166.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>40</sup> K. W. Butzer and C. L. Hansen, *Desert and River in Nubia*, (Madison, 1968), p. 334.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>43</sup> D. Darnell, Op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>44</sup> Butzer and Hansen, Op. cit., p. 390.

addition, dry stone huts of Pharaonic date have been found on the heights overlooking the wadi, with a well area in the main wadi being the focus of habitation<sup>45</sup>. Multiple stelae have been found in the region close to Kurkur. One of these, from the reign of Tutankhamun, depicts the king bowing before the god Khnum and also depicts a deputy commander of Wawat lecturing a Medjay patrolman for not reporting for duty – to which the patrolman defends himself about his labours<sup>46</sup>. The stela provides further evidence for the presence and importance of the Medjay in the South-eastern region of the desert (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of the Medjay). It has been suggested by Darnell that the Medjay would have been employed operating out of Kurkur as escorts for caravans carrying trade and tribute of Nubia and even some areas further south<sup>47</sup>. That Medjay were stationed here is evidenced further by epigraphic remains in the area demonstrating the importance of Kurkur during military operations in the New Kingdom against Nubia<sup>48</sup>. A further stela also from the region near Kurkur also shows the king, this time Seti I, bowing before Khnum<sup>49</sup>, with Khnum interestingly bearing the epithet “Lord of the West”<sup>50</sup>. A substantial text referencing the establishment of the borders of Ta-Sety<sup>51</sup> shows that this stela is a boundary marker. A further stela found on the Aswan to Kurkur road further demonstrates the importance of Kurkur as a destination or rest point. This is a large stela of Middle Kingdom date bearing a small depiction of a feathered archer leading a bound prisoner beneath an un-attributed regnal year date<sup>52</sup>. Kurkur provides a watering place for the desert roads from Upper Egypt to Abisko, Aniba, Toshka and Faras and therefore was a place where the pharaonic state could exert control over northern, central and southern portions of Wawat<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> D. Darnell, *Op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>46</sup> J. C. Darnell, “A Stela of the Reign of Tutankhamun from the Region of Kurkur Oasis”, *SAK* 31, (2003), pp. 73-91.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>48</sup> J.C. Darnell, “The Route of Eleventh Dynasty Expansion into Nubia An Interpretation Based on the Rock Inscriptions of Tjehemau at Abisko”, *ZÄS* 131, (2004), p. 30.

<sup>49</sup> P. J. Brand, *The Monuments of Seti I and their Historical Significance: epigraphic, Art Historical and Historical Analysis*, PHD Thesis, University of Toronto, (1998), p. 319.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> R. Engelbach, “The Quarries of the Western Nubian Desert and the Ancient Road to Tushka”, *ASAE* 38, (1938), p. 389.

<sup>53</sup> J. C. Darnell (2004), *Op. cit.*, p. 29.



## 7.4 Summary

The reasons for and nature of the occupation of these oases is still unclear and will require further survey and excavation of these sites, which, especially in the case of the north western group has been lacking to date. Kuhlmann believes that the inhabitants of some of the North Western minor oases such as Al Areg originally derived from Siwa and that they spent time in these oases in support and to profit from the trade route along the Darb Siwa<sup>54</sup>. What is clear is that Al Bahrein and likely the other oases in the neighbourhood witnessed activities during at least the Late Period. It was seen that the appearance of NVC elements in the archaeological record of Siwa (to date) commences also with the Late Period (26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, see Chapter 6). At the other side of the Darb Siwa, the Baharia Oasis also demonstrates rich evidence from the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (see Chapter 5). It is likely therefore that the Darb Siwa saw active use during this period at least and that the minor oases as a result would also have taken part in the possible trade and provision of those doing the traversal. The South Eastern Group saw demonstrable activity during the Pharaonic period and even prior. These would have served as stopping off and rest points for travellers emerging from and going forth to the south, on predecessor tracks to the Darb el Arbain and on roads leading to and from the Nile Valley to destinations such as the Kharga Oasis.

Overall, it would seem that the minor oases and springs likely fulfilled a role as provisioning and watering points along the way for major roads and trails. They were unlikely to be places that supported large populations in their own right and were probably used by the travellers in a direct exploitation sense for water and rest, or supported small resident populations that subsisted from supplying and servicing groups plying the desert roads.

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<sup>54</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

## Chapter 8

### Ethnic Groups in the Western Desert

#### 8.1 Introduction

An understanding of the cultures of the Western Desert during the Pharaonic period requires an examination of whether groups other than the NVC, such as the SMC were present in the Western Desert at this time and what the consequences of contact might have been. The Western Desert was surrounded on all four sides by regions that could potentially have exercised a cultural influence on its inhabitants. This work has concentrated largely on the evidence of the NVC and the Eastern limits. What remains is an examination of the possibility for influence from the remaining three sides – North, West and South including a more in-depth analysis of the indigenes of the desert itself. To this end, this section will examine the evidence for cultural interaction and influence in the Western Desert from SMC, Libyan, Nubian and Mediterranean groups.

#### 8.2 The “Libyan” Groups

One of the earliest works attempting to define the makeup of the groups referred to as Libyans was by Oric Bates<sup>1</sup> who reviewed this multitude of foreign groups depicted and named on Egyptian monuments<sup>2</sup>. More specifically, he focused on a collective he referred to as the “Eastern Libyans” whom he associated with the “Mediterranean Hamites” from a classificatory breakdown he made of North African groups<sup>3</sup>. He then uses the NVC naming to provide a provisional breakdown of the Eastern Libyans as follows. In major groupings he identifies the THnw, tmHw, rbw and mSwS<sup>4</sup>. Further, possible subgroups, are known from Bates such as qhq, isbt and bqn<sup>5</sup> together with qjjqS, hs, Sjj-tp, spd, mhswN and Smn<sup>6</sup>. A key question is how

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<sup>1</sup> O. Bates, *The Eastern Libyans*, (London, 1914).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 39-42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46. See also C. A. Hope, “Egypt and ‘Libya’ to the End of the Old Kingdom: A View from Dakhleh Oasis”, in Z. Hawass and J. Richards (eds.), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt Essays in Honor of David B. O’Connor*, Vol. 1, (Cairo, 2007), pp. 400-403 for further coverage of these groups.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

these groups were interrelated to be collected together into what we refer to as “Libyan”. Considering the various planes of difference – spatial, temporal, cultural and racial – we find that there are differences in each of these. The spatial plane and the origin and areas within which the Libyans dwelt are discussed further below. Temporally speaking, the groups and sub groupings listed earlier take prominence during various dynasties during the Pharaonic period. For example the terms THnw and tmHw were both archaic terms by the New Kingdom<sup>7</sup>, while mSwS is seen only since the reign of Amenophis III and qhq around the time of Rameses II to III<sup>8</sup>. The heterogeneity, both racially and culturally between these groups is attested in the NVC depictions over time showing the various groups with differing skin, eye and hair colour as well as differing tattooing, dress and choice of weapons<sup>9</sup>.

Much debate surrounds the question of the geographic origin of the Libyan groups. It would be beyond the scope of this work to enter into this debate, however what is important is to understand the possible expanse of this area of Libyan habitation. Bates places their origin well within the territory of present-day Libya, around Cyrenaica and along the coast of modern Egypt stopping west of the Nile delta<sup>10</sup>. Nibbi, places their origins in the area immediately west of the Nile delta. None of the claims are conclusive. Most of these claims are based on theoretical placements of Libyan groups based on historical documents on the campaigns of Sethos I, Merenptah and Rameses III. Little archaeological evidence is available to assist in this question, although excavations on the Mediterranean coast have revealed archaeological evidence for a possible trading station which interacted with, and was seasonally surrounded by Libyan groups<sup>11</sup>. Based on current hypotheses from the various scholars then, the Libyan homeland could be placed at some point in the region spanning west of the Nile delta, across the Mediterranean coast and into present day-Libya. From the perspective of the Western Desert, this implies the region immediately north and to the west, effectively framing the region.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Osing, “Libyen, Libyer”, *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, III, (1980), column 1017.

<sup>7</sup> D. O’Connor, “The Nature of Tjemhu (Libyan) Society in the Later New Kingdom”, in A. Leahy (ed.) *Libya and Egypt c1300-750 BC*, (1990), p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> Osing, *Op. cit.*, column 1016.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, column 1018.

<sup>10</sup> Bates, *Op. cit.*, p. 45, referring to the “Western Hamites” and “Eastern Mediterranean Hamites” with reference to the map on p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Bates’s Island just off the Mediterranean coast at Mersa Matruh, see D. White, “Provisional Evidence for the Seasonal Occupation of the Marsa Matruh Area by Late Bronze Age Libyans”, in A. Leahy (ed.), *Libya and Egypt c1300-750 BC*, (1990), p. 6.

Apart from the nebulous, generally Western origin applied to the Libyans by many authors, as noted earlier, it seems that Libyans were also at least in periodic contact with Western desert and oases inhabitants as evidenced by their use of the Western Desert routes as an alternative to reach the vicinity of the Nile Valley. The Great Libyan War inscription at Karnak from the time of Merenptah references a Libyan military thrust through the Western desert reaching “the hills of the Baharia Oasis, these being cut off from the Farafra Oasis.”<sup>12</sup>

The Smaller Dakhla Stela makes reference to a Libyan chief, sDHty, of the SA-iwn group making offerings to Seth during the reign of the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty ruler Piankh<sup>13</sup>, which Janssen interprets as the presence of a small Libyan tribe in Dakhla which, at the time of the publication of the stela had hitherto been unrecorded in Nile Valley contexts and was most likely unknown to the Nile Valley<sup>14</sup>. A more recent find of a further stela in the site of Amheida, Dakhla has provided further light on this Libyan chief and his tribe. The stela refers to the same chief sDHty of the SAM-iwn<sup>15</sup> and records a donation to the temple of Thoth in Amheida, dating most likely to the reign of Takelot III<sup>16</sup>. The appearance of a Libyan chief on a second stela such as this accounts for the significance and influence of the Libyan presence in Dakhla at the time. The presence of these “Libyans” however might have less to do however with their association with the West, proximity to Libya or the Western Desert and more to do with the Nile Valley and Delta centres of power at the time and their Libyan regents. It is known that after the reigns of Shoshenq I, Osorkon I and Osorkon II that new generations of commandants of the Libyan tribe in power rose to important positions in certain administrative and religious centres<sup>17</sup>. It is most likely, therefore, that the Libyan chiefs referred to here were present as a result of being placed there by the Libyan administration in Bubastis and/or Thebes (in the case of the Smaller Dakhla Stela – perhaps Libyan chiefs/local administrators remaining in office following Piankh’s succession in Thebes). Indeed, it is known that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasty that the Libyans were already well entrenched in Egypt, especially in the Delta and it is

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<sup>12</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, Vol. 4, (Gateshead, 2003), p. 4 (line 4:11).

<sup>13</sup> J.J. Janssen, “The Smaller Dakhla Stela”, *JEA*, Vol. 54, (1968), p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Note the additional “m” in SAM-iwn which was a point of uncertainty in the original Janssen article (see Janssen, *Op. cit.*, p. 166), where the other possible name of the tribe was postulated to be SA-iwn and has possibly been resolved through this stela.

<sup>16</sup> P. Davoli and O. Kaper, “Area 4.1” (Amheida) in A.J. Mills (ed.) *Dakhleh Oasis Project Report to the Supreme Council of Antiquities on the 2004-2005 Field Season*, (2005), p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> K. Mysliwiecz, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt*, (Cornell University, 2000), p. 49.

likely that they were able to rise to political advancement well before the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty<sup>18</sup>. Overall it is likely that the circumstances regarding Libyan incursions in the late New Kingdom were part of a continuum that resulted in the “Libyan” 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty<sup>19</sup>. It is therefore possible that the presence of Libyan chiefs in the oases might already have occurred prior to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty as part of the incursions of the late New Kingdom. The references in both stelae to offerings by the chiefs to the temples are also consistent with the generosity shown to the Egyptian deities by the rulers of the Libyan dynasty to placate the priesthods, who represented a potential source of resistance<sup>20</sup>.

Whether the ultimate Libyan homeland is placed to the north of the oases or to the north-west it seems that the oases route (from the previous inscription) was a viable method in moving towards the Nile Valley. Indeed, the oases provide a series of watering and trading points, acting as an alternative to the Nile river, as a line of communication, between Libya and Nubia as was exploited in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty between Libya and Nubia who were coordinating action against Merenptah<sup>21</sup>. It needs to be remembered however, that the coastal route towards the delta was also a route frequently used for Libyan incursions on Egypt<sup>22</sup>. By the time of Ramesses II this route was defended by a chain of fortresses reaching over 200 miles west of the Delta, including the fort of El-Alamein and Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham<sup>23</sup>. It is to be noted though, that an alternative explanation for these forts could have been the policing of the Mediterranean coast<sup>24</sup>. It is likely that this movement by Libyan groups also resulted in at least the periodic occupation of oases on the way as launching points for their incursions, in a way similar to the Libyan Senussi, who used them as staging posts in their actions against the Egyptians and British in the early part of last century<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> K. A. Kitchen, “The Arrival of the Libyans in the Late New Kingdom Egypt”, in A. Leahy (ed.) *Libya and Egypt c1300-750 BC*, (1990), p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> O’Connor, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Mysliwiec, *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> S. Snape, “The Emergence of Libya on the Horizon of Egypt”, in D. O’Connor and S. Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, (London, 2003), p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> O’Connor, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Kitchen, *Op. cit.*, p. 19. See also L. Habachi, “The Military Posts of Ramesses II on the Coastal Road and the Western Part of the Delta”, *BIFAO* 80 (1980), pp. 13-30.

<sup>24</sup> S. Richardson, “Libya Domestica: Libyan Trade and Society on the Eve of the Invasions of Egypt”, *JARCE* 36, (1999), p. 151.

<sup>25</sup> C.S. Jarvis, *Three Deserts*, (London, 1936), p. 4.

Aside from military actions, there is the possibility that the inhabitants of the oases engaged in trade with Libyan groups or that the oases constituted part of the trade network on the way to the Nile Valley. It is known that the Nile Valley received imports of oil and glass paste during Old Kingdom times and ostrich eggs and feathers during the New Kingdom<sup>26</sup> from Libyan groups.

As to whether there was a full time occupation in the oases or anywhere in the Western Desert of Libyan groups there is little material or archaeological evidence to indicate such a presence that has been found to date. Osing<sup>27</sup> is of the belief that to date there is no firm evidence for the presence of Libyans in the oases. This needs to be balanced with the evidence discussed earlier of Libyan chiefs being present in Dakhla as evidenced by the text on the stelae. The lack of associated material of Libyan origin is likely as a result of Egyptianisation of these individuals, at least to the extent of their use of implements and material culture.

### 8.3 Western Desert Indigenes

#### 8.3.1 The Sheikh Muftah Cultural Unit

In considering the society and culture of the Western Desert during the Pharaonic period it is necessary to consider the indigenes of the desert and oases within this chronological frame as well. The SMC is one example of such a group. There is currently no conclusive evidence for the origin of the SMC, however the possibility has been suggested that it might have derived from the earlier Bashendi B culture or that there was a period of overlap between the two<sup>28</sup> in the Dakhla Oasis. Apart from Dakhla, other occupation sites have also been recently uncovered, such as in the vicinity of Dush, Kharga Oasis (see Chapter 4). With respect to contact between NVC and SMC, there is currently insufficient evidence to indicate the exact nature of this contact aside from possible respective stylistic influences in the respective pottery industries of NVC and SMC as well as finds of NVC ceramic evidence in SMC contexts and vice versa.

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<sup>26</sup> J. Ösing, "Libyen, Libyer", *Lexikon für Ägyptologie*, Vol. 3, column 1020.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, column 1016.

<sup>28</sup> C.A. Hope, "Early and Mid-Holocene Ceramics from the Dakhleh Oasis: Traditions and Influences", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 45.

In relation to the earlier Bashendi-A and B cultures, the SMC sites are concentrated mainly in the central lowlands of the oasis<sup>29</sup>, the majority of the sites situated in the southern portions of the Central and Eastern sectors. McDonald has suggested that this move towards the more secure environment of the oasis proper was due to the pressure of increasing desertification during the mid-Holocene<sup>30</sup>. SMC sites are numerous in these sectors and there seems to be no break in the 1200 year span of this culture<sup>31</sup>. While there is evidence for sedentism from the previous indigenes of Masara C<sup>32</sup> and Bashendi<sup>33</sup> cultures, with stone hut circles appearing in both, this is not the case with SMC. Although the settlement patterns indicate year-round occupation, there is currently no evidence for permanent structures<sup>34</sup>. All recorded SMC localities seem to be temporary campsites<sup>35</sup>. This could however indicate that major centres still lie elsewhere in the oasis but are now obscured by the cultivation. Recent excavations at the site of El-Kharafish 02/5 have extended the settlement patterns of SMC and shed new light on their adaptive strategies. El-Kharafish 02/5 is situated 25 km north of Dakhla oasis on the limestone plateau and has to date revealed two occupation layers – one corresponding to an Early Dynastic phase (with local pottery), the other to an early Old Kingdom phase (with 1.5 % NVC pottery)<sup>36</sup>. The number and diversity of artifacts from this site indicate that occupation was extended and might have been over weeks to months<sup>37</sup>. The site itself must have attracted significant fauna since frequent remains of slaughtered gazelle were found here as well as evidence for fowling, egg collecting and domestic livestock<sup>38</sup>. The faunal composition indicates that El-Kharafish was occupied seasonally after rainfall (late winter-early

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<sup>29</sup> M.M.A. McDonald, C.S. Churcher, U. Thanheiser, J. Thompson, I. Teubner and A. Warfe “The mid-Holocene Sheikh Muftah Cultural Unit of Dakhleh Oasis, South Central Egypt: a preliminary report on recent fieldwork”, *Nyame Akuma* 56, (2001), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> M.M.A. McDonald, “Early African Pastoralism: View from Dakhleh Oasis (South Central Egypt)” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 17, (1998), p. 130.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>34</sup> McDonald et. al. (2001), *Op.cit.* p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> H. Riemer, N. Pöllath, S. Nussbaum and H. Berke, “The fire makers of El-Kharafish: a late prehistoric camp site in the Egyptian Western Desert”, *Antiquity* 80, no. 307, (2006), viewed 3rd April 2011, <<http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/riemer/index.html>>, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

spring)<sup>39</sup>. Overall a distribution pattern has been noted with a decrease in subsistence patterns with distance from the oasis core. This has been demarcated into four zones, with Zone 1 being the oasis proper, Zone 2 (20-30km from the oasis) having camps such as El Kharafish 02/5, temporary rest sites in Zone 3 (80-100km from the oasis) such as Meri 02/50 and Zone 4 being find spots for caches of artefacts such as Clayton Rings<sup>40</sup>. This indicates SMC survival and adaptation strategies based on the seasonal characteristics of the environment and would have required a depth of knowledge about where water resources were available at what time and the movements of fauna according to season.

There is evidence to show there was a SMC presence at the so-called Hilltop sites (see Chapters 2 and 3). These sites have been interpreted as providing a function in the oversight and regulation of caravan traffic from the desert into oases such as Dakhla. Hilltop sites such as the twin sites of 99/38 and 99/39 have evidence for a SMC presence through ceramics and possibly Clayton Rings<sup>41</sup> (see next section). As described in Chapter 2, the Hilltop sites generally occupy positions located at key roads and entry points to the oasis (to date Dakhla almost exclusively). It is currently not clear whether the SMC presence at these sites was one coordinated with the NVC administration of these or a previous, independent occupation. In the former model, it has been suggested that perhaps the SMC people were used by the NVC occupants as experts in the desert and its routes and therefore acted as guides/accomplices<sup>42</sup>. In the second scenario, the key question is why SMC people would have occupied these sites independently before the NVC incursions into these desert regions. The two primary reasons would be 1) the sites offered some type of resource (foodstuffs-game or water stores) or 2) the roads with which the sites were linked were already in use by the SMC people. At site 99/38 it was determined that it was unlikely that the site was used for obtaining wild game due to the relatively low levels of faunal remains found here<sup>43</sup>. The possibility that the SMC had established and were using roads between oases and springs as well as other areas of interest before the NVC made major inroads is highly plausible if the SMC were largely nomadic.

The pattern of settlement discovered to date might indicate that the SMC were either 1) a mixed economy population or 2) nomadic herders. In mixed economy societies such as the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> H. Riemer, *El Kharafish*, (Cologne, 2011), p. 291.

<sup>41</sup> H. Riemer, F. Förster, S. Hendrickx, S. Nussbaum, B. Eichhorn, N. Pöllath, P. Schönfeld and G. Wagner, "Zwei pharaonische Wüstenstationen südwestlich von Dachla", *MDAIK* 61, (2005), p. 344.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.



African Uduk, there are main population centres located in arable lands and in addition there are a series of associated herding camps dispersed at distances beyond 15 to 20km from the main settlements<sup>44</sup>. This type of scenario would fit well with the possibility of the main sites still being under the Dakhla cultivation. In contrast, nomadic herders are characterised by settlements that are seasonally or ephemerally occupied<sup>45</sup>. A possible contemporary parallel of nomadic herders living in a similar district are the Tibu from Kufra, Karkur Talh and Uweinat. Peel observed their use of grass and matting huts – which were quickly erected and then pulled down<sup>46</sup>. A similar approach might have been deployed by the SMC – accounting for the lack of structural remains discovered to date. If the SMC was indeed a nomadic herder group<sup>47</sup> then it would seem, when compared to the precursor cultures of Masara and Bashendi, that there was a steady trend towards increased pastoralism. This trend might be explained in an ecological way as part of the response to increased desertification, in line with McDonald's observation of more centralised settlement. Alternatively, a socio-political model might be applicable whereby this trend in Dakhla was due to the increased political and social complexity being observed in the Nile Valley. Such a phenomenon has been described by Sadr<sup>48</sup> where the Nile Valley changes were seen as responsible for changes in Upper Nubian and Kiseiba populations and an increasing tendency towards nomadic pastoralism.

A number of sites exhibit interaction with the Nile Valley. Localities 35, 72 and 135 have been associated with Early SMC and have also yielded imports from the Nile Valley (for example, 35 yielded three sherds of Nile B1 fabric)<sup>49</sup>. The fabric of Nile Valley sherds recovered from Locality 72 have been identified by Hope as having parallels to fabric from Hierakonpolis and Petrie's Rough Ware<sup>50</sup>.

By Late SMC, other NVC wares are found in the oasian contexts. Locality 69 yielded a sherd of what has been tentatively identified as a Buto ware and dated to NaqadaIIc-dI<sup>51</sup>. In

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<sup>44</sup> K. Sadr, *The Development of Nomadism in Ancient Northeast Africa*, (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> R.F. Peel, "The Tibu People and the Libyan Desert", *GJ* 100, no. 2, (1942), p. 82.

<sup>47</sup> Note that this could only be shown to be true with increased analysis of SMC sites, the current sample of sites is too small to say anything conclusive.

<sup>48</sup> Sadr, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>49</sup> A. J. Mills, "A Note on a New Old Kingdom Site in the Dakhleh Oasis", *JSSEA* XXV (1995), p. 62.

<sup>49</sup> Hope (2002), *Op. Cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

addition, at the same site, rim sherds that have been attributed to Early Dynastic storage jars have been recovered<sup>52</sup>.

The presence of imported fabrics as early as NVC Badarian type from 30/450-B4-1<sup>53</sup> could imply the transfer of the wares through indirect contact such as trade networks – it does not necessarily imply direct contact between Early SMC and NVC. Direct contact becomes more likely by Late SMC where there seems to be the start of an NVC presence in the oasis with Early Dynastic sites such as 32/390-L2-1 (cemetery featuring Early Dynastic wares)<sup>54</sup> and Mut el-Kharab where NVC Early Dynastic and SMC wares are found together<sup>55</sup> (see Chapter 3). By the Old Kingdom NVC one starts to see NVC sites and Late SMC sites in proximity and even the possible sharing of pottery manufacturing techniques, such as the use of SMC techniques to produce shale wares by the local NVC<sup>56</sup>, and the inspiration of SMC ceramics by Nile Valley forms as seen in distinct modelled rims as uncovered in Mut el-Kharab as well<sup>57</sup>.

Overall, the material culture of SMC indicates two distinct phases – Early and Late. These are based on the ceramic and lithic technology, with the Early SMC having many features in common with the Bashendi B culture<sup>58</sup>. Thus, fine quartz and shale-tempered wares carry through from Bashendi culture while coarser grained fabrics are also observed in the early phase

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> M.A.J. Eccleston, "Early and Mid-Holocene Ceramics from the Dakhleh Oasis: Macroscopic, Petrographic and Technological Descriptions", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 64.

<sup>54</sup> A. J. Mills, "Dakhleh Oasis Project. Report on the Second Season of Survey, September–December, 1979", *JSSEA* X, (1980), p. 258.

<sup>55</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, J. Cox, W. Dolling, J. Milner, and A. Pettman, "Report on the 2009 Excavations at Mut el-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis", *BACE* 20 (2009), p. 63, see also C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, W. Dolling, C. Hubschmann, P. Kucera, R. Long and A. Stevens, "Report on the Excavations at Ismant el-Kharab and Mut el-Kharab in 2006", *BACE* 17 (2006), p. 38.

<sup>56</sup> Hope (2002), Op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>57</sup> Hope et. al. (2006), Op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

which become predominant by the Late SMC<sup>59</sup>. This mutual influence went as far as the use of incised marks by the SMC on their wares, possibly influenced by the NVC potmarks<sup>60</sup>.

Although the surveys in Dakhla have uncovered very little to date providing clues as to the social structure of SMC, there has been observed a lack of significant burial monuments together with a paucity of grave goods (for example one burial contained a single copper pin)<sup>61</sup>. Although the extent of the available mortuary evidence is still small, some standardisation of practice has been observed in four of the five individuals examined. These individuals were buried in a flexed position<sup>62</sup>. Thompson and Madden<sup>63</sup> suggest there is possible evidence for agricultural activity from examination of the teeth of the interred which presented with root caries and dental wear (in addition to the finding of grinding stones). Recent research indicates, however, that such caries conditions can also occur in hunter-gatherer groups with non-agricultural foods<sup>64</sup>, while sometimes micro-wear of the teeth can actually reverse with agriculturalists<sup>65</sup>. To date, very little botanical remains have been recovered from the sites although grinding stones and sickle blades attest to the use of plant foods nevertheless<sup>66</sup>. The frequent finds of faunal domesticated remains with some wild species indicates that primarily herding with some hunting were practiced<sup>67</sup>.

The issue of which social category to place the SMC cannot be performed with certainty based on the current archaeological evidence. The available evidence indicates that the SMC

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> C. A. Hope, "Egypt and 'Libya' to the End of the Old Kingdom: A View from Dakhleh Oasis", in Z. Hawass and J. Richards (eds.), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt Essays in Honor of David B. O'Connor*, vol. 1, (Cairo, 2007), p. 407.

<sup>61</sup> M.M.A. McDonald, C.S. Churcher, U. Thanheiser, J. Thompson, I. Teubner and A. Warfe "The mid-Holocene Sheikh Muftah Cultural Unit of Dakhleh Oasis, South Central Egypt: a preliminary report on recent fieldwork", *Nyame Akuma* 56, (2001), p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> J. L. Thompson and G. D. Madden, "Health and Disease of Neolithic Remains from Sheikh Muftah, Dakhleh Oasis", in G. E. Bowen and C. A. Hope, (eds.), *The Oasis Papers III: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*, (Oxford, 2003), p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> C.S. Larsen, "Biological Changes in Human Populations with Agriculture", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, (1995), p. 188.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>66</sup> M.M.A. McDonald, "Early African Pastoralism: View from Dakhleh Oasis (South Central Egypt)" *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 17, (1998), p. 135.

<sup>67</sup> McDonald (2001), *Op.cit.* p. 9.

might have been either a mixed economy group, implying that the sites discovered to date were satellite campsites of major settlements yet to be discovered, or that all habitation sites were as those that have been discovered to date which would indicate that the SMC were a nomadic group. The frequent occurrence of domesticates in SMC contexts would further indicate that they were nomadic herders. There is evidence for interaction with the NVC, however the disappearance of an independent SMC presence during the NVC Late Old Kingdom has not been explained and might have been a result of being culturally subsumed by NVC, had been made extinct or, being potentially nomadic moved to areas not yet archaeologically surveyed. If the SMC had indeed acted in specific roles for the incumbent NVC as has been previously postulated (as locals who understood the surrounding land - in the role of guides or similar) then it is possible that such close association caused these people to then take up NVC material culture, and gradually abandon the use of their own toolkit – thereby disappearing from the archaeological record as we know it.

### 8.3.2 Nomadic Groups and “Clayton Rings”

Nomads are traditionally found in both arid and semi-arid environments, roaming over smaller or wider areas in the region they inhabit, mobile and always travelling light. Economically, a key survival strategy is to live off the land with a minimum of investment given in return<sup>68</sup>. This mobile and minimalist lifestyle often results in a paucity of information available from the archaeological record regarding these peoples. In addition, in the Western Desert, the type of environment in which these people would be spending a large part of their time was hyper arid and therefore the incentives to spend time here, from an economic and lifestyle perspective, would have been few.

There is evidence, however, for a type of artefact which has a relatively consistent form and which is relatively widespread over the Western Desert in some of its most inhospitable regions – the so-called “Clayton Rings”. These are conical rings (resembling flower pots) with thick and well fired walls often found together with perforated clay disks<sup>69</sup>. They are found in areas mostly void of other habitation and are spread over a large part of the Western Desert from the Abu Muhariq Plateau and Great Sand Sea in the North to the Laqiya area in Sudan<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> D. H. K. Amiran, “Man in Arid Lands II – Patterns of Occupance”, in E. S. Hills (ed.), *Arid Lands – a Geographical Appraisal*, (London, 1966), p. 249.

<sup>69</sup> H. Riemer and R. Kuper, “Clayton rings: enigmatic ancient pottery in the Eastern Sahara”, *Sahara* 12, (2000), p. 92.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Some objects have been recovered in and immediately around oases such as at Dakhla, for example some have been found at Hilltop sites, (refer Chapter 3). To date, no Clayton Rings have been found in the Nile Valley<sup>71</sup> and examples found so far have been radio carbon dated to Predynastic to Early Dynastic periods<sup>72</sup>. More recent discoveries have extended the possible chronology of the Clayton Rings. Surveys at Dush, south of Kharga Oasis have uncovered groups of ceramics with Clayton Rings in context with Meidum bowls and thus suggesting a 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty connection<sup>73</sup>. The site of Khufu 01/1 (also 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and also known as “Djedefre’s Water Mountain”, see Chapter 2) revealed several stone circles on the southern part of the gebel where three deposits of Clayton Rings were found with the largest deposit consisting of 6 Clayton Rings and 8 discs buried in a pit, and a fourth deposit, where three rings and two discs were piled up and covered with a large pot whose form is characteristic of late SMC<sup>74</sup>. Other sites are also known where Clayton Rings are found in context with Old Kingdom material<sup>75</sup>. The connection to SMC is also illustrated in site El Kharafish 02/5, where Clayton Rings were found in context with other SMC material<sup>76</sup>. The provenance in the Western Desert of these objects is most often near or on rocks, sometimes under rock overhangs, where they can be laid out in a line or stacked one inside the other<sup>77</sup>. This type of stacking arrangement might indicate storage of the objects. There have also been examples where the objects were situated between sand dunes, potentially laid out in the manner of their intended use<sup>78</sup>. Clayton Rings often incorporate pot marks consisting of crosses, squares and other rectangular figures, which have been interpreted to be a form of ownership mark<sup>79</sup>. To date no definitive function has been identified for these objects, although the most likely to date have been that their use was for the collection of honey or the trapping of small animals<sup>80</sup>. A cache of pottery uncovered at Bir Sahara (southern Western Desert) as well as a cache of Clayton Rings demonstrates the

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> B. Mathieu, “Travaux de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale en 2002-2003”, *BIFAO* 103, (2003), p. 523.

<sup>74</sup> H. Riemer, “Trouvailles predynastiques et des premières dynasties du désert de l’Ouest et libyque”, *Archeo-Nil* 12, (2002), p. 98.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> Riemer and Kuper, *Op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

heterogeneity of accompanying artefacts and their associated cultural groups. In the pottery cache (BS-21) was found a Clayton Ring and disks in association with what has been interpreted as both Naqada culture and A-Group pieces<sup>81</sup>. Gatto suggests that on this basis, Naqadian or A-Group traders might have stopped at Bir Sahara on their way to the IInd Cataract regions, having Clayton Rings in their possession as a result of local trade<sup>82</sup>.

It can be seen to date that the presence of Clayton Rings in these remote, broad and disparate locations across the Western Desert indicates the following:

1. There were activities occurring at least from Predynastic times up to Old Kingdom times that resulted in various disparate deposits of Clayton Rings in situ with other artefacts from different cultures (SMC, A-Group and Nile Valley),
2. These deposits being either storage or possible purposeful deployment of the rings, and
3. These activities were carried out in arid desert, often far from the main oases, although some Clayton Rings are found in the oases as well.

The evidence so far seems to show a prevalence of association with Nile Valley and SMC wares – thus possibly indicating that the A-Group items found in association at Bir Sahara were most likely obtained locally by the owners of the rings and were not A-Group people as such. In terms of the fabric analysis of Clayton Rings from El Kharafish, it has been determined that they are made almost exclusively of the EK 3B fabric with the EK 3 fabric representing one of two major fabrics of which SMC bowls and pots are made<sup>83</sup>. This led the researchers to conclude that these examples were from the same cultural unit<sup>84</sup>. This leaves NVC, SMC or a third culture as yet unidentified. It is unlikely that NVC people themselves (Naqada to Dynastic) were travelling to these regions since the first major influx into the Western Desert of NVC people occurred during Old Kingdom times. In addition, as was mentioned earlier, no Clayton Rings have emerged in the Nile Valley itself, with the exception of one site<sup>85</sup>. We are then left with SMC or a culture as yet unidentified. From the previous section it was seen that the SMC people were at least semi-sedentary and that the SMC might have been either a mixed economy

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<sup>81</sup> M.C. Gatto, “Two Predynastic pottery caches at Bir Sahara (Egyptian Western Desert)”, *Sahara* 13, (2001-2002), p. 57.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>83</sup> H. Riemer, *El Kharafish*, (Cologne, 2011), p. 63.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>85</sup> The site of El Amra, see H. Riemer, “News about Clayton Rings: Long Distance Desert Travellers during Egypt’s Predynastic”, in S. Hedrickx, R. F. Friedman, K. M. Cialowicz (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins*, (2004), p. 986.

group, implying that the sites discovered in Dakhla to date were satellite campsites of major settlements yet to be discovered, or that all habitation sites were as those that have been discovered to date which would indicate that the SMC were a nomadic group. Assuming a nomadic disposition, the frequent occurrence of domesticates in SMC contexts would further indicate that they were nomadic herders. The occurrence of the Clayton Rings over the wide ranging contexts discussed earlier implies that the owners would have spent much of their time in the desert itself, which would in turn suggest the owners were likely nomadic in nature. On this basis, given the possibility of a nomadic SMC culture as explained earlier, it would seem that the strongest connection to date between the Clayton Rings and a known culture would be SMC. If this attribution is eventually shown to be incorrect, the existence of Clayton Rings at least demonstrates a strong possibility for nomadic groups in the Western Desert during at least the early stages of the Pharaonic period.

### 8.3.3 The TktAnA

In New Kingdom times there are references to Western Desert TktAnA people, possibly indigenes, who were hunters and also capable of aggression<sup>86</sup>. They were also employed by the Egyptian authorities as scouts and informers who received special treatment in that they were not allowed to be meddled with, lest the Egyptians exact a punishment on the offender<sup>87</sup>.

## 8.4 Groups in the North West

It was related in Chapter 6 that the Oasis of Siwa featured two major temple complexes – the temple of Amun and temple of Umm Ubaydah. In the Amun Temple, Sethirdis the “Chief of the Desert Dwellers” bore the feathers signifying his foreign nature and accompanied Amasis on the opposite side, making offerings to the gods. Sethirdis is also njswt bjtj (King of Upper and Lower Egypt). At Umm Ubaydah, a further foreign chief, Wenamun, kneels before Amun-Re and a number of gods including Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Seth, Geb and Nut. His title is “The Great Chief of the Desert”, with his father bearing the same title.

In the same region, along the Darb Siwa, the minor oasis of Bahrein was discussed in Chapter 7. It was seen that in a small temple here was also depicted a ruler, with headband

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<sup>86</sup> R. A. Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, (London, 1954), p. 176 (quoting from Papyrus Anastasi IV 10, 81-11,8).

<sup>87</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “The “Oasis Bypath” or the Issue of Desert Trade in Pharaonic Times”, *Tides of the Desert – Gezeiten der Wüste*, (2002), p. 151.

supporting a feather, who reigned over the deserts of the West named Wenamun. Amongst his titles was also "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt" and "The great leader of deserts " This again is a significant demonstration of the status of this local ruler, who depicts himself opposite the NV king offering to the deities and even proclaims himself to be a king of the two lands. The individual seems to have sovereignty over the "deserts" and could be the same Wenamun as depicted in Siwa. The ruler also bears the accoutrements symbolizing his association with the west and is possibly a local to the area.

These "Ammonians" of Siwa were seen by the Greeks as ethnic Libyans<sup>88</sup> (refer also section 8.2). The inscriptions and monuments of Aghurmi and Umm Ubaydah as well as the onomastics of Sethirdis and Wenamun testify to an Egyptian cultural influence at least in some circles of the Siwan community, however the name "Rrwtk", the oldest known chief, on the other hand, points to foreign, likely Libyan culture<sup>89</sup>. The depictions discussed above indicate that there were at least foreign elites ("foreign" in relation to NVC) constituting a distinct regional ethnic group residing in this North West region and likely a populace of this group also. This is consistent with the present-day situation in Siwa with "foreign" Berber speaking<sup>90</sup> people inhabiting the area.

## 8.5 The Southern Limits and Nubian Groups

### 8.5.1 Nubian Cultures in the Western Desert

The Nubian C-Group culture was dominant in the earlier part of the period under consideration and was characterised by an economy based on agriculture with some husbandry and hunting, with little evidence for class differentiation<sup>91</sup>. Ceramics of probable C-Group origin have been recovered from the southern oases of Bir Nakheila and Kurkur in addition to NVC ceramic material<sup>92</sup> as well as at Yabsa Pass<sup>93</sup>. The possibility of either direct or indirect contact between C-Group culture and NVC within the Western Desert area is further evidenced by the "Camp

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<sup>88</sup> F. Colin, "Les Libyens en Égypte (XVe siècle. a.C.-IIe siècle. p.C.). Onomastique et histoire", PHD thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Brussels, 1996), p. 143.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>90</sup> F. Malim, *Oasis Siwa: from the Inside*, (Cairo, 2001), p. vi.

<sup>91</sup> W. Y. Adams, *Nubia – Corridor to Africa*, (London, 1977), p. 161.

<sup>92</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel in the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 166.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.



49” assemblage consisting of C-Group ceramics as well as a Meidum bowl fragment<sup>94</sup> in the same context, located in Wadi Shaw on the southern edge of the Selima sandsheet. Ceramics uncovered in Ayn-Asil, Dakhla, demonstrate elements of the traditional Kerma culture, such as coarse "bowls" with alveolate decoration in relief of which ten examples were found, while those with an incised decoration belong to the Pan-Grave culture, the distinction between the two Nubian traditions at times being difficult<sup>95</sup>. The Pan Grave sherds, however, do not necessarily indicate direct contact between Dakhla and Nubia but might have appeared as a result of Medjay mercenary troops being stationed in Upper Egypt<sup>96</sup> (see section 8.6).

### 8.5.2 tmHw and the South

In year 44 of Ramesses II it was tmHw that Setau, the Viceroy of Nubia seized in the “Western Desert oases” for work at Wadi es-Sebua<sup>97</sup>. Wadi es-Sebua lies to the east of the Dunqul-Nakhlei oasis chain<sup>98</sup>. Trigger et. al.<sup>99</sup> also make the point that there is most likely a racial distinction between the tmHw and the THnw, the implication being that the tmHw employed at Wadi es-Sebua were taken from the neighbourhood and possibly from the Dunqul-Nakhlei oasis chain. Osing makes references to Libyan trade goods under Hatshepsut consisting of ivory and leopard pelts, arguing that the Libyans were possibly middlemen between Nubia and Egypt<sup>100</sup>. A possible alternative interpretation of this is that the individuals trading these goods were actually residents of the Nubian region with direct access to the goods and not necessarily middlemen.

### 8.5.3 Groups from the South-West Corner Region

Research conducted to date into the palaeo-climate of the south-western corner (including the Gilf Kebir and Uweinat) indicates that they represented ecological niches providing favourable

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<sup>94</sup> R. Kuper, “Prehistoric Research in the Southern Libyan Desert. A brief account and some conclusions of the B.O.S project”, *CRIPEL*, (1995), pp. 123-40.

<sup>95</sup> M. Baud, “Balat/ Ayn Asil, oasis de Dakhla La ville de la Deuxième Période intermédiaire”, *BIFAO* 97, (1997), p. 28.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, Vol. 3, (Gateshead, 2003), p. 95 (Stela IX).

<sup>98</sup> B.G. Trigger, B.J. Kemp, D. O’Connor and A.B. Lloyd, *Ancient Egypt. A Social History*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 120.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> J. Ösing, “Libyen, Libyer”, *Lexikon für Ägyptologie*, Vol. 3, column 1020.

living conditions lasting longer than the surrounding areas<sup>101</sup>. The playa surfaces of the Gilf Kebir, for example, revealed evidence for occupation ranging from 4000 to 3000 BC<sup>102</sup>, where fluvial phenomena as well as occupation stopped around 3600 BC and after 3000 BC hyper arid conditions set in<sup>103</sup>. Despite these prevailing hyper arid conditions, explorers in the early part of last century still made contact with indigenes inhabiting, at least on a part time basis, these areas. Ahmed Hassanein Bey who passed through the Arkenu mountain chain in the 1920's commented that Bedouins, Tibu and Guuran occupied the area for part of the year, where rain water collected in natural basins (as opposed to springs in the oases)<sup>104</sup>. Guraan also inhabited the Uweinat region, at least during the 1930's<sup>105</sup>, while Almásy noted the remains of Tibu shelters in the Wadi Abd el Melik, Gilf Kebir<sup>106</sup>. These Tibu would drive their herds from Tibesti north to Uweinat and the Gilf Kebir to take advantage of the vegetation generated by rainfall occurring in "rain years" during summer<sup>107</sup>. It would seem from these observations that the "hyper-arid" conditions that set in following 3000 BC still allowed some level of habitation and exploitation in these areas – even up to last century. Kuhlmann believes that groups from the Gilf Kebir region were travelling along the Abu Ballas Trail to reach the oases<sup>108</sup>. He partially bases this on "Mery's Inscription", a short hieratic inscription found in the desert approximately 30 km south of Dakhla referencing the "the steward Mery on his way to meet the oasis dwellers"<sup>109</sup>. Kuhlmann believes that the translation needs to be viewed as a situation of "repulse" rather than "meet" these oasis dwellers and that furthermore the inscription refers to an Egyptian military action against nomads in the south west<sup>110</sup>. As was related in Chapter 2, the

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<sup>101</sup> R. Kuper, "The Eastern Sahara from North to South: data and dates from the B.O.S Project" in L. Krzyzaniak and M. Kobusiewicz (eds.), *Late Prehistory of the Nile Basin and the Sahara*, (Poznan, 1989), p. 197.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>103</sup> H. Riemer and R. Kuper, "Clayton rings: enigmatic ancient pottery in the Eastern Sahara", *Sahara* 12, (2000), p. 99.

<sup>104</sup> A. M. Hassanein Bey, *The Lost Oases*, (Cairo, 2006), pp. 193-196.

<sup>105</sup> R. A. Bagnold, *Libyan Sands*, (Suffolk, 1943), p. 145.

<sup>106</sup> L. E. Almásy, *Schwimmer in der Wüste*, (München, 2001), p. 222.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>108</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, "The "Oasis Bypath" or the Issue of Desert Trade in Pharaonic Times", *Tides of the Desert – Gezeiten der Wüste*, (2002), p. 157.

<sup>109</sup> G. Burkard, "Inscription in the Dakhla region Test translation and comments", *Sahara* 9, (1997), pp. 152-153.

<sup>110</sup> Kuhlmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

Abu Ballas Trail supported at least late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period traffic with water depots installed at regular distances. It was also seen how in the area of the far end of this trail an inscription incorporating a cartouche of a king likely to be Mentuhotep Nebhepetra was found, along with nearby habitation evidence in the Gebel Uweinat area. This indicated that the Gebel Uweinat region was an important point along the trade routes linking Egypt and its southern African neighbours. It is also possible that the route served to link with inhabitants of this region for trade or that the inhabitants were involved in the trade that the Abu Ballas Trail was servicing. Whether the inscription refers to the south western indigenes or not, it would seem likely that given the availability of limited water and vegetation resources in these areas (as observed by explorers last century), together with actual occupation evidence in the time preceding 3000 BC that at least a part time occupation still persisted into the Pharaonic period.

## 8.6 Eastern Groups – the Medjay

In association with the Nubian region, the so called “Pan Grave culture” has been identified, often in the midst of C-Group burials<sup>111</sup>. Detailed analysis of the pan-grave burials has revealed that they are distinct from C-Group and have been linked to the Medjay of the Egyptian texts<sup>112</sup>. In addition it has been suggested that the Medjay were not originally Nile dwellers but originated as nomads of the Eastern Desert<sup>113</sup>. Some evidence for a Medjay presence in the south-eastern sector of the Western Desert is seen in the west end of the Gebel Antef promontory (Pan Grave pottery in context with NVC storage jars – interpreted as a Medjay supply point)<sup>114</sup> and in Pan Grave material from Qarn el-Ginah (in the vicinity of Kharga Oasis)<sup>115</sup>. As noted in section 8.5.1, Pan-Grave sherds were also found in Ayn Asil, Dakhla Oasis. Further tentative evidence from Dakhla was the find of possible pan grave sherds from a site in the western sector in context with Second Intermediate Period NVC sherds<sup>116</sup>. The finds of Medjay artifacts in the remote districts around Kharga and within Dakhla might indicate that the Medjay were used in later periods as guides and guards to accompany desert travellers and expeditions as in a role that the SMC might have filled in earlier periods (see earlier in this chapter).

## 8.7 Mediterranean Groups

The northern limit of the Western Desert, namely the Mediterranean coast, has revealed evidence for either direct or indirect penetration by Mediterranean cultural groups. The early Ramesside coastal fortress of Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham, among other imports recently revealed Aegean jugs and stirrup vessels<sup>117</sup>. As a further example, “Bates’ Island” a site near modern day

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<sup>111</sup> Adams, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> J. C. Darnell, "Opening the narrow doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> D. Darnell, "Gravel in the Desert and Broken Pots in the Road", in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (2002), p. 172.

<sup>116</sup> C. Hope, "Dakhleh Oasis Project – Report on the Study of the Pottery and Kilns", *JSSEA* X, (1980) p. 287.

<sup>117</sup> S. Snape, “Imported Pottery at Zawiyet Umm el-Rakham: Preliminary Report”, *Bulletin de liaison du Groupe international d’étude de la céramique égyptienne* 21, (2000), pp. 17-21.

Mersah Matruh, revealed an occupation deposit with Aegean White Slip Wares<sup>118</sup>. There is little evidence for the physical presence of Mediterranean groups within the Western Desert, although the most significant is the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Amun temple at Siwa oasis which has been interpreted to be the work of Greek architects and stone masons<sup>119</sup>. Generally speaking, the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty coincides with an increase of Greek overseas activity and the foundation of Greek settlements around the Mediterranean, including the employment of Ionic and Carian mercenaries in Egypt after 620 BC<sup>120</sup>. Architecturally, while there was frequent influence from Egypt to the outside, there was little observable from the Greeks in Egypt, besides the aforementioned Ammoneion and a temple of Amasis at Mendes<sup>121</sup>.

## 8.8 Summary

The previous chapters have explored largely the society and nature of NVC groups transposed to the Western Desert setting. A more complete understanding of the cultures of the Western Desert during the Pharaonic period required an examination of the different external ethnic groups that both passed through here and those that settled here. In addition, the evidence for Western Desert indigenes was sought.

In the case of the so-called Libyan groups as to whether there was a full time occupation in the oases or anywhere in the Western Desert of Libyan groups there is little material evidence to indicate that such a presence – at least through finds of Libyan cultural artefacts. This however needs to be balanced with the evidence discussed of Libyan chiefs being present in Dakhla as evidenced by the text on the stelae, with the lack of discernible Libyan material culture likely being as a result of Egyptianisation of these individuals. The strongest case for actual Western Desert indigenes during the Pharaonic period is from the SMC unit, at least to the late Old Kingdom, with evidence for interaction with NVC groups as colonists in the Dakhla oasis or possibly through other additional means. The evidence for SMC settlement in the Dakhla region to date and the relative temporary nature of these settlements would point to the SMC having nomadic characteristics, possibly engaged in pastoral nomadism. The prevalence of Clayton Rings in remote, arid regions around the Western Desert and their strong association

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<sup>118</sup> D. White, “Provisional Evidence for the Seasonal Occupation of the Mersah Matruh Area by Late Bronze Age Libyans”, in A. Leahy (ed.) *Libya and Egypt c1300-750 BC*, (London, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> K. P. Kuhlmann, “The Preservation of the temple of the Oracle. Report of the German Institute’s Mission to Siwa Oasis (1<sup>st</sup> March, 1999 – 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1999)”, *ASAE* 75, (2000), p. 63.

<sup>120</sup> D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, (Oxford, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

with SMC would go further in identifying SMC with nomadic traits. From New Kingdom sources, we have evidence for a possibly indigenous group known as the TktAnA, these are yet to be related to an ethnic group through archaeology. There is evidence for C-Group activity in the southern regions of the Western Desert, with cultural material found as far north as Dakhla. It has been suggested that the “Libyan” group, the tmHw were possibly southern indigenes, who lived in the small oases in the south east section of the Western desert. The possible availability of water and vegetation in some sections of Uweinat and the Gilf Kebir in the South-West corner region might have attracted and partially sustained small groups of people as they did until relatively recent times, although to date there is no firm archaeological evidence for indigenous inhabitants during the Pharaonic Period. There is evidence all the way from the Nile Valley through Kharga and Dakhla for the originally Eastern Medjay, most likely artefacts left as part of their employ by the NVC administration as desert scouts. Mediterranean groups seem to have settled in the far north, along the coast at least as early as the Ramesside period, with their influence extending south in later periods as in Siwa by the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

## Chapter 9

### Western Desert Cult

Research and archaeological work within the Western Desert at various sites has shown that during the Pharaonic Period and thereafter there seemed to be a preference or predominance for particular gods in the local Egyptian pantheon. Similarly, work in the Nile Valley has demonstrated references to these gods in association with the Western Desert. It would seem that there was a distinct pantheon and cult concepts that were associated with the Western Desert. The questions that should be asked therefore are, what was this Western Desert pantheon and how was it characterised? Who was responsible for this association with the Western Desert – the inhabitants of the Nile Valley, the inhabitants of the Western Desert or foreigners? And why was this pantheon associated with the Western Desert?

#### 9.1 The Western Desert Pantheon

Before looking in detail at the Western Desert pantheon, it needs to be borne in mind that the chief gods of the NVC prevalent in the Nile Valley during given periods were also strongly represented in the Western Desert through temple installations and attendant priesthoods, particularly to the cult of Amun and the Theban triad. The Hibis temple in Kharga, for example, was dedicated to the triad of Amun, Mut and Khonsu with substantial installations to the cult of Osiris<sup>1</sup>. What differentiates the Western Desert pantheon is the prevalence of manifestations of its elements within the Western Desert region, ranging from graffito to secondary depictions and text references within temples to dedicated temples. This pantheon is thus constructed from depictions and references emanating from the Western desert and references from the Nile Valley associating these gods to Western Desert attributes. In the following we review some of the gods with particular associations.

Of all the gods of the Western Desert pantheon, Seth is the most widely attested and stands foremost. In the Western Desert, Seth appears in temples such as Hibis in Kharga (refer Chapter 4) and Mut el-Kharab, Dakhla. Indeed, it is probable that there once stood a temple devoted to Seth here with an attendant priesthood (refer Chapter 3). He is also attested in graffito in the Dakhla region (refer Chapter 3) and in the Kharga region such as at Gebel el-Teir and Ain Amur (refer Chapter 4). Seth is core to the fundamental elements of NVC cult and

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<sup>1</sup> D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, (Oxford, 1999), p. 80.

philosophy regarding their world. Through the “Contendings of Horus and Seth” we see the basic elements at work, where the struggle between Osiris and Seth represents a conflict between the fertile Nile Valley and infertile desert or between the regularity of Nile inundation and the chaos of storms<sup>2</sup>. Much debate surrounds the morphology of the Seth animal, and whether it was based on a specific species or mythical the characteristics evident in the representations characterise a predatory nature with claws, sleek body, permanently erect tail and pricked ears – symbolising dominance and aggression<sup>3</sup>. A manifestation of Seth with the head of a falcon appears on both the Smaller Dakhla Stela (refer Chapter 3) and in the Hibis Temple, Kharga<sup>4</sup>. This form has been suggested by Osing to be a local form of Seth in association with Nephtys, the consort<sup>5</sup>. Seth was simultaneously “Lord of Foreign Lands”<sup>6</sup>, as well as the desert and oases<sup>7</sup>. The popularity of Seth radically diminishes in the Nile Valley after the 20th Dynasty<sup>8</sup>, although it seems his veneration in the Western desert persists after this time as seen in the Seth temple at Mut el-Kharab (refer Chapter 3). Indeed the vitality of the Seth cult is exemplified by his veneration in Dakhla well into the Roman period. This late veneration can be seen at Deir el Hagar (“Lord of the oasis who slays Apophis”) and the temple of Tutu and Seth graffito at Kellis<sup>9</sup>. It is thought that Nile Valley priests who had ceased Seth’s veneration had no objection to his worship in more distant regions<sup>10</sup>.

From Old Kingdom times Hathor was known as mistress of the Western Desert, of the necropolis and of the realm of the dead<sup>11</sup>. In the myth of the sun-eye Hathor as the wandering eye of the sun leaves Egypt in anger and roams the southern deserts in the form of a bloodthirsty

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<sup>2</sup> L. H. Lesko, “Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology” in B. E. Shafer (ed.), *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths and Personal Practice*, (New York, 1991), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> A. McDonald, “Tall Tails – the Seth Animal Reconsidered”, in A McDonald *et al.* (eds.) *Current Research in Egyptology: 2000*, (Oxford, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> N. de Garis Davies, “The Temple of Hibis in El Khargeh Oasis. Part III: The Decoration” *PMMA* 17, (New York, 1953), Pl. 43 and 77.

<sup>5</sup> J. Osing, “Seth in Dachla und Charga”, *MDAIK* 43, (1985), p. 233.

<sup>6</sup> H. Te Velde, “Seth, God of Confusion”, in W. Helck (ed.) *Probleme der Ägyptologie*, (Leiden, 1977), p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>9</sup> D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, (New Jersey, 1998), p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> C. J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, (Leiden, 1973), p. 42.



lioness. At the request of her father, Re, Thoth seeks her out and entices her back to Egypt<sup>12</sup>. This return journey was commemorated in desert regions as evidenced by sites along roads such as inscriptions and depictions in the Wadi el-Hol and Gebel Tjauti<sup>13</sup>. Among those who escorted Hathor back to Egypt were desert Nubians and Libyans, dancing for her and making specific offerings. A line from the Mut ritual papyrus reads “Let us take for her feathers off the backs of the ostriches which the Libyans slay for you with their throw sticks.”<sup>14</sup>

Igai ruled a region rather than a locality, namely he ruled the oases. The god is closely associated with Ha (see below), the two gods often being referenced together<sup>15</sup>. References to Igai have been found in various forms from the Nile Valley including references to a priest of Igai, personal names incorporating Igai and featuring on the base of a seated statue of Sesostris III<sup>16</sup>. From the Western Desert there is a reference in the form of graffito at Gebel el-Teir<sup>17</sup> featuring the double sceptre symbol of Igai and the epithet “Lord of the Oasis”. The use of the foreign land determinative and the style of hieratic dates this depiction to somewhere between the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and Late Period<sup>18</sup>. A sandstone fragment found in Mut, Dakhla<sup>19</sup> and dated to Dynasty 22, was examined by Fischer who notes a reference to a temple to Igai (pr aIgai)<sup>20</sup>. Subsequent work here also uncovered a large Middle Kingdom sandstone block with a record by a governor, Sa-Igai; making additions in a shrine to the god Igai<sup>21</sup> (refer Chapter 3). This underscores the importance of such a deity in Dakhla who has a dedicated shrine, and a governor whose name even incorporates them. A gebel 120km south-south-west of Mut, Dakhla, known as “Djedefre’s Water Mountain” was visited by expeditions in Old Kingdom times, allegedly for the mining of red ochre<sup>22</sup> (refer Chapter 2). A rock inscription here

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup> J.C. Darnell, “Opening the Narrow Doors of the Desert: Discoveries of the Theban Desert Road Survey”, in R. F. Friedman (ed.), *Egypt and Nubia. Gifts of the Desert*, (London, 2002), p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> J. C. Darnell, “Hathor Returns to Medamud”, *SAK* 22, (1995), pp. 69-72.

<sup>15</sup> H. G. Fischer “A God and a General of the Oasis”, *JNES* 16, no. 4, (1957), p. 233.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>17</sup> A. Fakhry, “The Rock Inscriptions of Gabal el-Teir”, *ASAE* 51 (1951), p. 415 (Fig. 25).

<sup>18</sup> J. Osing, “Notizen zu den Oasen Charga und Dachla”, *GM* 92, (1986), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> B. Gunn, “Additions to the Collections of the Egyptian Museum”, *ASAE* 29, (1929), p. 94.

<sup>20</sup> Fischer, *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>21</sup> C. A. Hope, G. E. Bowen, W. Dolling, E. Healey, J. Milner, “The Excavations at Mut el-Kharab Dakhleh Oasis in 2008”, *BACE* 19 (2008), p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> G. Negro, V. de Michele and B. Piacenza, “The Lost Ochre Quarries of King Cheops and Djedefre in the Great Sand Sea (Western Desert of Egypt)”, *Sahara* 16 (2005), p. 124.

incorporates an anthropoid depiction of Igai<sup>23</sup> with the distinctive paired was sceptres above the head. From an extensive cache of tablets of correspondence and records at Balat come two references to Igai – a piece of correspondence referring to the raising of an ox, as well as an anthroponym – “that which likes Igai”<sup>24</sup>.

Like Igai, the god Ha ruled a region rather than a locality. This god was known since the First Intermediate Period as “Lord of the West”<sup>25</sup> and by the Late period, had become the “Personification of the West”<sup>26</sup>. Representations of Ha have been found in Baharia Oasis in the Chapel of Ain Muftillah<sup>27</sup> and the Tomb of Bannentiu<sup>28</sup>. Ha also features in the Hibis Temple in Kharga Oasis<sup>29</sup> with the epithet “lord of the west, who dwells in Hibis”.

Ash was also associated with the Western Desert often referred to as “Lord of Libya” and was depicted in human form with a hawk or Seth animal’s head<sup>30</sup>. Other sources refer to Ash as “Lord of Nubia”, a possible indicator of a southern origin<sup>31</sup>. Whether Ash is ultimately of Libyan or Nubian origin remains unclear. The Seth’s head depiction of Ash commenced in the reign of Peribsen and evolved before the New Kingdom to a revelation of Seth to the Late Period where Ash is referred to by the Seth-animal determinative<sup>32</sup>.

Onuris was an ancient god of hunting depicted in anthropoid form with four feathers atop the head, associated with the desert and distant regions<sup>33</sup>.

## 9.2 The Creators and Maintainers of Western Desert Cult

The question of the ultimate origin of elements of the Western Desert pantheon can be assisted by a review of how the Nile Valley administration managed cult in other occupied regions such

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 6.

<sup>24</sup> P. Posener-Krieger, “Les tablettes en terre crue de Balat”, in E. Lalou (ed.) *Les tablettes à écrire de l’antiquité à l’époque moderne*, (1992), p. 48.

<sup>25</sup> A. Kamal, “Fouilles a Deir Dronka et a Assiout (1913-1914)”, *ASAE* 16 (1916), p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> J. J. Clère, “Fragments d’une Nouvelle Représentation Égyptienne du Monde”, *MDAIK* 16, (1958), p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahriyah and Farafra*, (Cairo, 2003), Fig. 25.

<sup>28</sup> A. Fakhry, *Bahria Oasis*, vol. 1, (Cairo, 1942), p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> E. Cruz-Urbe, *Hibis Temple Project Volume 1*, (Texas, 1988), p. 85.

<sup>30</sup> E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, (New York, 1996), p. 275.

<sup>31</sup> Silverman, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Te Velde, *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>33</sup> Hornung, *Op. cit.*, p. 280.

as Nubia and Syria. It can be seen from these regions that the NVC had a tendency to introduce as well as absorb foreign gods into its own pantheon. In Nubia, for example, the local god Dedun was incorporated into the NVC pantheon, while local Nubians were subject to large scale introduction of NVC gods<sup>34</sup>. Dedun then became a god associated with the Nubian region, having virtually no significance north of Aswan<sup>35</sup>. In Syria, however, although there was NVC uptake of local gods such as Ba'al<sup>36</sup> (associated with Seth), the Syrians accepted no NVC gods into their own pantheon<sup>37</sup>. Te Velde proposed when referring to the oracle mentioned in the Greater Dakhla Stela, that the oracle might have been a local divinity referred to as Seth by the Egyptian governor<sup>38</sup>. It would seem then, that association of gods with the Western Desert would have come about in at least two ways: either the adoption of foreign local gods or associating NVC gods which have a strong symbolic connection to the Western Desert. In relation to Seth, Te Velde takes up the second model hypothesising that Seth was placed on the outside since, as the disturber of peace; he was to be venerated on the verge of the cosmos<sup>39</sup>.

On the question of who the maintainers were of Western Desert cult it should be remembered that only few NVC gods had power outside a particular geographic sphere. The power of the gods diminished with distance from their cult centres so that travellers prayed to the deities of the areas in which they travelled at the time<sup>40</sup>. Thus it can be seen that travellers in the vicinity of Dakhla and Kharga who left depictions of Seth and Igai on the local stone (referred to earlier) were exercising this type of veneration. Permanent temple installations and attendant priesthoods in the oases to gods such as Seth referred to earlier were set up by the NVC administration in recognition of the gods of the region.

### 9.3 The Western Desert as a Conceptualised Landscape

Landscapes offer a variety of images, which are interpreted and given meaning through localised social practices and experience<sup>41</sup>. Knapp and Ashmore's<sup>42</sup> concept of a conceptualised

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<sup>34</sup> A. R. David, *The Ancient Egyptians: Religious Beliefs and Practices*, (London, 1982), p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Hornung, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>36</sup> David, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>38</sup> Te Velde, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>40</sup> Hornung, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>41</sup> C. Richards, "Henges and water: toward an elemental understanding of monumentality and landscape in late Neolithic Britain", *Journal of Material Culture* 1, (1996), pp. 313- 336.

landscape is most appropriate to the Western Desert context wherein landscapes are mediated through and to some extent constitutive of society and culture, which in turn is integral to the reproduction of concepts. The NVC identified the Nile Valley and the fertile soil of the plain (Kmt) as the proper context for order and the living, while the desert or Red Land (Dsrt) was identified with the dead and with chaos. The physical geography of the Western Desert therefore has a cognitive overlay and contains sacred events, symbolic features and a dimension of meaning that could be manipulated for cultural, political or ideological purposes. The maintenance of universal order (ma'at) was a key NVC concern and was manifest in ritual expression as well as in ordering of the conceptualised landscape into areas representing chaos and areas representing order. While providing a stark and ever-present symbol of the world on the periphery of control, it is important to note that the desert itself was never elevated to cult status, as some natural features such as Meretseger as a divine representation of mountains<sup>43</sup>.

#### 9.4 The Western Desert and its Cult Associations

Geertz<sup>44</sup> defines religion or cult as a system of symbols acting to create powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods. It can be seen from the previous discussion that the symbolism applied to the Western Desert is manifest in a number of forms:

1. The symbolic association of the geography and the conceptualised landscape whereby the physical geography represents the realm of the dead and chaos, and
2. A pantheon of gods having a “Western” association or orientation.

The “Western” association of gods is manifest most strongly in two ways: in their epithets and in the locality of references or cult installations to them. It was seen that examples of Western association through epithets included references to “the West”, “desert”, “oasis” and “Libya”. It was also seen that there is an apparent ubiquity of references within the Western Desert to the Western Desert pantheon ranging from rock art depicting deities to major cult installations dedicated to these same deities (such as the temple of Seth at Mut el-Kharab). Culturally speaking, both from the point of view of Nile Valley inhabitants as well as those inhabiting the Western desert and oases it would seem that the association of the pantheon of gods discussed

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<sup>42</sup> A. B. Knapp and W. Ashmore “Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualised, Ideational” in W. Ashmore and A. B. Knapp (eds.), *Archaeologies of Landscape*, (Oxford, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> D.P. Silverman, “Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt” in B. E. Shafer (ed.), *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths and Personal Practice*, (New York, 1991), p. 38.

<sup>44</sup> C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973), p. 90.

so far with the Western Desert was both externally applied (through the NVC notion of the divine cosmos) and internally accepted by the oasians and desert dwellers. This apparent harmony, which seems incongruous given that one sees large scale veneration of a god such as Seth (having largely negative associations), would most likely be as a result of acceptance of these gods as local gods having exceptional powers in these districts and requiring specific veneration. This acceptance also applies to the duality of the conceptualised landscape – if the kingdom is to function, the two parts of it must cooperate, the two opposite forces must be harmonised and if a man is to be complete he must know the two sides of nature<sup>45</sup>.

### **9.5 Personal Piety and the Role of the Gods in Problems Unique to the Desert Environment**

Simultaneous with the abovementioned veneration of deities as Lords of the Realm and having symbolic, western-oriented associations there is also evidence of a layer of veneration that pertains more to the functional associations of certain gods.

Life in the desert was associated with a reliance on many varied conditions, skills and resources. Among these, two that are salient are:

1. The ability to navigate, and
2. Availability of resources, particularly water.

Desert travel, much like seafaring, required skills and resources to enable optimal route planning and safe traversal of desert landscape from oasis to oasis or to and from the Nile Valley. Skills would include the use of celestial markers, *alamat*, track marks and travel by night to avoid the heat of the day, particularly in the summer months. Night travel in particular would have benefited from the light and chronological indication provided by the moon and it would have been critical to not lose one's way during these traversals [although in the author's experience it is also possible to travel on clear nights by the light of the stars, given a clearly definable trail]. Assistance from deities responsible for these aspects hence would have been sought. It was seen that the god Thoth received some attention in Baharia (see Chapter 5) in the

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<sup>45</sup> G. Englund, "The Treatment of Opposites in Temple Thinking and Wisdom Literature", in G. Englund (ed.), *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians Cognitive Structures and Popular Expressions*, (Uppsala, 1989), p. 79.

governors' tombs where the association of Thoth with the moon was noted as well as temples dedicated to Thoth as in Dakhla (see Chapter 3).

Resources and water availability were also critical to survival. Desert crossings needed to ensure that there would be regular access to water sources through route planning that encompassed oases or use of water depots. Springs in the oases themselves were prone to depletion and a system of ownership over the springs was observed through the Greater Dakhla stela (see Chapter 3). As such, devotion to the deities responsible for the continued supply of water would be expected as was also observed in the tombs of Baharia with the depiction of Meret goddesses (see Chapter 5).

## 9.6 Relations Between Nile Valley and Western Desert Cult Centres

A further defining influence on some of the Western Desert cult centres was their relationships with dominant cult centres in the Nile Valley. As was seen in the Hibis temple of Kharga, the mode of representation and choice of the multitude gods and the Amun-Mut-Khonsu triad indicated a relationship with the Theban cult centre (see Chapter 4). A strong possibility was also discussed for such a relationship between the Amun Temple in Siwa and the cult centres in Thebes and Memphis, with a priest exchange system also being postulated, the primary motivator being discussed as the projection of NVC ritual power and order (see Chapter 6).

In the Baharia chapel complex of Ain Muftillah the arrangement of deities allow associations with other cult centres such that the appearance of Mahes and Bastet demonstrate relations with Bubastis, similarly with Amun, Mut, Khonsu and Montu with Thebes; Herishef, Hathor and Somtous with Heracleopolis; and Thoth and Nehmetaway with Hermopolis<sup>46</sup>. In the temple complex at Mut el-Kharab, Dakhla, was found a formal inscription referring to the High Priest of Amun at Karnak from the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty<sup>47</sup>. This, together with other epigraphic evidence such as the fact that additions and decorations continued to be made during the Third Intermediate Period by Nile Valley kings, indicates the oasis was under Theban control during

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<sup>46</sup> F. Labrique, "Le catalogue divin de 'Ayn el-Mouftella : jeux de miroir autour de 'celui qui est dans ce temple'", *BIFAO* 104, (2004), p. 351.

<sup>47</sup> O. E. Kaper, "Epigraphic evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period" in: G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée and O.E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st - 24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, (2009), p. 154.

these periods<sup>48</sup>. The evidence shows furthermore a continuing desire of the kings and High Priests of Amun to maintain stability in this region (especially in the period following the Libyan incursions)<sup>49</sup>.

The demonstration of links between the oases and the Nile Valley cult centres over time therefore can be demonstrated for all the primary oases. What this indicates is likely that the NVC temple administration wished to project the influence of the Nile Valley gods west in the direction of perceived real threats (such as the Libyans) and the symbolism of chaos. The establishment and maintenance of a cult centre to Amun in Siwa represents the furthest projection of NVC influence, the power of the god and the keeping at bay of the forces of chaos and maintenance of order. Similar motivations were at play in Mut el Kharab.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 10**

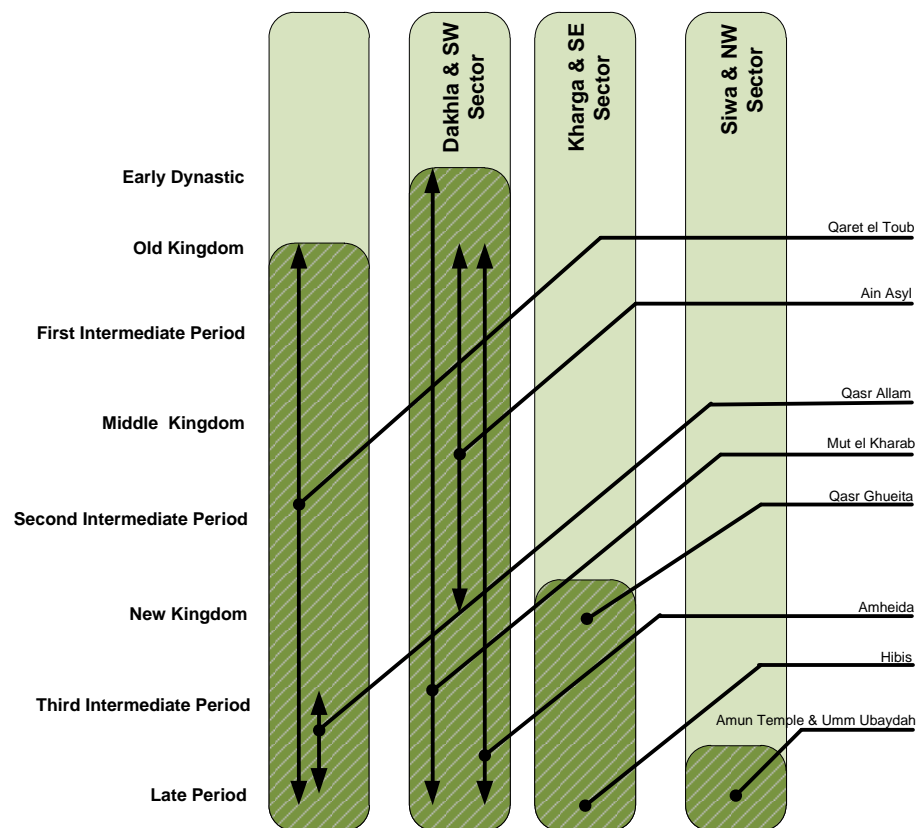
### **The Egyptian Western Desert during the Pharaonic Period - Conclusions**

This work has sought to explore the role played by the Western Desert in influencing the lives of people who lived or spent time within its boundaries. The primary question that was to be addressed was that of who lived in the Western Desert during the Pharaonic period, and what influences could be observed on these people that could be ascribed to the desert environment. In order to address this question, the physical characteristics of the environment were established and the various known and suspected ethnic groups that spent time in the Western Desert were described, with the primary focus being on Nile Valley Culture. Having thus established the context of influence (ie the landscape on the groups and the groups on each other), evidence was sought for influences in the archaeological remains of the Western Desert. Specifically, the evidence for influence within social and cultural indicators was sought. Culture was analysed through the material remains of symbols and meanings, as for example in traditions and cult practice. Social structure was examined separately from cultural aspects with an assumption that they are independently variable yet mutually interdependent. This entailed identifying the range of cultural units that inhabited the Western Desert and examining the lives of these people and how they had adapted to life in extremely arid conditions.

While archaeological field work in the Western Desert is providing a rich picture of the cultures that lived there, the overall extent of the work to date, has not been sufficient to provide a clear, unbiased perspective on the history of settlement in the Western Desert. What follows are some aspects of this chronology based on positive archaeological evidence available to date, with future fieldwork likely updating this picture again. It was seen that the SMC preceded the other cultures with the first NVC artefacts appearing in Dakhla by the Early Dynastic period. Thereafter a presence is attested by the NVC of Dakhla for the rest of the period under consideration. Baharia might possibly have been occupied from the Old Kingdom, with the first definitive evidence deriving from the Middle Kingdom. Kharga was occupied from at least the New Kingdom by the NVC, and



likely earlier given the relative proximity to Dakhla and its earlier history of occupation. The earliest evidence for an NVC influenced culture in Siwa derives from the 26th Dynasty, with Bahrein and likely the other oases of the North Western minor oases following this chronology. Likely due to their relative proximity to the Nile Valley, the South Eastern minor oases saw Pharaonic activity at least from the Middle Kingdom. Refer Figure 7.



**Figure 7 Western Desert Chronology of Habitation**

### 10.1 Ethnic Groups

In order to understand the dynamics of society and culture manifest in the Western Desert it was first necessary to establish a baseline of the various groups that might have inhabited the region demarcated for this work. It was found that the relevant groups to consider as part of the Western Desert included NVC, Libyan groups,

SMC, users of the Clayton Rings (who might be associated with SMC), TktAnA, Nubian cultures, Medjay, Mediterranean cultures and possibly people from the South West Corner region of the Gilf Kebir and Gebel Uweinat.

The ultimate origin of the Libyan groups is still a matter of debate. The presence of elites in Dakhla is affirmed through the evidence of stelae; however no material evidence is available to support the presence of a foreign Libyan culture (this being restricted to date to the Mediterranean coast). The only group that could truly be referred to as Western Desert indigenes during the Pharaonic period is the SMC unit, with a long history of habitation from predecessor Masara and Bashendi units. There is evidence for interaction with NVC groups who were colonists in the Dakhla oasis as well as evidence of influence on each other's respective ceramic industries. The evidence for SMC settlement in the Dakhla region to date with temporary campsites and hunting camps would point to the SMC having nomadic characteristics, possibly engaged in pastoral nomadism. This adoption of pastoral nomadism (in contrast to the Bashendi culture) might have come about as a result of increasing desertification in the region and demonstrates adaptation strategies.

The prevalence of Clayton Rings in remote, arid regions around the Western Desert is indicative of groups of nomadic people who were able to travel to very remote quarters of the Western Desert. Their strong association with SMC would go further in identifying SMC with nomadic traits. From New Kingdom sources, we have evidence for a possibly indigenous group known as the TktAnA, these are yet to be related to an ethnic group through archaeology.

Evidence is found for C-Group activity in the southern regions of the Western Desert, with cultural material found as far north as Dakhla. It has been suggested that the "Libyan" group, the tmHw were possibly southern indigenes, which lived in the small oases in the south east section of the Western desert.

The availability of water and vegetation in some sections of Uweinat and the Gilf Kebir in the South-West corner region might have attracted and partially sustained small groups of people as they did until relatively recent times, although to date there is no firm archaeological evidence for indigenous inhabitants during the Pharaonic Period. There is evidence from the Nile Valley through Kharga and Dakhla for the originally Eastern Medjay, most likely artefacts left as part of their employ by the NVC administration as desert scouts. Mediterranean groups seem to

have settled in the far north, along the coast at least as early as the Ramesside period, with their influence extending south in later periods as in Siwa by the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

## **10.2 Social Aspects**

### **10.2.1 Governors and Administration in the Oases**

The review of the various Western Desert oases in the previous chapters has shown that the vestiges of state society practiced by the NVC in the Nile Valley were largely brought across to the oases and practised there. A closer examination of aspects such as the position of governors however indicates that some subtle differences did indeed exist.

In Dakhla, it was seen that during the earlier phase of settlement by the NVC, the administration found it necessary to surround parts of settlements with thick, apparently defensive walls as was seen in the earlier site of Ain el Gezareen and the earlier phase of Ain Asil. The key issue regarding these walls is whether they were built with the expectation of hostilities taking place in these areas, which is yet to be fully investigated. Massive mastabas in Qila ed-Dabba, palatial structures and administrative quarters at Ain Asil are further indicative of an NVC state-sponsored enterprise having been established in Dakhla. At the periphery of the centres, close to the main track networks entering and leaving the oasis, Hilltop sites were in use during at least Old Kingdom and Late Period times possibly to monitor NVC state-sponsored and provisioned groups as well as possibly the movements of indigenes and other ethnic groups. In Qasr Allam, Baharia, were found a complex of buildings dated to late Third Intermediate Period to Late Period, comprising storerooms and courtyards, the area likely serving a role in the local administration. The structures were for service, production, storage and habitation with the activities controlled by an administration (as evidenced by seals see below) and likely linked to a “Domain of Amun” in Bahariya. The Amun temple complex in Siwa included a temple and adjacent palace zone consisting of three small chambers linked via a common hall which might have served as sleeping quarters for the elites here.

Seals and seal impressions have been found in Dakhla in both Ain el Gezareen and Ain Asil attesting to the state ownership and state sponsored production.

Furthermore, in Ain Asil, numbers of silos and bakeries had been in operation that were storing and producing in excess of the needs of the local community, indicating external destinations for produce. Wine production was also conducted during New Kingdom times as evidenced through amphorae and labels for Ain Asil. In Qasr Allam, Baharia, numerous bread moulds and sealings indicate that this site was engaged in the administrative production and storage of goods and possibly existed to collect economic resources from the district. In addition, half fired ceramic fragments attested to the existence of a workshop installed on the site.

The governors residing in Dakhla had similar titulary to NVC provincial governors, with similar elements in their titles, with the exception of what has been variously interpreted as “admiral” or “commander in chief” at the start of the title possibly related to expeditions led through the desert or to commercial pursuits. These could also related to the initial process of colonisation of this part of Dakhla and possibly point to a local administration which might have been military in nature at the start. This final point would also be consistent with the initial establishment of the possible fortifications at Ain Asyl and Ain el Gezareen. The second part referred to “governor of the oasis”, with the third being “overseer of priests”. The second part has some consistency with earlier Nile Valley nomarchs titles such as “District Chief” and with respect to this last title, it should be noted that “chief priest” was already being borne by individuals who were also nomarchs in the Nile Valley. It is also noteworthy that there is little reference to the king – which has been interpreted as indicating minimum contact with the royal palace. Middle Kingdom governors in Dakhla bore titles such as “leader of nobility, mayor, chief of priests..”, as seen on blocks from Mut, largely conformant with the Nile Valley titles during the Middle Kingdom. Petroglyphic inscriptions referring to a Middle Kingdom governor with his son include royal iconography - further highlighting their power and relative autonomy and the close affinity with direct family in these elite roles.

In Baharia it was seen that governors were present in the Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom and Late Period. The Middle Kingdom governor’s title HAty – hbj - the governor Hebi, appears on natural rock, just as those from Dakhla, with the same short title, using only the primary role, HAty – Imny. The brevity of the title in both instances might be an abbreviation due to their execution on a natural rock

surface. The New Kingdom governor Amenhotep also bore a basic title of “governor of the northern oasis”. The Late Period governors of Baharia such as Zed- Khonsu-ef-ankh had titles such as “the prince, the governor of the Oasis” along with priestly offices as “Second Prophet of Amun”. It was seen how these governors also granted other official roles within their families and how successive governors were often related. This phenomenon of governors coming from the same line was also observed at Ain Asyl, Dakhla and shows that the local administration of the oases was based on family and heritage rather than on the objective choice of the central administration. The method and accruements of burial for the Late Period governors in Baharia are testimony to the relative power and influence of this oasian governor of the 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, while the quality of construction and relative sophistication of structures such as Ain Muftillah demonstrates that the governor had significant resources at his disposal. In Siwa and nearby minor oases such as Bahrein, the system of governor’s titles of the other oases gives way to titles such as “Chief of the Desert Dwellers” and “The Great Chief of the Desert”, with feathers signifying a foreign nature. While these individuals could no longer be considered governors acting within a framework as their other oasian or NVC counterparts (refer section 10.2.3.1 for a more detailed examination of this), these individuals place themselves at the same level as the NVC king on temple depictions and also refer to themselves as “The King of Upper and Lower Egypt”. This is a significant demonstration of the status of this local ruler, who depicts himself opposite the NV king offering to the deities and even proclaiming himself to be a king of the two lands. There seems to be a shift away from the concept of a local ruler who is associated with a specific oasis (for example for Baharia there was the “Governor of the Oasis”) to an individual who seems to have sovereignty over the “deserts”.

In Dakhla, evidence for public servants was seen in the use of scribes and tablets bearing the names of high ranking officials attached to the palace listing the son of the governor, chiefs of the escorts, priests, directors and foremen. The subsidiary burials of Mastaba I in Dakhla also revealed that some of the civil servants of the court were most likely relatives of the governor. Provincial titles such as “Inspector of the Oasis” emphasise the Egyptian character of the administrative organization of the oasis. In Baharia were mentioned a scribe of the

treasury Pendua, as well as “butler of the storerooms” and “the seal keeper worthy of confidence of the Double Treasury”.

A significant amount of trade occurred between the oases and the Nile Valley. Settlements in Dakhla from a very early stage (5<sup>th</sup> Dynasty at least) were in constant contact with the Nile Valley and received products and produce from it. Imports in Ain el Gezareen were seen to include Nile-sourced fish and shellfish as well as Nile Valley produced ceramics. Oasian produced amphorae were found across the Nile valley attesting possibly to the export of Southern Oasis wine there, Tell el Yahudiyyeh wares indicate trade relationships between Baharia and the Hyksos in the north.

### **10.2.2 Administration outside the Centres**

It was seen in Chapter 2 that some major routes such as the Abu Ballas trail were characterised by depots along the way, apparently to assist or provide storage for passers by. These sites incorporate archaeological evidence attesting to at least temporary occupation with ceramic evidence at times featuring potmarks. It was seen that the pots contained both water and food commodities. It was not clear whether these sites were set up for official state purposes or for regional commerce, and whether these sites were occupied as passers-by came or on a semi permanent basis by military or customs officials or private road station keepers. In any case, whether these were set up for state purposes by the NVC administration or used and were maintained by egalitarian groups, they are indicators of indicators of a regular usage system, cooperation and contact between groups.

It was seen that expeditions were organised to sites in the Western Desert by the NVC and possibly indigenes for commercial purposes such as to obtain stone or mineral resources. Other more regular commercial activity was carried out that supplied the Nile Valley with oasian produce or vice versa. The requirement to obtain stone and minerals required the NVC administrators to organise expeditions into inhospitable areas, requiring an understanding of logistics and supply for the provisioning and organisation of workers and transport of materials back. While much of the quarrying activity was restricted to the vicinity of the Nile Valley it was seen that there were some materials which were also obtained from the Western Desert – either from the oases themselves, primarily for local use or from remote areas of the desert. Examples of items obtained from the Western Desert

included cobalt alums for the colouring of glass. The site of Khufu 01/1 displayed evidence, both inscriptional and archaeological, for NVC expeditions that were conducted to come to this region to obtain certain substances. That these were state-organised expeditions that came here is indicated by the diversity of roles of the members such as the “leader of the stonemasons”, stonemasons and scouts, indicating that there was planning applied to the organisation of the actual workers, those who escorted and guided the group through the desert and those responsible for provisioning of the group. It is likely that the major centres in Dakhla also played a role in the organising and conduct of expeditions to the west (such as to Khufu 01/1) and south along the Abu Ballas trail (see Chapter 2) due to its proximity to these areas as being the closest administrative centre. In addition, it was seen in textual evidence from Ain Asil refers to provisioning of an official along the way as they made their way across the desert.

### **10.2.3 Nile Valley Influence and Control of the Western Desert**

A key consideration within the social aspects regarding the Western Desert is the relationship between centres in the Nile Valley and settlements in the oases of the Western Desert. It was seen in the previous chapters that all the oases considered in this work were culturally Egyptianised. This section will examine the degree of influence and control that might have been exercised by the NVC. In doing this, the variables of distance between centres, the types of cultures involved and the role of cult centres will be considered.

#### **10.2.3.1 Influence and Control over Distance**

It can be suggested that there existed a pattern of varying level of presence of the NVC in the Western Desert over time and space. This presence ranged from a remote cultural influence to outright colonisation of an area. In examining the relations of the NVC with the Western Desert over distance, the framework of centre (or core) and periphery shall be used, whereby the NVC is at the core - both in its own ideology, and from an external perspective, in its comparative level of development in relation to other cultures in the region.

It appears that the ability of the NVC to exercise hegemony from the Nile Valley over centres in the Western Desert might follow what Stein<sup>1</sup> refers to as the “Distance-Parity Model of Interregional Interaction”. The model holds that the ability of the core to exercise hegemonic power decreases with distance, leading to increasing parity or equality in economic and political relations with increasingly distant peripheries<sup>2</sup>. This model was convincingly applied to another riverine civilisation in an arid environmental context – Uruk Mesopotamia<sup>3</sup>. In addition, it has also been noted that relations between the NVC and Nubia were characterised by a level of autonomy which was exercised by local rulers in areas past the third cataract<sup>4</sup>. Imperial dynamics, as exercised by the NVC, were such that the degree of direct control imposed by Egypt corresponded directly with distance and difficulty of travel. The Middle and New Kingdoms exercised a strong policy of intervention in the areas closer, whereby in southern Upper Nubia they adopted a hegemonic approach that maximised economic gains with minimal intervention and investment<sup>5</sup>.

The primary factors that affect variability in the organisation of interregional exchange systems are the effects of distance on transport costs for both military force and trade goods<sup>6</sup>. As discussed earlier in this work, the Western Desert is an environment characterised by long distances, extreme climate, difficult passage and extreme lack of resources along the way – making transport a major consideration. In cases where there are greater distances, core-periphery interaction is expected to be limited in scale and influence such that the peripheral political economies won’t necessarily develop specialised dependency relations<sup>7</sup>, and might even develop a level of autonomy. It is noteworthy, however, that ideological power is less subject to the distance-decay function than the aforementioned military, economic and political influence due to its high value to weight ratio<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. J. Stein, *Rethinking World Systems*, (Arizona, 1999), p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> S. T. Smith, *Wretched Kush*, (London, 2003), p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> Stein, *Op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.



(this point is elaborated upon in section 10.2.3.3). This notion of distance leading to conditions of increasing parity between core and periphery will be applied to briefly explore one aspect of the relationship dynamics between the oases (as periphery) and the Nile Valley (as core). In considering the distance factor, the oases of Kharga, Dakhla and Baharia will be considered as a group, while Siwa and the north-western minor oases (discussed in Chapter 7) as another group, being at a far greater distance from the Nile Valley than the previous group.

It should be noted that the distance-parity model incorporates considerations of the exchange relationships between core and periphery to determine the level of parity of the periphery. In the case of the Dakhla, Kharga and Baharia group, it was seen that exchange networks were indeed in operation with the Nile Valley with oasian ceramic fabrics were found in the Nile Valley and, conversely, Nile Valley ceramics in the oases, attesting to exchange of produce generally between the regions. Moreover, it was seen that oasian wine was exported to the Nile Valley, with some specialised foodstuffs imported from there to the oases, such as to Dakhla. From the level of archaeological data available to date on this subject, however, it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions at this stage regarding symmetric exchange relationships, for example, of the aforementioned oases in comparison to the remoter Siwan group (where there is a paucity of material culture data to date on which to base any conclusions). This would be a productive area of research for the future. For the moment, the model will be used to assess the political relations between the Nile Valley and the two groups of oases established earlier.

It was seen that the governors of Dakhla and Baharia possibly exercised a relatively high level of autonomy in relation to similar roles, such as nomarchs, in the Nile Valley. In Late Period Baharia, for example, the governor Zed-Khonsu-ef-anekh was shown in a temple depiction on either side of the king, while his prolific public works and rich burial for himself and his family were testament to his great power in the region. In Dakhla, as seen in Chapter 3, the Old Kingdom governors had constructed massive mastabas and a substantial palace complex. They were able to establish their own Ka Chapels, supported by magazines, silos, bakeries and houses for personnel. It was also seen in Section 10.2.1 that the roles and titles of the governors of Dakhla and Baharia, while having their own variations in relation to the Nile Valley nomarchs, there were still many similarities in the titles and

likely a situation where the governors were a part of the overall administration of the Nile Valley. In addition, in both Baharia and Dakhla there was a tendency for the governors to appoint individuals in key positions from within their own families. This is consistent with Stein's criterion for increasing parity, where there is an elite class established with an increasing restriction of core influence to peripheral elites, rather than in the peripheral population as a whole<sup>9</sup>. Aspects that demonstrated resistance to changes (and therefore a level of autonomy) in the Nile Valley were seen in the way cult practice such as that of Seth persisted for longer periods, while the local administration of Dakhla at Ain Asyl seemed to persist despite upheavals in the Nile Valley from the Old Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period.

Moving past the Dakhla, Baharia and Kharga group, to the distant area of Siwa and the nearby minor oases, it seems the level of autonomy achieved by local elites is greater. As was seen in Section 10.2.1 the local Siwan chiefs were referred to with titles such as "Chief of the Desert Dwellers" and "The Great Chief of the Desert", placing themselves at the same level as the NVC king on temple depictions and referring to themselves as "The King of Upper and Lower Egypt". It was noted that Wenamun "The Great Chief of the Desert", had a father with the same title, again possibly indicating restriction of roles to an elite class and being consistent with the criterion above of progressive restriction of core influence to peripheral elites. The level of autonomy of the Siwan chiefs seems very high with no evidence of an NVC garrison in the area and therefore a greater restriction of the ability of the Nile Valley core to use its military, economic and political influence in the Siwa area than it could in the aforementioned oases.

In summary then, there seems to be a pattern of increasing autonomy in the political organisation of the oases which is observable between the closer group of Baharia and Dakhla (and possibly Kharga<sup>10</sup>) and the more distant group of Siwa and its nearby minor oases, whereby the level of autonomy seemed greatest in the Siwa area. This difference could be based on the distance from the Nile Valley to these areas and that a distance-parity pattern is observed here, whereby these

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Note that to date, there is little archaeological evidence available regarding the political organisation of Kharga, in terms of governors and the like.

centres become more independent, politically, with distance. Some level of relative autonomy could be observed in Dakhla and Baharia, however it would seem that these centres were politically still part of the Nile Valley administration. The question remains for the Siwan area of why there was an uptake of NVC cultural attributes if it had attained such a level of autonomy with its distance. This is discussed in the next section.

#### 10.2.3.2 Nile Valley Relationships with Other Cultural Groups

It has been noted that there were a number of occasions where contact was made by the NVC with foreign cultures resident in the Western Desert. Two of these will be reviewed to afford a better understanding of the dynamics of this contact: the relations between the NVC and SMC and cultures in the Siwa group.

It has been discussed in Chapter 8 that the SMC were most likely pastoral nomads, while the evidence thus far of their lack of substantive structural remains and no visible social differentiation in their burial practices, indicated an egalitarian, tribal type society. The chiefs of the district of Siwa were, by their own depiction, foreigners in relation to the NVC and were likely the heads of a distinct ethnic group resident here. It is also likely that these chiefs were heads of a society which was socially differentiated to a point that enabled individuals to attain the status as depicted on the temples. It should be noted that of the groups considered, only the first, the SMC, is supported by archaeological evidence, the other deriving from epigraphic evidence from temple complexes.

Doyle's notion of 'Empire'<sup>11</sup> will be used here whereby political control is exercised by one polity (the 'metropole') over another polity (the 'periphery') which results in control over who rules and what rulers can do<sup>12</sup>. It will be used to analyse the dynamics that might have existed between the NVC and the two aforementioned groups, whereby he refers to the relationship between a 'metropole' and a 'periphery', the latter being penetrated by transnational forces and actors. The metropole in this instance is characterised by central government, a sense of

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<sup>11</sup> M. W. Doyle, *Empires*, (New York, 1986), p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

community and substantial social differentiation<sup>13</sup>. The NVC clearly suits this category as an early state society during the period under consideration.

The SMC would correspond with Doyle's category of a tribal periphery which is typified by no central state, no social differentiation and strong communal loyalty<sup>14</sup>, the last characteristic currently difficult to demonstrate from the archaeological evidence. It was seen that following the establishment of NVC major settlements in Dakhla during the Old Kingdom, that there was a corresponding disappearance of the SMC from the archaeological record. This is consistent with Doyle's notion that a lack of social differentiation and central political direction makes it difficult for tribal societies to defend against imperial encroachment<sup>15</sup>. Whether this encroachment resulted in the annihilation of the SMC or their being subsumed into the community of the NVC incumbents is yet to be fully determined. What is clear, as was discussed previously, was that there was at least an initial period of cultural interaction resulting in influence on each others' material culture as evidenced by the ceramic remains.

In contrast to the SMC, the Siwan group likely demonstrated social differentiation which would place them in one of Doyle's categories of socially differentiated societies such as the 'patrimonial' in which case the leaders and their clientele became associated with the metropole in a relationship benefitting both the collaborators and the metropole itself<sup>16</sup>. The key question here is that of what the nature of the mutual benefit was.

It would be useful to review how the NVC exercised imperialist policies towards other foreign cultures to assist in understanding how it might have functioned in the Western Desert – Palestine and Nubia are used as points of comparison. It can be seen that with respect to the NVC, imperial outcomes do not always follow a simple pattern of dominance and subordination, but are determined through a combination of imperial goals, native agency and potential threats from

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

competing cores<sup>17</sup>. Palestine was governed by local vassal princes at the behest of the NVC authority with local elites emulating Egyptian culture thereby enhancing their status in the eyes of their own people as well as the NVC bureaucracy<sup>18</sup>. These vassals ruled on behalf of the pharaoh with NVC documentation referring to their presence within the administration under the title of 'chief'<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, more distant regions of Nubia, south of the third cataract (such as Tombos, Kawa and Gebel Barkal) had vassals to rule on behalf of the pharaoh and may have been allowed a degree of autonomy, with NVC material and culture adopted but in a selective and adaptive strategy enabling the Kerma elite to draw prestige from their NVC overlords<sup>20</sup>. This active manipulation by the periphery's elite to bring prestige upon themselves was also observed in more remote cultures such as the 'Ubaid, where elites were able to manipulate their own society through a supposed connection with the sacred, and their use of material culture associated with places of sacred significance to maintain a distance from the bulk of the population<sup>21</sup>. All of the Western Desert oases covered in this work have demonstrated strong NVC cultural elements and influence. This is not to be taken, however, as evidence for total subordination of that centre into the NVC sphere. An aspect of cultural interaction (apart from warfare and exchange) is that of cross-cultural emulation. This is a process of social-identity negotiation where one group attempts to raise or reinforce its own status by adopting the behavioural, material or ideological attributes of another group of equal or higher status<sup>22</sup>. In this way, local elites in one area emulate the elites of other, higher status polities as a way to redefine or reinforce their status relative to competitors of lower ranked groups in their own society. Archaeological evidence for cross-cultural emulation would consist of local imitations of the architecture, iconography and material culture associated with foreign elites as seen through public buildings, residences

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<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> C. R. Higginbotham, "Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine", in B. Halpern et. al. (eds.), *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, (Leiden, 2000), p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> C. Gosden, *Archaeology and Colonialism*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Stein, *Op. Cit.*, p.66.

and burials of local elites<sup>23</sup>. The temples of Siwa and the minor oasis of Bahrein discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 were seen to have followed NVC decorative schemes and cult depictions. The necropolis of Gebel el-Mawta, similarly demonstrated strong NVC themes.

Returning to the original question, then, it is possible that the elites of the Siwa group, individuals such as Seth-Irdis and Wenamun were able to establish a relationship of mutual benefit with the NVC and demonstrate an association with a powerful, sophisticated state (the NVC) to their own people, thereby elevating their status at home. The NVC, however, were able to maintain through the locals a cult centre manifest as the Amun Temple and others through a possible relationship between Siwa and Nile Valley cult centres, thereby ensuring an NVC cultic presence and maintenance of order in this remote outpost. The latter point is covered further in the next section.

#### 10.2.3.3 The Role of Organised Cult

It was noted in section 10.2.3 that ideological power was less subject to the distance-decay function than military, economic and political influence due to its high value to weight ratio.

It was seen in Chapter 9 that Western Desert cult centres maintained relationships with dominant cult centres in the Nile Valley. It was seen, for example, that the Hibis temple of Kharga, maintained a relationship with the Theban cult centre, while it was likely that a relationship between the Amun Temple in Siwa and the cult centres in Thebes and Memphis pursued a relationship, with a priest exchange system also being postulated.

In Baharia common prime deities demonstrated relations with Bubastis, Thebes, Heracleopolis and Hermopolis. Inscriptions from the temple complex at Mut el-Kharab, also indicated Theban links during Third Intermediate Period, which Kaper<sup>24</sup> saw as a continuing desire of the kings and High Priests of Amun to maintain stability in this region.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>24</sup> O. E. Kaper, "Epigraphic evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Libyan Period"

As a comparison, NVC imperial policy in Nubia was discussed earlier, here again another method of control was sought through means other than the secular. The NVC adopted, for example, a policy of transplanting the Amun cult to Gebel Barkal which was highly successful, as was Napata and its temple, which remained a key nucleus of political power for over a thousand years<sup>25</sup>. The imperialist relationship between the NVC and Nubia evolved from defensive fortresses in the Middle Kingdom to the New Kingdom, where the temple replaces the fortress as a symbol of authority<sup>26</sup>. In this way there occurred an ideological transformation, aided by the establishment of religious cults, resulting in Egyptianised elites taking their place in the ranks of colonial officials<sup>27</sup>.

The demonstration of links between the oases' temples and the Nile Valley cult centres over time indicates that the NVC temple administration wished to project its ideology to these remote places. Hence key relationships were established between temples in the oases and cult centres in the Nile valley. The establishment and maintenance of a cult centre to Amun in Siwa represents the furthest projection of this NVC influence, the power of the god and the keeping at bay of the forces of chaos and maintenance of order.

### 10.3 Symbol and Meaning

The aspect of symbol and meaning was explored with further definition provided by Geertz. Here the focus was to concentrate on the more abstract aspects associated with culture such as cult, traditions, ideology, as well as aspects where stylistic elements could be observed such as through ceramic styles.

#### 10.3.1 Cult Practice

Cult practice was an important aspect of culture where clear evidence was seen for adaptation and practice specific to the region. A distinct pantheon could be seen

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in: G.P.F. Broekman, R.J. Demarée and O.E. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in Egypt, Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st - 24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007*, (2009), p. 159.

<sup>25</sup> W. Y. Adams, "The First Colonial Empire: Egypt in Nubia, 3200-1200 B.C.", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 26, no. 1, (1984), p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

associated with the Western Desert, the deities themselves having either a geographic association with the west or with its symbolic attributes such as chaos. The maintenance of universal order was a key NVC concern and was manifest in ritual expression as well as in the ordering of the conceptualised landscape where the Western Desert represented chaos. This association led to the establishment of major cult centres dedicated to Western Desert deities such as to Seth in Dakhla, and also to more humble dedications through depictions of the gods in rock art, most likely as expressions of personal piety. This indicates that there was an acceptance by the desert inhabitants of the local gods who had exceptional powers in these districts, having associations even with the practical issues of desert survival, such as navigation and water resources. These deities therefore required specific veneration; however they were not the only group to receive this attention in the Western Desert. All the oases also maintained temples which had persistent links with specific Nile Valley based cult centres with veneration occurring of the conventional groups such the Theban Triad. These cult centre relations are testament to a desire by the NVC temple administration to project cult influence and control into the remoter regions for the maintenance of order in a chaotic realm.

### **10.3.2 Stylistic Elements**

One of the richest manifestations of material culture in the Western Desert is that of the ceramics which demonstrate the cultural influences of and between its inhabitants as well as the adaptative strategies for the environment. A local style was found in Dakhla where the resident oasians pursued their own pottery manufacture, producing distinctive styles similar to Nile Valley types, and fabrics such as what has been identified as B23, used for New Kingdom amphorae. Of the amphorae, two groups were discernible, those with a local oasian style as well as a style that copied Nile Valley forms. The “oasis keg” is a unique oasian type from the Late Period which was manufactured in the southern oases and is assumed to have been used for the transport of liquids and grain.

In Baharia also, local ceramics were produced based on NVC styles but such as spouted bowls from the 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, large storage pots from the same period while in the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty amphora were also produced. Other ceramic



products include anthropoid coffins. In addition to local wares, there was also the presence of imported vessels such as the Tell el Yahudiyyeh wares.

Kharga also revealed deposits of pharaonic ceramics ranging from the Middle to New Kingdoms. The majority of the wares were made of local oasis-made fabrics, with 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty forms dominating. Other local wares in the form of amphorae were uncovered on the road to Kharga at the major reprovisioning station of Tundaba.

The significant quantity of NVC-produced rock art in Dakhla is testament to the fact that a significant portion of the local population, or visitors enroute to Dakhla, were engaged in cultural expression using the most immediate available means when in remote areas. This ranged from personal inscriptions or graffiti executed by individuals to more official inscriptions of governors and high officials. This rock art was often executed as a part of groups engaged in the conduct of expeditions and occupation of Hilltop sites.

As observed in other oasian outposts some examples of the execution and style of decorative elements in tombs and official structures in Dakhla is seen to be of a lesser quality than that of similar work in the Nile Valley as an example, - the decoration of Mastaba III in Qila ed-Dabba was described as “naïve” and representative of the quality of “provincial work”. This might indicate the work of local artisans. A similar observation was made about the decoration of the Qaret Hilwah tomb in Baharia.

## **10.4 Adaptation Strategies**

As a part of the investigation of the cultural attributes visible amongst the communities inhabiting the Western Desert, the attribute of adaptation, arising out of Rapoport's definition, was also covered. The strategies described were in use by at least the NVC, SMC, Clayton Ring nomadic groups and possibly others such as the C-Group. The following adaptation and survival strategies were noted and were mentioned in context in the preceding chapters.

Different types of shelter have been identified in association with desert occupation sites as categorised in Chapter 2. Types included what was classified as Major Reprovisioning Stations, Hilltop Sites, Trail Depots and Temporary Rest Spots. These were often located on or near conspicuous rock formations - such as

yardangs or inselbergs, providing shade and stone for dry stone structures whilst also acting as conspicuous markers as a part of trail waypoints. Associated structures included possibly open shelters and enclosed shelters, constructed from readily available materials. Windbreaks usually faced the strongest prevailing winds, which in the Western Desert, are generally from the north. They were usually found on exposed surfaces such as at the tops of yardangs or inselbergs as was seen on Hilltop sights. These likely acted to limit wind exposure whilst lying or sleeping behind the small wall. A similar structure was observed by Bermann, in use by the Tibu of the Gilf Kebir to shield them from wind whilst asleep<sup>28</sup>.

It was seen that the NVC were able to harness their great capacity for organisation and planning for specific and far reaching expeditions and desert crossings. This included the assignment of specific roles to expedition members with a requirement to sustain groups of up to two to four hundred men in a hostile environment. As part of the overall planning it was necessary to understand the intended routes to be used as a part of traversal (see below) and the ability to navigate whilst traversing. It is likely as a part of this that scouts were drawn from local communities and, in earlier periods, possibly indigenes such as the SMC. In Chapters 2 and 3 it was seen that petroglyphs were frequently found in association with habitation sites (such as Hilltop sites, Trail Depots and Temporary Rest Spots, discussed earlier) and also along roads such as the Darb el Ghubari. Whilst some types were likely from Prehistoric, possibly indigenous people, some motifs reflect NVC traditions, particularly depictions of men with kilts, NVC deities, boats and possibly bovids.

As discussed in Section 10.3.1, cult practice was characterised in the Western Desert by a number of factors, one of these being the special focus on the deities having a symbolic association with this region within the NVC pantheon. This was shown to be the case as demonstrated at the level of the administration and elite class through specific cult complexes and even with a connection in governor's names. This is seen to be a form of adaptation wherein the NVC inhabitants of the Western Desert (as well as those in the Nile Valley) saw veneration of the gods of the realm as appropriate and necessary, if not a further means of survival. This was occurring at the official level, however it likely also

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<sup>28</sup> R. A. Bermann, *Zarzura: Die Oase der kleinen Vögel*, (Munich, 2003), p. 114.

occurred at the individual level as evidenced through seemingly unofficial rock depictions of gods such as Seth. It is likely that this was a form of personal piety being practiced by individuals traversing the desert.

Mobility was an important adaptation strategy utilised by some of the cultures under study, notably the SMC. The primary aspects of mobility are environment and distance, with mobile people generally occupying terrain not suited to fixed-place agriculture, usually due to lack of precipitation and seasonal temperature extremes<sup>29</sup>. It was seen that the SMC likely deployed such strategies as evidenced by their far-ranging material remains, desert hunting camps and temporary nature of their settlements as seen in Dakhla. The layout and courses of the various roads and routes traversing the Western Desert reflect adaptive strategies particular to arid environments. It was found in Chapter 2 that, overall, the course of a route was influenced by three factors of: directness of the route from one point to the next, the existence of water sources along the way and the topography of the route. It was seen in Chapter 2 that navigational aids were used to mark the direction of routes in the desert. One technique was by choosing way stations/replenishment points characterised with large, significant natural rock features, such as inselbergs (Abu Ballas being a case in point), which were visible from a distance and easily recognisable. In addition, “*alamat*” were discussed in Chapter 2, being human-made stone structures placed atop hills and high places to indicate a direction of travel. It is likely that celestial techniques and travel by night were also employed.

Evidence from the desert regions indicated that donkeys were likely used as beasts of burden, as seen through tracks, fodder remains and pot baskets. These animals were used to carry water and provisions, however imposed range limitations between water sources, compared to the camels used in post pharaonic times. In addition, animals for food were taken along such as goats from the evidence of animal pens and dung from rest spots in the desert.

The use of various types of containers and vessels was discussed which were deployed by Western Desert communities. These enabled the carriage of

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<sup>29</sup> F. Hole, “Pastoral Mobility as an Adaptation”, in J. Szuchman (ed.), *Nomad, tribes, and the State in the Ancient Near East Cross Disciplinary Perspectives*, (Chicago, 2009), p. 262.

consumables either for trade or for the provision of those performing desert crossings. Amongst the specialist vessels designed to be used for desert crossings are the amphora and oasis flask. Amphorae were of such importance to the oasian inhabitants that locally made variants were produced. This is consistent with their disposition, requiring high capacity, robust vessels to enable the provision of those carrying out desert crossings as well as carry goods for long distances for the purposes of trade. Their finds in Western Desert contexts as well as the finds of oasian produced amphorae all along the major centres of the Nile Valley are testament to their widespread use in trade.

In addition to usage of natural water sources available through springs, oases and water soaks, the NVC were able to create in some instances water sources, depending on other environmental factors. Previously it was seen that a simple storage mechanism via the use of large ceramic containers could be used, as seen at Abu Ballas. In sites such as Tundaba a cistern was built to capture water run off from the surrounding depression - a system set up to capture opportunistic rainfall. In later periods, qanats could be constructed to tap into subterranean water enabling delivery of large quantities of water to the surface without the need for pumping. The qanats, as well as springs and wells around the oases were also subject to regulation and a system of ownership.

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