

This pdf of your paper in *Oasis Papers 6* belongs to the publishers Oxbow Books and it is their copyright.

As author you are licenced to make up to 50 offprints from it, but beyond that you may not publish it on the World Wide Web until three years from publication (February 2016), unless the site is a limited access intranet (password protected). If you have queries about this please contact the editorial department at Oxbow Books (editorial@oxbowbooks.com).

An Offprint of

Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 15

THE OASIS PAPERS 6

Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference
of the Dakhleh Oasis Project

Dakhleh Oasis Project: Monograph 15

THE OASIS PAPERS 6

Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference
of the Dakhleh Oasis Project

Edited by

Roger S. Bagnall, Paola Davoli and Colin A. Hope

Production Editor

Bruce E. Parr

Contributing Authors:

Nicola Aravecchia, Giuseppina Azzarello, Roger S. Bagnall, Barbara E. Barich, Maher Bashendi, Gillian E. Bowen, Jean-Paul Bravard, Charles S. Churcher, Magali Coudert, Mattia Crespi, Raffaella Cribiore, Paola Davoli, Delphine Dixneuf, Françoise Dunand, Ulisse Fabiani, Romain Garcier, Iain Gardner, Maria C. Gatto, James C. R. Gill, Włodzimierz Godlewski, Stéphanie Guédon, Jean-Louis Heim, Colin A. Hope, Maxine R. Kleindienst, Bahgat A. Ibrahim, Salima Ikram, Olaf E. Kaper, David Klotz, Paul Kucera, Rudolph Kuper, Fleur Letellier-Willemin, Roger Lichtenberg, Rosanne Livingstone, Giulio Lucarini, Anthony J. Mills, Ashraf Mostapha, Giuseppina Mutri, Amy J. Pettman, Fabian Reiter, Heiko Riemer, Corinna Rossi, Constance S. Silver, Gaëlle Tallet, Ursula Thanheiser, Günter Vittmann, Nicholas Warner, Helen Whitehouse, Marcia F. Wiseman, Sayed Yamani and Daniela Zampetti

ISBN 978-1-84217-524 8



© Oxbow Books
www.oxbowbooks.com

Editors' Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project held in Lecce in 2009 plus one paper that was to have appeared in the proceedings of the previous conference held in Cairo, which is still being prepared for publication. The organization was principally undertaken by Paola Davoli with some assistance from Roger Bagnall and Colin Hope; in this respect we would like to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Mario Capasso, Director of the Centro di Studi Papirologici of the University of Salento. The conference was hosted by the University of Salento at Lecce, which was pleased to undertake this task coinciding as it did almost with the 30th anniversary of the first major field season of the Dakhleh Oasis Project in 1978. The normal geographical range of papers accepted for presentation at the conference, the entire Western Desert of Egypt, was extended on this occasion to include also the Fayyum in light of the University of Salento's activity there since 1993, first at Bakchias and then Soknopaiou Nesos.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Provost of the University of Salento, Professor Domenico Laforgia, who was an enthusiastic supporter of this event from the outset and whose good offices persuaded Monte dei Paschi di Siena generously to sponsor the conference. Monte dei Paschi di Siena is one of the most important Italian banks, founded in 1472; it is considered the oldest bank in the world. Through their respective institutions, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World of New York University, and the Centre for Archaeology and Ancient History of Monash University, Melbourne, also contributed significantly to the financial effort. Of the latter institution, our gratitude is extended to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ed Byrne, and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Rae Frances, for their support.

The excellent work of the undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Salento, who volunteered to undertake a variety of tasks throughout the conference, is gratefully acknowledged. For assistance in the preliminary stages of formatting the volume we would like to thank Nate Nagy, while the final result is due to the careful and professional work of Bruce Parr.

On a technical note, the volume includes a programme of the papers presented at Lecce, not all of which are published in this volume; those presented here have been grouped into broad chronological periods. As a wide variety of spellings has been used by the contributing authors for place names in the Western Desert, not only resulting from local linguistic differences, but also conventions employed in the languages of the contributing scholars, and the use of writings that have become accepted both over time and through regularity of use within one language, it was thought necessary to introduce some degree of standardisation. This has been done with the advice of Professor Fred Leemhuis, Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Groningen, and Director of the Qasr Dakhleh Project. Thus, where authors prefer to use a particular conventional spelling that varies notably from what Arabists might use as a formal transcription of Standard Arabic, then the latter is provided in parentheses when the popular spelling is first used. In some cases the formal transcription has been adopted throughout when variations in spelling have resulted from an incorrect rendering of the Arabic, or when authors have agreed to the formal transcription.

Roger S. Bagnall
New York University

Paola Davoli
University of Salento

Colin A. Hope
Monash University

Contents

Editors' Preface.....	v
Conference Programme	xi

General

Major Archaeological Sites in Kharga Oasis and Some Recent Discoveries by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (Bahgat A. Ibrahim)	1
Wanderers in the Desert: The North Kharga Oasis Survey's Exploration of the Darb 'Ain Amur (Salima Ikram)	9
Demotische und kursivhieratische Ostraka aus Mut al-Kharab (Günter Vittmann)	19
Cultural Heritage Management of the Archaeological Resources of the Deserts of Egypt (Sayed Yamani)	33

Prehistory

The Culture of the Oases: Late Neolithic Herders in Farafra, A Matter of Identity (Barbara E. Barich).....	39
Geomatics Resources for Archaeological Survey in Desert Areas – Some Prospects from Farafra Oasis, Egypt (Barbara E. Barich, Mattia Crespi, Ulisse Fabiani and Giulio Lucarini).....	49
Beyond the Shale: Pottery and Cultures in the Prehistory of the Egyptian Western Desert (Maria C. Gatto)	61
The Gebel Souhan Problem: Local Innovation in the Middle Stone Age? (Maxine R. Kleindienst and Marcia F. Wiseman)	73
Early Craftsmen of the Desert. Traces of Predynastic Lithic Technology at Farafra during the Mid-Holocene (Giulio Lucarini).....	87
Levallois Lithics on a Middle Stone Age Playa: Finds at Bir el-Obeiyid, Northern Farafra Depression, Egypt (Giuseppina Mutri).....	99

Wadi Sura and the Gilf Kebir National Park: Challenge and chance for archaeology and conservation in Egypt's south-west (Heiko Riemer and Rudolph Kuper)	107
The Khargan Industry Revisited (Marcia F. Wiseman).....	119
Technique and Content in the Rock Art of the Libyan Fezzan: some Saharan Stereotypes (Daniela Zampetti).....	129
 Pharaonic	
Egyptian Connections with Dakhleh Oasis in the Early Dynastic Period to Dynasty IV: new data from Mut al-Kharab (Colin A. Hope and Amy J. Pettman)	147
Epigraphic Evidence from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Late Period (Olaf E. Kaper)	167
An Old Kingdom Trading Post at 'Ain el-Gazzareen, Dakhleh Oasis (Anthony J. Mills)	177
The Date of the Occupation of 'Ain el-Gazzareen based on Ceramic Evidence (Amy J. Pettman).....	181
Provisions for the Journey: Food Production in the 'bakery' area of 'Ain el-Gazzareen, Dakhleh Oasis (Amy J. Pettman, Ursula Thanheiser and Charles S. Churcher)	209
 Ptolemaic	
Ptolemaic Period Pottery from Mut al-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis (James C. R. Gill).....	231
 Roman	
An Agricultural Account from the Gemellos Archive (Giuseppina Azzarello)	243
Cemeteries in Dakhleh (Maher Bashendi).....	249
Amheida 2007–2009: New Results from the Excavations (Paola Davoli)	263
Les Nécropoles d'el-Deir (Oasis de Kharga) (Françoise Dunand, Jean-Louis Heim and Roger Lichtenberg)	279
Yale University Nadura Temple Project: 2009 Season (David Klotz)	297
al-Qasr: the Roman <i>Castrum</i> of Dakhleh Oasis (Paul Kucera).....	305
Five Roman-Period Tunics from Kellis (Rosanne Livingstone)	317
A Remark on the Poll Tax Rate in Kysis (Fabian Reiter)	327
Controlling the Borders of the Empire: the distribution of Late-Roman 'forts' in the Kharga Oasis (Corinna Rossi)	331
Painted Surfaces on Mud Plaster and Three-Dimensional Mud Elements: The Status of Conservation Treatments and Recommendations for Continuing Research (Constance S. Silver).....	337

The Survey Project at el-Deir, Kharga Oasis: First Results, New Hypotheses (<i>Gaëlle Tallet, Jean-Paul Bravard, Romain Garcier, Stéphanie Guédon and Ashraf Mostapha</i>)	349
Amheida: Architectural Conservation and Site Development, 2004–2009 (Nicholas Warner)	363
Vine and Acanthus: decorative themes in the wall-paintings of Kellis (Helen Whitehouse).....	381
 Christian	
The Church Complex of ‘Ain el-Gedida, Dakhleh Oasis (Nicola Aravecchia).....	391
Christianity on Thoth’s Hill (Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore)	409
Coins as Tools for Dating the Foundation of the Large East Church at Kellis: problems and a possible solution (Gillian E. Bowen)	417
The Church of Dayr Abu Matta and its Associated Structures: an overview of four seasons of excavation (Gillian E. Bowen).....	429
The Christian Necropolis of el-Deir in the North of Kharga Oasis (Magali Coudert)	451
Ceramics from ‘Ain el-Gedida, Dakhleh Oasis: preliminary results (Delphine Dixneuf)	459
Coptic Ostraka from Qasr al-Dakhleh (Iain Gardner).....	471
Naqlun: the Earliest Hermitages (Włodzimierz Godlewski).....	475
Contribution of Textiles as Archaeological Artefacts to the Study of the Christian Cemetery of el-Deir (Fleur Letellier-Willemin)	491

Conference Programme

THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE DAKHLEH OASIS PROJECT

New Perspectives on the Western Desert of Egypt

20–24 September 2009
Università del Salento, Lecce

Sunday, 20 September 2009

Opening Ceremony

Dr Paolo Perrone, Mayor of Lecce
Professor Domenico Laforgia, Provost, Università del Salento
Professor Anthony J. Mills, Dakhleh Oasis Project
Associate Professor Colin A. Hope, Monash University
Professor Paola Davoli, Università del Salento
Professor Mario Capasso, Università del Salento

Monday, 21 September 2009

Surveys and Environmental Topics Chairperson: Anthony J. Mills

Sayed Yamani: *Cultural Heritage Management of the Archaeological Resources of the Eastern Sahara.*
Michel Wuttmann: *La prospection de l'oasis de Kharga.*
Salima Ikram: *Exploration of the Darb 'Ain Amur.*
Barbara E. Barich, Mattia Crespi, Ulisse Fabiani and Giulio Lucarini: *Geomatics Resources for Archaeological Survey in Desert Areas – Some Prospects from Farafra Oasis.*
Rudolph Kuper and Heiko Riemer: *The Gilf Kebir National Park: Challenge and Chance for Archaeology.*
Gaëlle Tallet: *The Survey Project at el-Deir, Kharga Oasis: First Results, New Hypotheses.*
Ursula Thanheiser: *Times of Change: Subsistence Strategies in the Early and Middle Holocene in Dakhleh Oasis.*

The Oases in Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Periods Chairperson: Olaf E. Kaper

Anthony J. Mills: *Recent Fieldwork at 'Ain el-Gazzareen.*
Amy J. Pettman: *The Date of 'Ain el-Gazzareen as determined by an Examination of the Ceramic Material.*
Ellen Morris: *Activities at Amheida from Prehistory until the First Intermediate Period.*
Maher Bashendi: *The Necropoleis of the Dakhleh Oasis.*
Laure Pantalacci: *Animals and Meat Consumption in Ancient Balat at the end of the Old Kingdom.*
Colin A. Hope: *Recent Excavations at Mut al-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis.*
James C. R. Gill: *A Study of Ptolemaic Period Ceramics from Mut al-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Tuesday, 22 September 2009

Prehistory Chairperson: Colin A. Hope

Mary M. A. McDonald: *Dakhleh and Kharga Oases in Late Prehistory.*

Barbara E. Barich: *The Culture of the Oases: Late Neolithic Herders in Farafra – a Matter of Identity.*

Giulio Lucarini: *Early Craftsmen of the Desert. Clues of Predynastic Lithic Technology in the Late Neolithic of Farafra.*

Giuseppina Mutri: *Stratigraphic Evidence for MSA Finds at Sheikh el Obeiyid, Northern Farafra Depression.*

Maria C. Gatto: *Beyond the Shale: Pottery and Cultures in the Prehistory of the Egyptian Western Desert.*

Marcia F. Wiseman: *The Khargan Industry Revisited.*

Maxine R. Kleindienst: *Results of Survey for Pleistocene Cultural Evidence from Dakhleh Oasis, 1978–1979 to 2008–2009 Field Seasons: Summary of Evidence and New Geoarchaeological Interpretations.*

Rock Art Chairperson: Mary M. A. McDonald

Andras Zboray: *Rock Art at Jebel Uweinat.*

Daniel James: *Stepping from Winkler's Shadow: an Analysis of Rock-Art Classification at Dakhleh Oasis.*

Daniela Zampetti: *Iconography and Techniques in the Rock Art of the Tadrart Acacus and Messak Settafet (Libyan Sahara).*

Recent Research in the Kharga Oasis Chairperson: Salima Ikram

Bahgat Ahmed Ibrahim: *Archaeological Sites in the Kharga Oasis.*

Françoise Dunand, Jean-Louis Heim and Roger Lichtenberg: *Les Nécropoles d'el-Deir (Oasis de Kharga).*

Deborah Darnell: *Pottery of Ghueita (MK-2IP-NK).*

John C. Darnell: *Cedar of the West, Products of Bahriyya, and Divine Offerings for Thebes: The Trade Relations of Gebel Ghueita in Kharga Oasis.*

Papyrology and Archaeology in el-Fayyum Chairperson: Paola Davoli

Mario Capasso: *La cultura letteraria greca nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana.*

Natascia Pellé: *Tra scuola e filologia: la ricezione delle Historiae tucididee nel Fayyum.*

Włodzimierz Godlewski: *The Earliest Hermitages in the Fayyum.*

Fabian Reiter: *New Ostraca from Tebtynis.*

Giuseppina Azzarello: *New Texts from the Archive of Epagathos.*

Ashraf Senussi: *Making Pottery in Fayyum: an Ethnoarchaeological Study.*

Wednesday, 23 September 2009

Egyptian Temples and Religion Chairperson: John C. Darnell

Olaf E. Kaper: *The Reconstruction of the Temple of Thoth at Amheida.*

David Klotz: *Yale University Nadura Temple Project, 2009 Season.*

Adam Zielinski: *Archaeological Exploration and Conservation Measures at 'Ain Birbiyeh Site, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Textual Finds Chairperson: Fred Leemhuis

Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore: *Christianity on Thoth's Hill at Amheida.*

Iain Gardner: *The Coptic Ostraca from Qasr al-Dakhleh (2007–2009).*

Günter Vittmann: *New Texts in Demotic and Abnormal Hieratic from Mut al-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Christianity and Christian Sites in the Oases Chairperson: Roger S. Bagnall

Nicola Aravecchia: *The Church Complex of 'Ain el-Gedida, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Delphine Dixneuf: *'Ain el-Gedida (Oasis de Dakhleh). La céramique du IV^e siècle.*

Gillian E. Bowen: *The Church of Dayr Abu Matta and its Associated Structures: a Preliminary Report.*

Magali Coudert and Fleur Letellier-Willemin: *The Christian Necropolis of el-Deir in the North of Kharga Oasis.*

Thursday, 24 September 2009

Roman Presence and Late Antique Sites Chairperson: Françoise Dunand

Paola Davoli: *Amheida 2007–2009. New Results from the Excavations.*

Paul Kucera: *al-Qasr: the Roman castrum of Dakhleh Oasis.*

Rosanne Livingstone: *The Textiles from Kellis.*

Tosha L. Dupras and Sandra M. Wheeler: *Children and Childhood in Kellis: a Bioarchaeological Approach.*

Helen Whitehouse: *Vine and Acanthus: Decorative Themes in the Dakhleh Oasis and Beyond.*

Evelyne Ferron: *Roman Adaptation to the Environmental Particularities of the Integrated Regions to its Empire: the Example of the Oases of Kharga and Dakhleh.*

Corinna Rossi: *The Distribution of Late-Roman 'Forts' in Northern Kharga Oasis.*

Islamic Period Chairperson: Włodzimierz Godlewski

Ahmed Salem: *S. C. A. Excavations at al-Qasr.*

Fred Leemhuis: *Letters from al-Qasr. Glimpses into the Life of the Qurashi Family in the 19th and the Early 20th Century.*

Anetta Lyzwa-Piber: *Progress in the Study of the Pottery from al-Qasr.*

Conservation and Technologies Chairperson: Michel Wuttmann

Constance S. Silver: *Mural Painting and Plaster Conservation in the Dakhleh Oasis: a Summary of Conservation Problems and the Status of Conservation Treatments.*

Nicholas Warner: *Amheida: Architectural Conservation and Presentation Works 2006–2009.*

Bruno Bazzani: *A New Database for Recording Excavation Data.*

Posters

Mauro Cremaschi, Simone Occhi and Chiara Pizzi: *The Graeco-Roman Palaeo-Oasis of Dime: Origin, Apogee and Decline.*

Rudolph Kuper, F. Förster and Heiko Riemer: *From Dakhleh down to Yam? New Light on Abu Ballas Trail.*

Conni Lord: *A Histological Investigation of Two Individuals from the Kellis Cemetery.*

Roger Montgomerie: *A Histological Examination of Preserved Lung Tissues from Dakhleh Oasis Mummies.*

Fabrizio Pavia and Silvia Maggioni: *Topographical and Tri-Dimensional Modeling of Amheida, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Maria E. Peroschi: *Wadi Abd el-Malik: Highlights from our Explorations.*

Anna-Katharina Rieger, Thomas Vetter and H. Möller: *Man and Landscape in Ancient Marmarica (Northern Libyan Desert).*

Malgorzata Winiarska-Kabacinska: *Function of Chipped Stone Tools from Old Kingdom Site at 'Ain el-Gazzareen, Dakhleh Oasis.*

Christianity on Thoth's Hill

Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore

The Roman city of Amheida (Amhida) stood on a terrace wrapped around a hill (Figure 1). On this hill once stood the Temple of Thoth (Area 4.1), which we can trace back to 800 BCE with certainty, to the New Kingdom with probability, and perhaps even earlier. We must confess that as scholars interested in late antiquity we had great hopes for this temple when we began to excavate it in 2005. We thought that carefully excavated it might tell us about just when it ceased to be a working temple and what, if anything, happened to it after that. Everyone interested in late antiquity would like a few well-stratified and well-documented examples of such temples, because few Egyptian temples have had the kind of histories that would give us solid information on these questions. Their ancient fates and the character of their modern excavation, particularly when they were excavated a century or more ago, typically conspire to deprive us of information of this kind. It was not so long ago that late antique remains in and on Egyptian temples were considered encumbrances to be removed without ceremony and, often, without record.

Our hopes to see the full life cycle of the temple were not to be realized. We were not really surprised to find that the temple site was disturbed, because blocks, and even an entire doorway, from the temple, now built into houses in al-Qasr, had long suggested that stone-robbing must have been extensive. Paola Davoli had also observed, before we started work on the hill, many evident pits clearly visible on the satellite imagery of the site, indicating that there had been digging; and indeed many pits large and small have been found. Actually, pits might well be said to be the most noteworthy feature of the area, with many dozens excavated so far. They have different shapes and measures; sometimes they are round or elongated. In the deepest one, a rough staircase was organized by the *sebbakhin* to reach its bottom.

In fact, no *in situ* remains of the temple itself were found, only partly because the area has been severely disturbed by this later human activity, both stone-robbing and *sebbakh*-extraction. These have also been abetted by a fierce north wind that has removed something like a metre and a half of deposit, including the entirety of the foundations of the temple. Our excavations have, however, now uncovered hundreds of decorated or inscribed temple blocks, when fragments are included. They come mostly from temple decoration under Titus and Domitian, but reused blocks of the Saite and Persian periods have been found, and a few stones from even earlier eras. Paola Davoli and Olaf Kaper have described many of these finds (Davoli and Kaper 2006).¹ Although not one stone of the temple was left upon another, those that were not carried away were left in the pits that we have mentioned. In the unstratified mess that remained, we have found a few traces of interest, which show that Christianity was not absent from the hill in the fourth century. It is these that form our subject here.

Although we cannot yet claim with any confidence to have found a church at Amheida, there is adequate evidence for Christianity there, including the titles of members of the clergy and a number of Christian personal names. Priests, *presbyteroi*, occur in two ostraka, and deacons in five.² Christian names include Martyrios, Makarios, Paulos, Timotheos, Psenpnouthes, and also no doubt Moses, Ephrem, Jonas, and Joseph. Most of these are not common, however, and the direct evidence for Christianity from the ostraka would best be described as modest rather than abundant.

One striking find is an ostrakon (inv. 13253) found in the temple area in 2008, with a list of names including Jacob and Abraham, and headed with ὁ πατήρ, 'the father' (or 'our father'). The other names, however, are not distinctively Christian, and if this was an account,

¹ There are further discoveries not yet published.

² Deacons: *O.Trim.* I 26.10; 76.4; 269.3; 272.1; 383.2 (?); presbyteroi: *O.Trim.* I 27.5; 44 conv. 1.

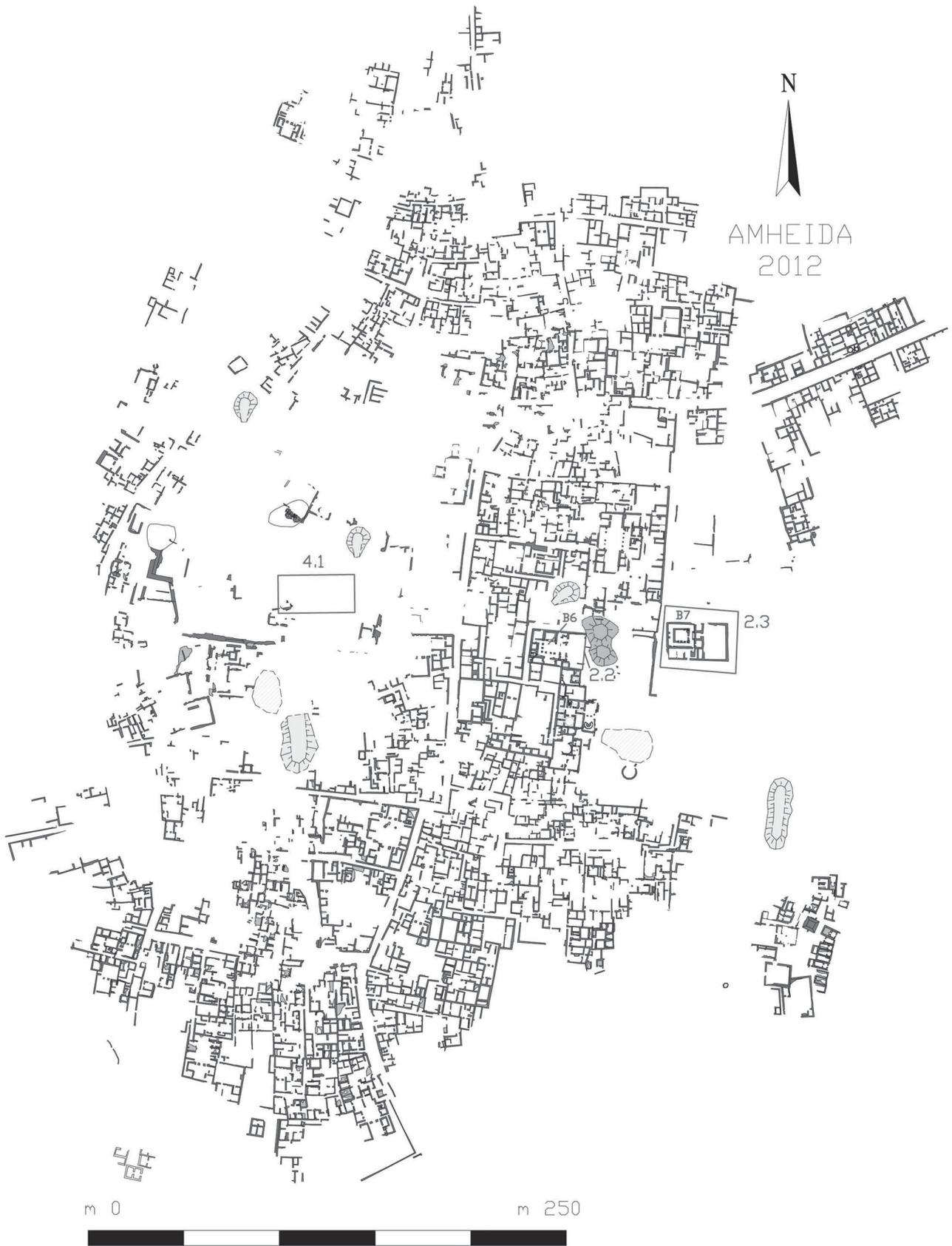


Figure 1 Topographic visualization of Roman Trimithis.



Plate 1 Graffito of Horigenes, Amheida inv. 3271.



Plate 2 Graffito from temple area at Amheida, inv. 3053.

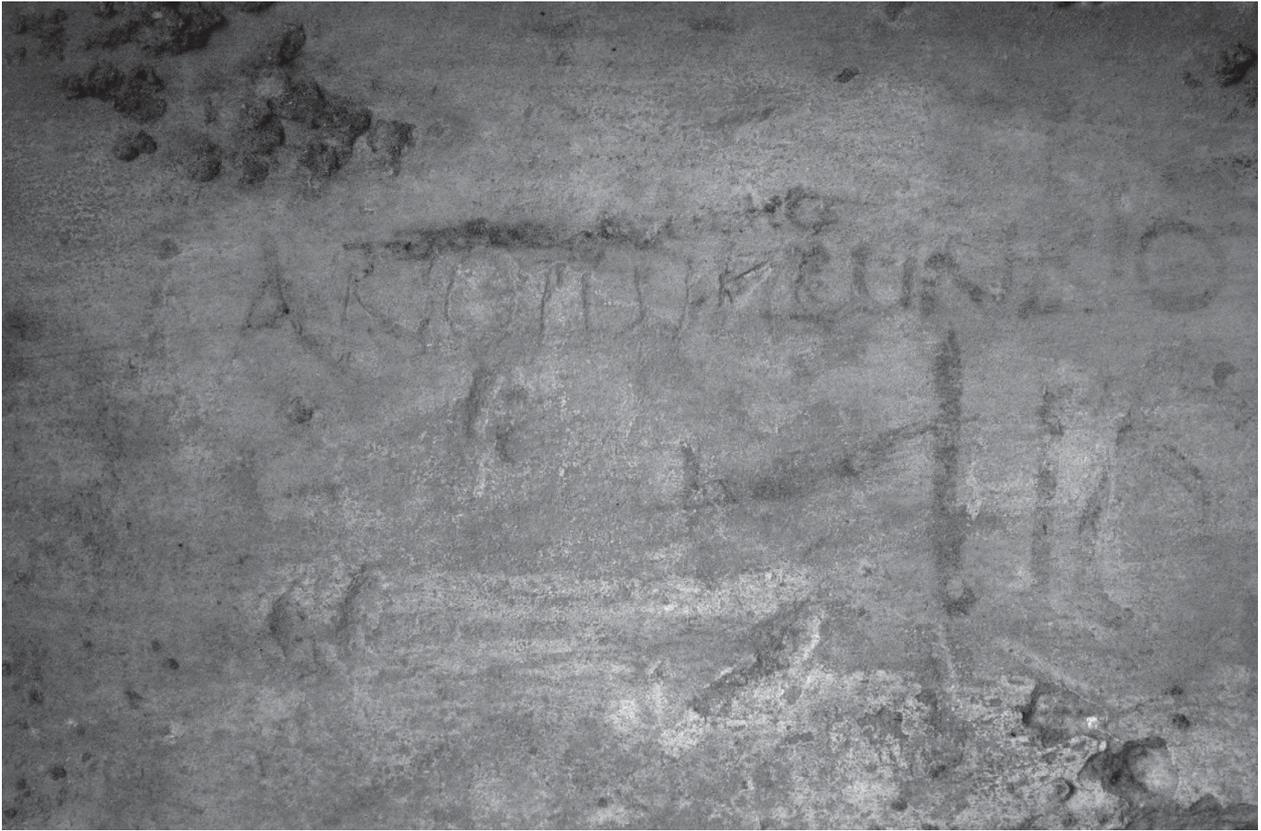


Plate 3 Graffito from temple area at Amheida, inv. 3053, infrared photo, left.

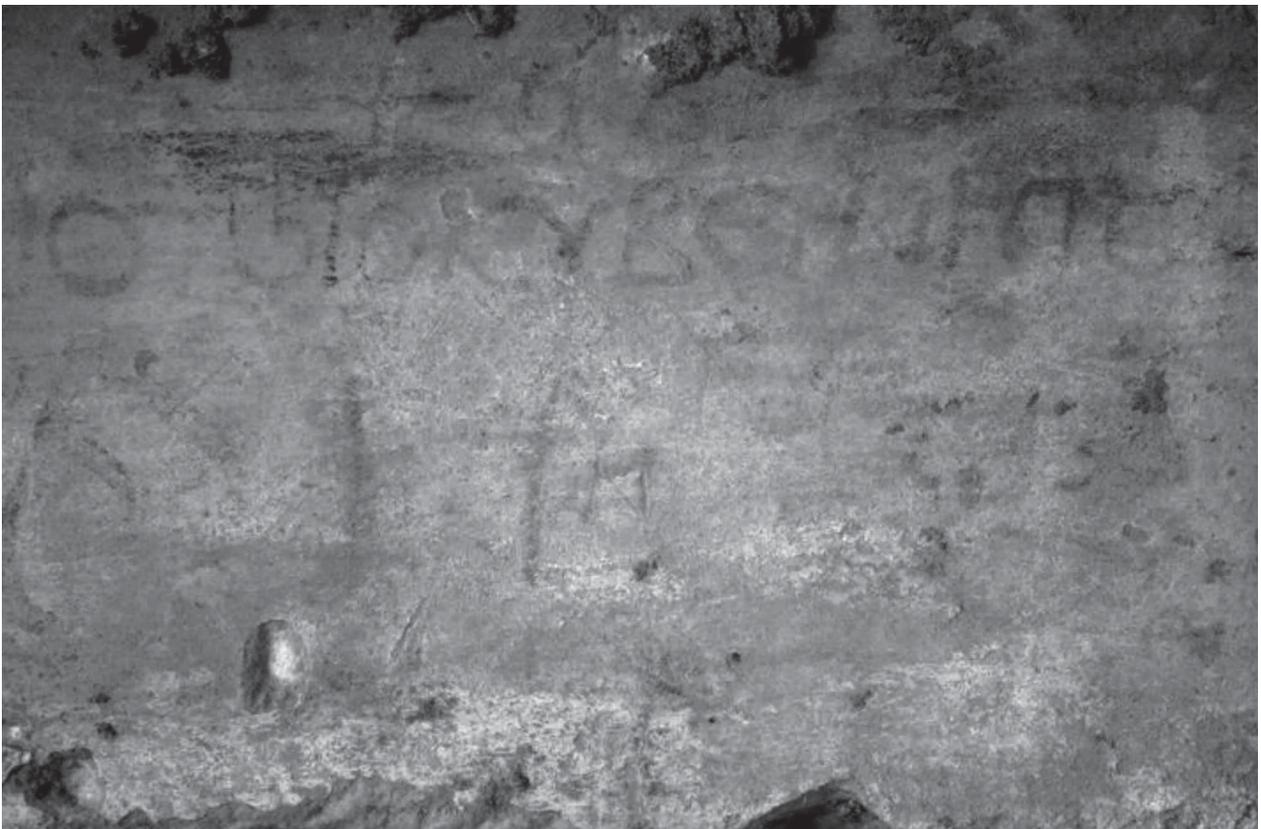


Plate 4 Graffito from temple area at Amheida, inv. 3053, infrared photo, center.

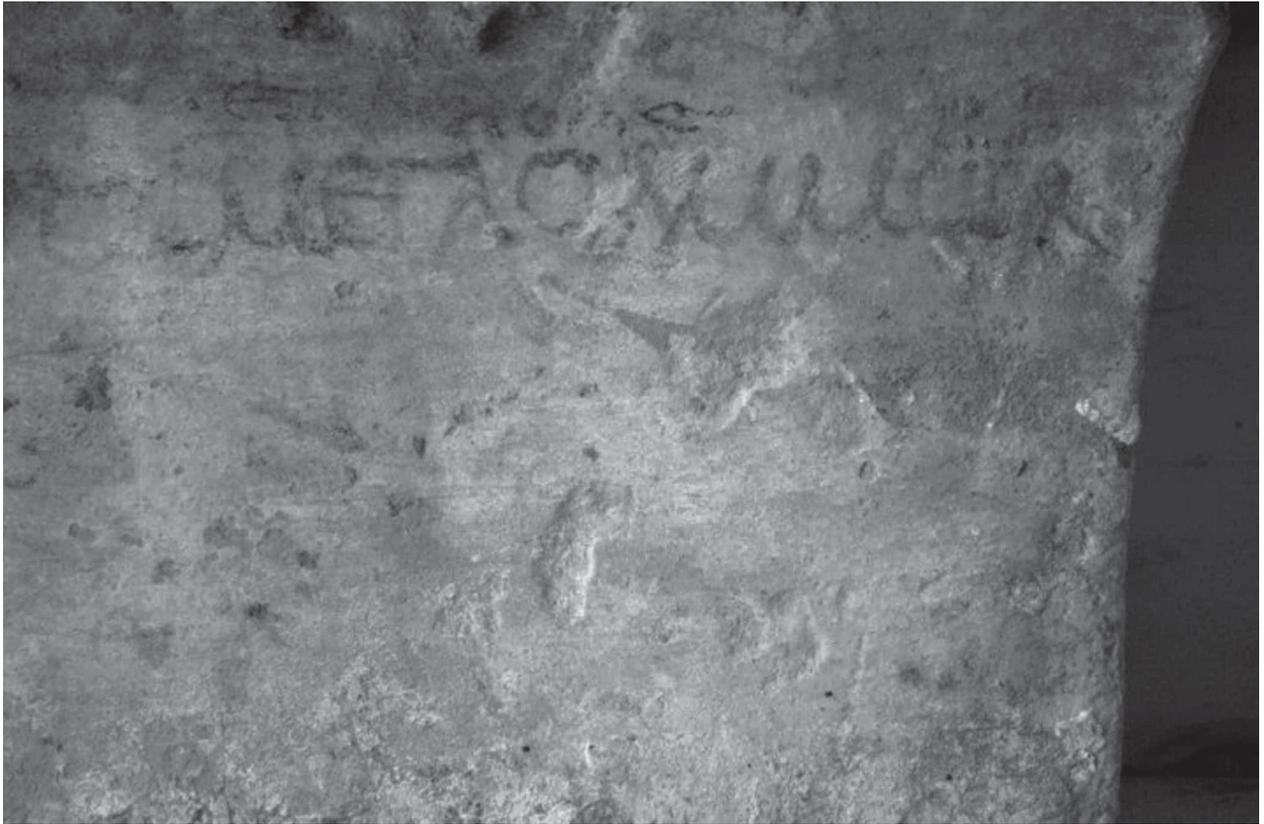


Plate 5 Graffito from temple area at Amheida, inv. 3053, infrared photo, right.

fading or breakage has taken away any amounts that may have stood at the right side.

A graffito of Horigenes son of Ioannes on one stone (inv. 3271, Plate 1) is also probably Christian. Even though Horigenes is a common theophoric name derived from Horos, found in hundreds of papyri, it was also the name of the famous early third-century Alexandrian theologian and scholar Origen; more importantly, Ioannes is distinctively Christian. So Horigenes son of Ioannes is likely to be a third-generation Christian.

But most striking of all is a block, inv. 3053 (Plate 2), in the middle of which someone had written a Greek verse. This comes either from an altar (as Paola Davoli has suggested) or from the base of a statue (as Olaf Kaper thinks). The gouging on the block was made by pilgrims to remove powdered stone for amuletic or medicinal reasons. The ink is quite faded in parts and demands persistent and prolonged autopsy, because natural color photographs are almost illegible. These processed infrared images³ (Plates 3, 4 and 5) may give you an idea of how difficult this was to make out. The text reads (first in diplomatic transcription, then with accents):

ανθρωπων βιοτοιο κυβερνητης μεγας Αμμων
 άνθρωπων βιότοιο κυβερνήτης μέγας Ἄμμων
 ‘Great Ammon is the pilot of the life of men’.

This is a perfect hexameter verse with an Epic ring that shows various literary reminiscences. It is in a way a kind of pastiche that represents well the religious and cultural syncretism of Egypt. The phrase *ἄνθρωπων βιότοιο* appears in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 167, while once in the same work the genitive *βιότοιο* is attested in line 499. This epic form in any case is typically Homeric, e.g., *Iliad* 6.14. The further occurrences of this phrase in literature derive presumably from Hesiod, e.g., in the tragic writer Critias and Stobaeus.

The concept of steering oneself through life occurs once in a Ptolemaic letter, *P.Lond.* I 42 (*UPZI* 59), where the verb *διακυβερνάω* was used. The metaphorical use of the verb ‘to pilot’ and the noun ‘pilot’ becomes more frequent in literary attestations of the Roman period. In the second century it is noteworthy that Dio Chrysostom in *Or.* 63.7.8 writes that “Tyche governs a man’s life”, using the verb with a sense very similar to the line on the block. What makes Dio’s attestation notable is the fact that he refers to a deity as the pilot of mortal life. Generally, in fact, man is presented as his own pilot, while life and troubles are regarded as the waves of a tempest. Thus the Cappadocian fathers, who frequently employ the phrase, encourage man to overcome the waves of trouble, becoming safe pilots of their life, e.g. Basil, *Hom.*

³ We are deeply indebted to Bruno Bazzani for his help in taking and improving these images.

in *principium proverbiorum* or Gregory of Nyssa, in his *On Virginity* (*De virginitate* 23.6.8), who says that the good man “like a good pilot with his boat, looks only up to heaven in guiding his life”. Like Dio, however, John Chrysostom, in his *On Genesis* (*In Genesim* 53.118.16), regards God as the pilot: “We navigate through the sea of our present life, led by the great pilot, God”.

Ammon is a Greek form of the Egyptian god Amun, who had a great temple in Luxor and was the dominant god of the oases in the Roman Period (*SB V* 8440, Wagner 1987, 329–34). The hellenized Ammon had his main sanctuary in the Siwa Oasis, where he was an oracular divinity widely recognized in the Greek world and with strong ties to Cyrene. Herodotus 2.42 says that Ammon is the Egyptian name for Zeus and thus explains why the Egyptian images of Zeus have a ram’s head. Alexander the Great famously visited the Siwa Oasis in early 331; from this visit originated the claim that Alexander was Ammon’s son. Ammon appears as the μέγας θεός, the great god, in the *Historia Alexandri Magni* (recensio byzantina) I. 1261.

If the concept that the gods and one god in particular give life to men is uncommon in Greek literature, it is a commonplace in Egypt from as early as the Old Kingdom. Amun was regularly seen as the source of life, but more interesting are the remarkably direct invocations of Amun as the pilot of life found in New Kingdom prayers, cited by Jan Assmann. One describes him as “Pilot who knows the water, rudder that does not lead astray.”⁴ “You are Amun who comes to him, who calls unto him, the pilot who knows the water, the rudder that does not lead astray” says another.⁵ “If a man’s tongue is the boat’s rudder, the Lord of All is its pilot,” says still a third.⁶ If the expression here is Greek, then, the sentiment is deeply rooted in Egyptian religion. Although Amun was not the god to whom the temple of Amheida was dedicated, he was certainly the principal god of the oases in Roman times. Olaf Kaper has kindly told us that there is an image of Amun-Re of Hibis (Amenebis) on the gateway of ‘Ain Birbiyeh, decorated under Augustus, which gives the following titles: ‘Amun-Re Lord of Hibis, the Great God, strong of might, King of the Gods, who gives(?) the breath of life, who lets the constricted throat breathe, who causes all that exists to live’.

A nice pagan hexameter verse, then, written on a cavetto cornice block, the original use of which is not clear. It is, to judge from the presence of the graffito and other writing on it, likely to have been in a public place in the temple of Thoth, probably in the courtyard. Now, above this line of writing there are some rather faint traces

of additional writing in a much smaller hand. We believe that at the top right it is possible to make out *ete pnoute*, which we take to be a Coptic gloss on the whole, putting forward the view that it is God, *pnoute*, who is the governor of life, not Ammon.⁷ A bit of not entirely friendly religious dialogue in late antiquity, it appears.

These graffiti certainly indicate that in the last period of occupation of Amheida, which on present evidence appears to be the last quarter of the fourth century, the temple was no longer in use as such, but was accessible to Christians who wished to leave a mark of their own religion on the structure and its contents. That is hardly surprising, and we have no means of saying at what date that became possible. It is to be observed that the excavations in the temple area also found a considerable number of well tags of the type found in Area 2.1, the large fourth-century house which we have designated B1. The bulk of these date from relatively low-numbered years, with eight of the nine coming from years 1 to 10, which are mostly likely to be assigned to the regnal years of Diocletian and Maximian, if not to an earlier ruler. The lone exception is *O.Trim.* 127, of year 33, which is to be assigned to Constantius II, thus 356/7. There are two other indications that activity on the hill was continuing in the fourth century, the occurrence of Psais the deacon (known from two other ostraka of that period) in *O.Trim.* 383 and the co-occurrence of Nikokles and Philippos in *O.Trim.* 286. Both of these are well known from the final phase of occupation of House B1, in the 350s and 360s. We cannot, however, be certain from these ostraka whether the activity in question consisted simply of dumping trash from House B1 and its outbuildings on an abandoned hill, or if there was habitation on the hill itself. Nor do the graffiti tell us the answer to that question, as their presence is consistent with either hypothesis.

A slight hint might be drawn from the list or account that we mentioned earlier, headed by ‘the father’ (or ‘our father’). A similar text was found in 2008 in the excavations of Deir Abu Metta (Bowen, this volume). The meaning of ‘father’ in both cases is not transparent, but we do not know of similar texts of this period in which it refers to any secular office in local or imperial government; the institution of the πατήρ πόλεως (‘father of the city’) does not occur in Egypt before the second half of the fifth century. If the reference is to some kind of religious community, this would certainly be consonant with the excavators’ hypothesis at Deir Abu Metta that that church was attached to a community of some kind, with the adjacent building perhaps a monastic keep.

⁴ See Assmann 1995, 175–85 on Amun as the source of life; 193–5 on Amun as pilot. This passage is quoted by Assmann 1995, 194 from Assmann 1975/1999, no. 177, from P.Anastasi II, 9.2.

⁵ Assmann 1995, 194, citing Assmann 1975/1999, no. 188.

⁶ Assmann 1995, 194, citing Assmann 1975/1999, 190, from Tab. BM 5656.

⁷ We would expect a *pe* at the end; it is impossible to say if it stood there or not.

There is nothing found at Amheida so far to indicate the presence there of any monastic establishment, or indeed any other type of religious community. But given the condition of the top of the hill today, it is impossible to exclude any hypothesis – and that includes the hypothesis that it was merely a dump for debris from adjacent areas of the city that were still in full activity. Still, one might well wonder if the temple compound was an early example of a temple turned into a church. We say that, of course, knowing well that the now rather numerous churches of the Dakhleh Oasis are all either retrofits of domestic structures or purpose-built in this period, and that the one case we know of where a temple was to our knowledge repurposed, at 'Ain el-Gedida, it was turned into a pottery workshop, as Nicola Aravecchia has established (Aravecchia, this volume).

Authors' Affiliations and e-mail Addresses:

Roger S. Bagnall
 Institute for the Study of the Ancient World
 New York University
roger.bagnall@nyu.edu

Raffaella Cribiore
 Department of Classics
 New York University
rc119@nyu.edu

REFERENCES

- Aravecchia, N., this volume, The Church Complex of 'Ain el-Gedida, Dakhleh Oasis, 391–408.
- Assmann, J., 1975/1999, *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebeten*, Zurich/Freiburg-Göttingen.
- Assmann, J., 1995, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*, London and New York.
- Bowen, G. E., this volume, The Church of Dayr Abu Matta and its Associated Structures: an overview of four seasons of excavation, 429–50.
- Davoli, P. and O. Kaper, 2006, A New Temple for Thoth in the Dakhleh Oasis, *Egyptian Archaeology* 28: 12–14.
- Wagner, G., 1987, *Les oasis d'Égypte*, Le Caire.

