

EPIGRAPHY THROUGH FIVE MILLENNIA

TEXTS AND IMAGES IN CONTEXT

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ABTEILUNG KAIRO

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Epigraphy through five millennia

Texts and images in context

edited by
Svenja C. Dirksen and Lena S. Krastel

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Stephan J. Seidlmayer · Daniel Polz
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Vorwort

Seit langem bildet die Region Aswân einen besonderen Schwerpunkt in der Forschung der Abteilung Kairo des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Dabei kommt der Dokumentation und Analyse der epigraphischen Zeugnisse aller Epochen in mehreren Teilprojekten ein besonderer Stellenwert zu. Um diese Arbeit in einen größeren Kontext zu setzen, konnten wir in den Jahren 2013 und 2016 zwei internationale Tagungen in Kairo durchführen. Deren Anliegen war eine doppelte Grenzüberschreitung.

Zum einen ging es um die Grenze zwischen Textforschung und Archäologie. Tatsächlich stellen sich die Materialität der Inschriften und ihre Einbettung in kulturelle Räume – seien es gebaute Anlagen oder kulturell genutzte Landschaften – als Schlüssel zu einem neuen Verständnis der in der Forschung oft aufs philologisch-prosopographische reduzierten Textzeugnisse heraus. Erst durch die Beachtung der archäologischen Dimension wird die Rolle der epigraphischen Dokumente als Medien kultureller Kommunikation in der Selbstdarstellung ihrer Urheber und in ihrer Wendung an ein Publikum im Rahmen spezifischer Situationen, seien sie ritueller oder pragmatischer Art, rekonstruierbar.

Zum anderen ging es um die Grenze zwischen Sprache und Bild, um ihre Trennung oder Verschränkung in fließenden Übergängen. Zusammen bilden sie ein mediales Ganzes, dessen Mitteilungs- und Rezeptionspotential sich erst aus dieser Verbindung und diesem Kontrast erschließt. Der Blick über den allein schriftlich-sprachlichen Aspekt

hinaus – sowohl in Bildern, die Texte begleiten, wie in reinen (Fels-)Bildzeugnissen – schärft insbesondere die Aufmerksamkeit für soziale und ethnische Gruppen – illiterate oder semiliterate Mitglieder der sozialen Grundschicht, nichtsesshafte Bewohner der angrenzenden Wüstengebiete – als Partner und Akteure epigraphischer Kommunikation, die sonst unbeachtet bleiben.

Insgesamt war es das nur auf den ersten Blick vielleicht paradoxe Anliegen beider Tagungen, nicht etwa die epigraphische Forschung als ein spezielles Gebiet zu profilieren, sondern im Gegenteil es einzubetten in ein übergreifendes Universum kultureller Kommunikation – darin freilich als ein Feld eigener Signifikanz. Dies in komparativer und kontrastiver Form zu ermöglichen, wurden ebenso die langen diachronen Linien von „den Anfängen“ bis an die Schwelle der Gegenwart wie auch der große Raum des ägyptisch-sudanesischen Niltals und die Gebiete um das Niltal aufgesucht.

Dass dieses Vorhaben zweimal gelingen konnte, ist den Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmern beider Tagungen zu danken, die die Vielfalt und Tiefe ihrer Forschungen in die Diskussion eingebracht haben. Den Herausgeberinnen, Svenja Dirksen und Lena Krastel, gilt mein Dank, dass sie die Aufgabe übernommen haben, die Beiträge nach etlichen, zumal in Kairo ereignisreichen Jahren zusammenzuführen, editorisch und redaktionell zu betreuen und in diesem Band vorzulegen.

STEPHAN J. SEIDL MAYER

Introduction

By SVENJA C. DIRKSEN and LENA S. KRASTEL

Epigraphy through five millennia

For thousands of years people have expressed themselves, their beliefs, and their conceptions of the world through pictorial and written modes. The variety of epigraphic material has increased in manifold ways over time; from early cave paintings and rock art to monumental Pharaonic inscriptions through to tombstones from Islamic times, and modern *graffiti* painted in public spaces: epigraphic material is all around.

The academic field of epigraphy is concerned with the study of inscriptions and depictions that are written or painted on or incised into various kinds of material surfaces. These include both mobile media, such as stelae or statues as well as immobile media, like rock faces or walls of buildings. Although epigraphy has been regarded as an auxiliary science of history in the past, it has grown into an independent and significant scientific discipline with various research opportunities.

In two conferences convened at the German Archaeological Institute, the diversity of epigraphy was demonstrated and discussed by numerous scholars working in this particular field. The conference 'Epigraphy through five millennia: the area of Aswan' was held from 12th–13th March 2013 and focused on the First Cataract region, including both research on rock art and inscriptions from Palaeolithic to Islamic times. The second conference, 'Rock art and (non-textual) *graffiti* in context', took place from 11th–12th December 2016 and was concentrated mainly on pictorial representations left in various places along the Nile and in the desert, covering a spatial distribution from Serabit el-Khadim in the north to the Wadi Abu Dom and Meroe in the south, as well as the Oases of Kharga and Dakhleh in the west. Given that both conferences dealt broadly with the topic of epigraphy,

the selection of contributions brought together in this volume likewise provides wide-ranging coverage of ongoing research on textual and non-textual epigraphy in Egypt and its neighbouring regions.

Textual and non-textual epigraphy

The articles collected in this volume not only cover a period of several thousand years – from the Palaeolithic to Islamic times – but also show a wide range of epigraphic topics, contents, methodological approaches, as well as future prospects.

Contributions to rock art and its spatial context form the main part of this volume. While TIM KARBERG discusses different motifs of rock art from Wadi Abu Dom in Northern Sudan, four other articles focus on rock pictures from the First Cataract region. LINDA BORRMANN-DÜCKER investigates 'textless rock inscriptions' at Tabyat al-Sheikh and Sehel Island, REBECCA DÖHL reflects upon the communicative function of rock art as signs in Wadi Berber, whereas ADEL KELANY surveys the Epipalaeolithic rock art landscape in Wadi Abu Subeira. In turn, MARIA NILSSON and JOHN WARD examine 'rupestrian memoranda' at Gebel el-Silsila. The transformation of landscape through rock art at Kharga Oasis is addressed by SALIMA IKRAM, while PAWEŁ L. POLKOWSKI elucidates the agency of rock art in the context of its environment at Dakhleh Oasis. These discussions of rock art are complemented by the articles of LUDWIG D. MORENZ and DAVID SABEL which examine cross-cultural contacts, both focusing on the region of Serabit el-Khadim in Sinai.

In addition to contributions on rock art, the remaining articles concentrate on different kinds of textual evidence. LINDA BORRMANN-DÜCKER's second article deals with royal and private rock inscriptions at Aswan. CORNELIA RÖMER sheds light

on the relationship between writing and images in the public sphere of Hellenistic Egypt, while HOLGER KOCKELMANN presents the epigraphic material documented at the Temple of Isis on Philae Island. In addition, JOCHEN HALLOF's contribution is concerned with the Merotic inscriptions in the same temple precinct. Several articles focus on epigraphic evidence from Elephantine in the Graeco-Roman Period and beyond. Decoration fragments of religious building structures are studied in detail by EWA LASKOWSKA-KUSZTAL, whereas HANA NAVRATILOVA and IAN RUTHERFORD discuss the existence of the deity Neilammon based on Greek and Demotic *proskynemata* and other *graffiti*. Continuing with the topic of *graffiti*, JITSE H. F. DIJKSTRA and TOBIAS KRAPF explore the interplay of two- and three-dimensional representations in the Khnum Temple forecourt. Extending the timeframe, the article by LENA S. KRASTEL provides a brief overview of the Coptic funerary stelae and wall inscriptions of Deir Anba Hadra on the west bank of the Nile, opposite Elephantine Island. Three Islamic tombstones found on this island presented and analysed by MOHAMED ABD EL-LATIF conclude the chronological range of this volume.

While working on their respective epigraphic material, the authors employed various conventional and new scientific recording methods. In addition to the well-established epigraphic approaches, such as facsimile drawings, new computer- and photography-based techniques offer greater possibilities for documenting and presenting epigraphic evidence. Given that numerous inscriptions and depictions are faded or weathered due to different environmental factors and are therefore often barely visible, the enhancement of digital photographs by the means of imaging software (e. g. DStretch), the recording of surface structures through laser scanning or the creation of 3D-models can help to visualise these challenging textual and non-textual inscriptions and thus offer new perspectives. Nevertheless, the feasibility and success of such new scientific approaches depends on factors such as the kind of material, its location, and individual research questions, but also on financial resources.

Texts and images in context

Apart from applying different methodologies and dealing with textual and non-textual evidence alike, several contributions attempt to embed their epigraphic research into various theoretical frameworks.

The articles in this volume concentrate on two main theoretical concepts: the notion of landscape on the one hand, and interaction and communication on the other.

Natural and man-made 'landscapes'

Regarding the discussion and documentation of epigraphic sources, it is important to include the notion of landscape in the interpretation, as demonstrated in numerous contributions in this volume. Taking into account the spatial context of inscriptions and depictions can provide additional information on the functions of inscriptions and rock art motifs in particular, as well as the intentions underlying the processes of their production. Thus, not only the meaning content of an inscription or a rock picture is important, but by taking the surrounding landscape into account, broader perspectives and forms of understanding can be accessed and explored. Focusing on the 'where' and not just the 'what' of epigraphic evidence can help us to draw different and more profound conclusions.

Rock art as well as inscriptions of various kinds tend to cluster in particular areas and specific places that we often refer to as epigraphic 'hot spots'. Their patterns of distribution can be analysed in order to gain insights into the significance of these topographic locations for cultural, religious, strategic or travel related practices. This implies not only a direct connection between natural spaces and their annexation by humans through the production of texts and images, but also a mutual influence of space and humans. 'Landscape' – both natural and man-made – inspires us to interact with it, while at the same time the chosen form of interaction changes the landscape itself.

While LINDA BORRMANN-DÜCKER demonstrates how landscape and daily life are intertwined, LUDWIG D. MORENZ and DAVID SABEL focus on how geographical conditions provoke human responses in the landscape. In contrast, SALIMA IKRAM emphasises the human transformation of the surrounding landscape by the means of rock pictures. REBECCA DÖHL describes what the clustering of rock art means for the interpretation of these places and their associated functions. Often rock art is found near ecologically favoured zones, as TIM KARBERG illustrates. MARIA NILSSON and JOHN WARD highlight the connection between the spatial distribution of rock art and activities of daily life, such as hunting and fishing. A similar observation is made by ADEL KELANY, who also addresses the role of the environment. Finally, PAWEŁ L. POLKOWSKI establishes rock

art as the interface between landscape and human contemplation thereof.

Moreover, contributions to this volume also cover research questions regarding the religious landscape. As inscriptions also provide us with information about the transformation of sacred space and religious activities of individuals and institutions, HANA NAVRATILOVA and IAN RUTHERFORD investigate the mutual influence of religious space, and the natural and built environment. An additional study contributing to our understanding of the religious landscape of Elephantine Island is provided by EWA LASKOWSKA-KUSZTAL, who examines the architectural elements of religious buildings.

To conclude, research on epigraphic practices in the wider context of its landscape enables us to shed light on the relationships between humans, landscape, and material culture. This not only opens up new perspectives on the epigraphic evidence itself, but it also allows for a deeper understanding of the motivations behind the creation of inscriptions and rock art in general. At the same time, although landscape is a highly important factor in the investigation of epigraphic material, we must bear in mind that the topographical setting as encountered today does not necessarily correspond with the original setting in the past when inscriptions and depictions were created. Researchers must therefore pay close attention to this issue and consider it critically in the course of documentation, analysis, and interpretation.

Interaction and communication

In addition to the notion of landscape, another significant aspect of the wider context of epigraphy revolves around the relationships between inscriptions and depictions and their recipients as illustrated in various articles throughout this volume. This relationship can be defined as one of interaction and communication, where both parties engage in a dialogue and actively refer to each other.

Prominent examples for this phenomenon can be found across the epigraphic case studies in this volume, *e.g.* the interaction of inscriptions and depictions in south-western Sinai as discussed in the articles of LUDWIG D. MORENZ and DAVID SABEL. Moreover, REBECCA DÖHL and LINDA BORMANN-DÜCKER impressively illustrate the influence that existing rock art and inscriptions can have *e.g.* on the motifs, techniques, and locations of subsequent textual and non-textual inscriptions. Further examples for the communication between inscriptions and their recipients are attested both among the Coptic *graffiti* and *dipinti* of Deir Anba Hadra,

as introduced by LENA S. KRASTEL, and the Islamic funerary inscriptions of Aswan as shown by MOHAMED ABD EL-LATIF. Both types of inscriptions are addressed directly to passers-by and thus exemplify the notion of the so-called 'appeals to the living', as also attested among ancient Egyptian texts. While these inscriptions communicate directly with the recipient, another less personal way of communication is discussed by CORNELIA RÖMER, who focuses on written public announcements or advertisements and the closely related issue of illiteracy in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Furthermore, interactions between depictions, inscriptions, and landscape may indicate cultural contacts and exchange between Egypt and other cultures, such as those of Nubia and Canaan. This exchange is visible in the particular placement of images and texts, as investigated by JOCHEN HALLOF on Philae Island. JITSE F. H. DIJKSTRA and TOBIAS KRAPF point to another aspect of epigraphy that is important both for understanding the semantic content of inscriptions and depictions as well as for interpreting the significance of their surroundings: textual and non-textual inscriptions are always representatives of their owners in one way or another. Based on the analysis of *graffiti* and statues situated in the Khnum Temple forecourt on Elephantine Island, the authors illustrate the ways in which two- and three-dimensional representations further the same or similar intentions.

Concluding remarks

Even though these proceedings contain contributions on diverse topics and research interests within the vast field of epigraphy, the similarities between the contributions are striking. We have seen that the notions of landscape and interaction between different agents are manifold and can be observed in almost every epigraphic context. Hopefully the results of the discussions presented here will contribute to wider understandings of epigraphic material in the future.

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