



NEKHEN NEWS

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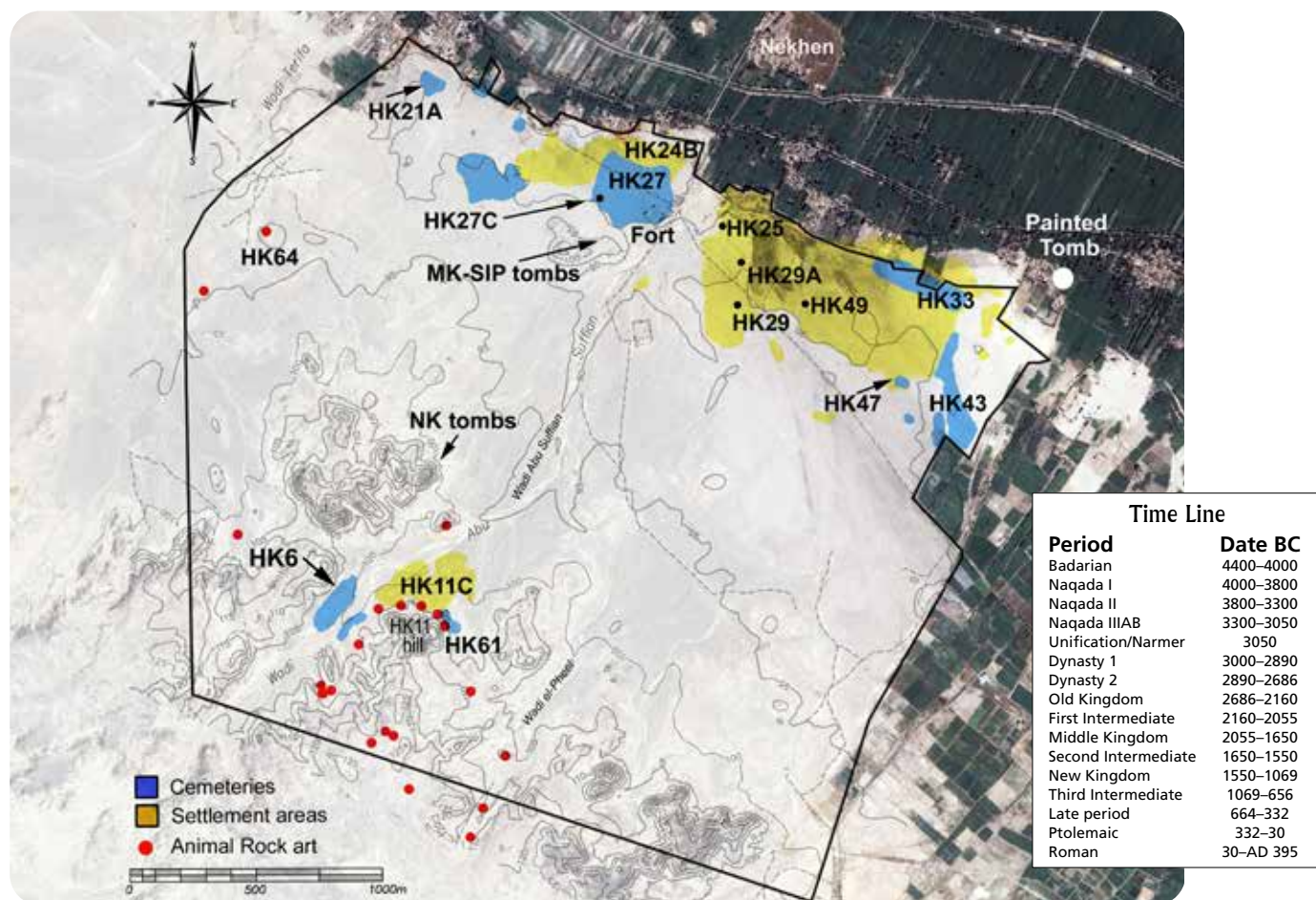
Animals at Hierakonpolis

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Hierakonpolis in 2021



Thank you so much!

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Thank you all. Large and small, your contributions help to make our work possible.

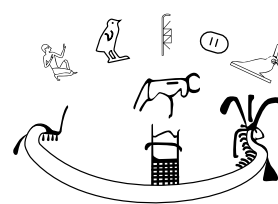
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The World of Animals at Hierakonpolis

—Renée Friedman, Director, Hierakonpolis Expedition

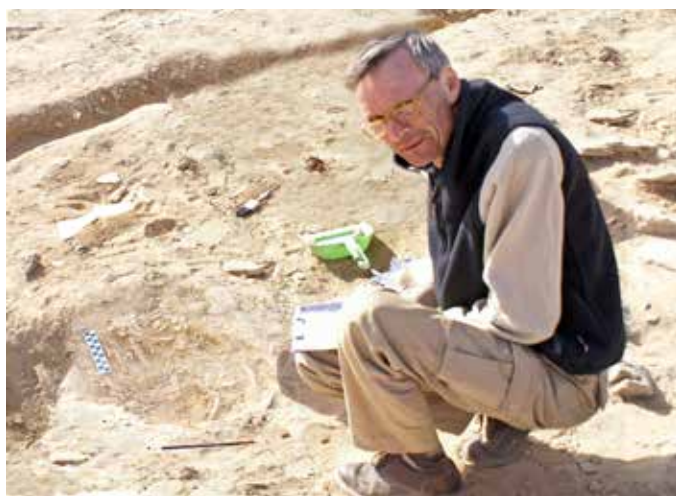
The year 2021 has probably been a time of reflection for many, and for us (not) at Hierakonpolis it has been an opportunity to reflect on the sometimes weird, but always wonderful, animals that have been found at the site over the years. We have looked at both their physical remains and artistic renditions, and examined the various contexts (domestic, industrial, cultic, mortuary), time periods (Predynastic to New Kingdom) and cultures (Egyptian and Nubian) from which they originate. The results of this ambitious project are presented here in discussions that bring together all the evidence to date and share new insights and ideas. Arranged roughly in chronological order, the articles explore the presence, usage and possible meanings of animals at Hierakonpolis, be they as sources of food and labour, symbols of power or wealth, icons, modes of protection, commemoration or communication, or simply as ways to amuse. Concluding the volume, a stimulating overview of Predynastic Hierakonpolis' contribution to the enduring animal-based imagery of Dynastic Egypt is also included. The no less interesting topic of the use of animals as a raw material (i.e., ivory, bone, leather) could not be addressed at this time, but it is one we hope to investigate in the future.

Of course, the largest part of our material dates from the Predynastic, when animals were especially prominent features of the iconography all over Upper Egypt, their meaning and selection much discussed. A general trend favouring Nilotic fauna (hippopotamus and crocodile) in the early Predynastic, and desert fauna in the later phases, has been recognized throughout the region. Yet Hierakonpolis shows us so much more. In addition to the many stunning animal depictions for which the site is famous (e.g., the flint figurines, Painted Tomb, and carved ivories), what really sets Hierakonpolis

apart from other sites are its vast and varied assemblages of faunal remains containing a remarkable range of species, both native and exotic. Representing animals that have been eaten as food, used in rituals or buried by the elite, they allow us to scrutinize the artistic record and the place of animals in the conceptual world in greater detail.

However, none of this would have been possible without the expertise of archaeo-zoologist Wim Van Neer and his associates, Veerle Linseele and Bea Du Cupere, with whom we have shared a fruitful collaboration for more than 20 years. They have examined the faunal material from all our different localities, and it is difficult to thank them enough for all their hard work (e.g., the excavations at HK29A alone produced over 40,000 bones) and their dedication (sorting the toe bones of 12 commingled dogs takes determination), while their knowledge and experience allowed them to distinguish even the most unexpected, ranging from adolescent elephants to beat-up baboons, and modified sheep to tamed wild cats. The information their intensive analyses has added to the understanding of human-animal interaction with regard to subsistence, ritual, symbolism and ecology (among other things) has been truly transformative. An overview of some of their many outstanding findings can be found on pages 5–10.

Interestingly, not all of the animals portrayed in art are present among the physical remains, and conversely, not all the species in the faunal assemblage have a corresponding image in art, although this is not static, with changes over time and place. Nevertheless, there is a clear disjunction between what the Predynastic inhabitants of Hierakonpolis knew and then what they 'drew'. Yet, the choices also depended on who made the image (or for whom), in what medium, when, and of course, why.



Wim Van Neer cataloguing cats.



Bea De Cupere with a bounty of bones.

To illustrate this we have put together a table charting animal presence in physical and artistic form during the Predynastic (Naqada I–II) in a variety of contexts of different function and status, and the Early Dynastic (Naqada III) as represented by the Main Deposit and more limited finds from the Naqada III tombs at HK6. While the osteological identifications are definite, it must be kept in mind that for some of the more stylized depictions, species attribution is not so easy, and here we provide only our best guess. Whether some represent a wild or domesticated animal cannot be easily determined and remains a question. Due to the limitations of space and the sheer complexity of the variables, the range of materials on which the animal imagery occurs in mobile art could not be accommodated, but is discussed in detail within the articles. However, it is worth noting that in the non-elite cemeteries (HK43, HK33, HK27/Fort cemetery), the evidence is derived mainly from greywacke palettes and a few Decorated jars, while in the settlements animals generally appear as marks on pottery, with some figurines of cattle and hippos coming (or likely coming) from HK29A (see pages 14–17). Not surprisingly, the greatest variety of materials occurs in the elite cemetery at HK6, and this can be visually appreciated on the centrefold (pages

20–21), in a spectacular display made possible thanks to the efforts and assistance of Xavier Droux, James Rossiter, Joel Paulson, and Wim Van Neer. Notable also are the differences that can be seen when comparing the two dimensional (palettes and ivories) and three-dimensional art from the Main Deposit, discussed more fully on pages 24–28.

Much can be said, but briefly, from the table it is clear that while the inhabitants knew many carnivorous animals in life, such creatures only became a significant part of the iconography in Naqada III. The wide range encompassed within the hoofed animal category is clearly the most popular in art. The popularity of wild animals might suggest an allusion to the hunt, yet some of these species do not appear in the faunal record, hinting at a meaning we do not yet fully comprehend. With the possible exception of cattle (and maybe a donkey or two, see pages 18–19), the lack of domestic hoofed animals in the art of the period stands in strong contrast to later Dynastic mortuary practices (see pages 30–31), indicating evolving concepts of the afterlife. More in-depth analysis can be found within. Here we point out just some of the observations that reflection on the wide corpus of material unearthed and examined at Hierakonpolis can provide. Welcome to our world of animals. Enjoy the tour! 🦒

HK Animals	Physical presence			Depictions Naqada I-II					Depictions Naqada III		
	HK29A ritual	HK6 burial	Settlement	Rock Art	HK6 elite cem	Cems non-elite	Settlement	Painted Tomb	Main Dep 3D	Main Dep 2D	HK6
Carnivores											
Lion				x	X			X	X	X	X
Leopard		x			?				x	X	X
Cat wild	X	X	x								
Hyena	x								x	?	?
Fox/fennec	X		x							x	
Dog wild										X	?
Dog	X	X	X	X	x		X	X	X	X	
Hoofed mammals											
Elephant		X		X	x		x			X	X
Hippo	X	X	X	X	X	x	X		x		
Cattle wild	x	X		X	X		x	x		X	X
Hartebeest	x	x		x	X		x	x		X	
Gazelle	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	
Barb. Sheep	X	x	X	X	X		x			X	X
Ibex			x	X	X		X	X		X	X
Oryx				X				X	X	X	
Giraffe				X	x	x				X	?
Donkey		X/X*		X	x			X			
Cattle	X	X	X	x	x		X	?	x	x	
Sheep/goat	X	X	X							x	
Pig	X	x*	X						x		
Other mammals											
Baboon		X							X		
Hare	X		X								
Hedgehog									X		
Birds											
Ostrich		x		x		X	x			x	
Falcon					X				X	X	
General	X		X			x		X	X	X	X
Reptiles and others											
Crocodile	X	X	X		x						
Turtle	X		X			X					
Fish	X		X			X	x		X		
Frog									X		
Scorpion					X				X	X	X

Animal presence in physical remains and artistic depictions in Predynastic and Early Dynastic Hierakonpolis. Small x indicates singular or rare attestations. Asterisk indicates Naqada III date.

Animals for Food, Prestige and Ritual: Evidence Off the Bone from Hierakonpolis

—Wim Van Neer and Bea De Cupere, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, Belgium

From the beginning of Predynastic excavations in the late 1970s, the faunal remains from Hierakonpolis have revealed the unique role animals played at the site. In this short review we summarize how the various species were exploited as a source of food, how they inform us about the status of the consumers and, above all, how they were kept and sacrificed in the elite cemetery. These different aspects can be illustrated by comparing the faunal remains retrieved from HK29 (the burnt house), HK29A (the ceremonial centre) and HK11C (brewery and food production), where mainly food refuse was found, with those from the elite cemetery at HK6 where complete animals were buried (see page 2 map for locations).

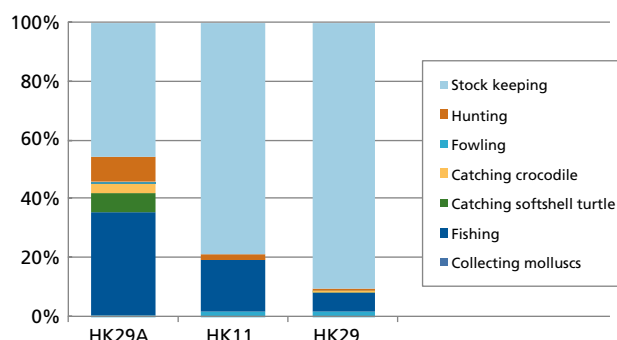
Daily Food

The proportions in which the bones of the various food animals occur make it obvious that the keeping of domestic animals and fishing were the major subsistence activities during the Predynastic period. Other strategies were less frequently employed and include the harvesting of molluscs, fowling, the capture of crocodiles and soft-shell turtle, and the hunting of large and small game. Graph 1 illustrates the frequency with which the various activities were carried out, but in terms of meat yield, livestock and fish were the most significant. Among the domestic species, pigs are of minor importance, no doubt because they were difficult to keep in the hot climate of Upper Egypt. Small livestock (sheep and particularly goat) as well as cattle were most frequently slaughtered, but when the meat yield is considered, it is clear that beef was the major source of animal protein (Graph 2).

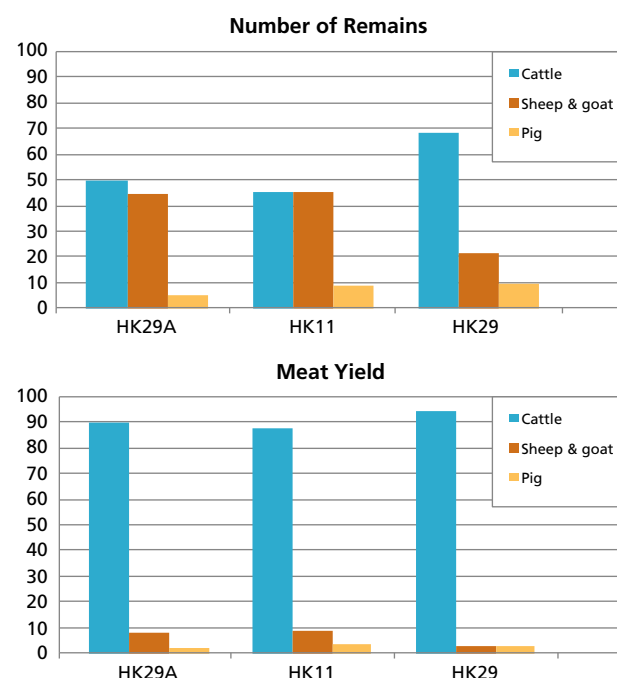
The Nile was also an important source of food at Hierakonpolis. A wide variety of fish has been identified, and it is striking that the majority are species that typically live in the main river channel. There are relatively few bones from fish that inhabit shallow waters, even though such fish are easily captured in large numbers during the annual flood. The explanation lies in the course of the Nile: geomorphological work has shown that the river was closer to the site in Predynastic times, leaving little room for a flood plain that could seasonally inundate. People were therefore forced to exploit the fish species living in the main channel. Among them is the Nile perch that could reach lengths of up to 2 metres and weigh up to 200 kg, as attested by the large vertebrae recovered at HK29A.

Special Food for Special Occasions

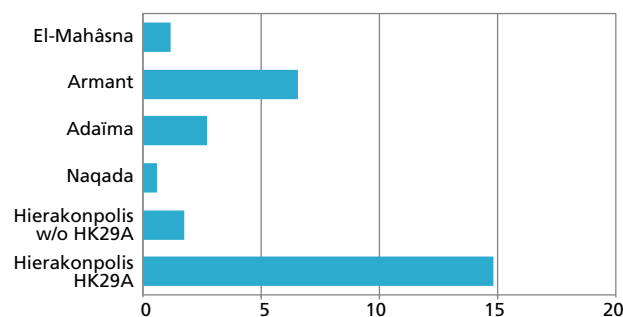
Evidence for hunting is relatively sparse at HK29 and HK11C. The wild species encountered in the food refuse there are mainly dorcas gazelle and hare. However at HK29A, the ceremonial centre, the situation is strikingly different. Here, around 15% of the faunal remains are from wild mammals whereas elsewhere, both at Hierakonpolis and across Upper Egypt, hunted animals account for only a small percentage



Graph 1: Major subsistence activities based on bone numbers in the food refuse from HK29A, HK11C and HK29.



Graph 2: Importance of the domestic species reflected by bone number and meat yield.



Graph 3: Presence of wild mammals at Predynastic sites in Upper Egypt. The ceremonial centre at HK29A has far more than any other place.



All of the wild animals found at the ceremonial centre at HK29A except the extinct aurochs, which is only represented by its horn cores. Those not found in food refuse contexts elsewhere on the site are marked with an asterisk.

(Graph 3). At HK29A there are also a number of species not found in food refuse anywhere else: striped hyena, fennec, hartebeest, and dama gazelle (much larger than the common dorcas gazelle). Interestingly, the animals come from several, totally different environments: the Nile valley, the wadis and desert fringes, as well as the high desert, where, for instance, Barbary sheep were captured. There are also more crocodiles and soft-shell turtle remains at HK29A than elsewhere; moreover, it appears that the Nile perch are much larger than at HK29 and HK11C. The domestic fauna is also distinctive for the larger average size of the cattle compared to other refuse deposits on site.

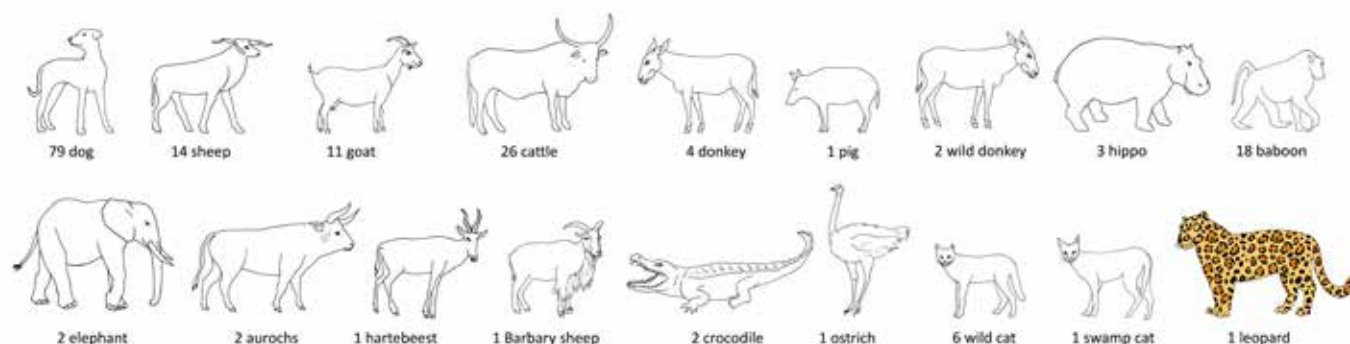
Together with the lithic evidence for butchery, the faunal assemblage suggests that feasting took place here, which was likely reserved for an elite group. However, the wide range of wild animals, including various carnivores, implies something more than just fine dining. This collection of wild and often dangerous game may have had a much more important purpose, namely for use in rituals representing the control of nature and the disordered world. The high number of remains from Nile perch, Nile oyster and wild mammals (particularly dorcas gazelle) may be significant, as these species were easier to obtain when the river waters were low. Together, this suggests that the rituals and festivities were related

to the anticipated arrival of the Nile flood, a time that was an especially critical as well as chaotic moment in the cosmic cycle of renewal.

Prestige Animals from Near and Far

The important role animals played in funerary rites is shown by the amazing discoveries at the elite cemetery HK6 (see pages 20–21). Thus far, nearly 180 animals have been found buried in that cemetery, either in graves of their own or, more rarely, accompanying humans. Animal burials are known from other Predynastic cemeteries in Egypt, but elsewhere they involve only domestic animals: dogs, sheep, goat and cattle. Uniquely, at the elite cemetery of Hierakonpolis, around 20% of the buried animals are wild.

Some of the wild species, such as hippos, crocodiles, wild and swamp cats, were no doubt abundant in the region and may therefore have been captured locally. Others, such as the aurochs and hartebeest, were already rare in Upper Egypt by this time due to over hunting and competition with livestock (see page 9). More astonishing, however, are the anubis baboons and elephants that must have been brought in from the south, from present-day Sudan. Capturing these animals alive and bringing them to the site after such a long journey must have been a difficult



Animals buried in the elite cemetery at HK6: What we know so far.

enterprise and this is not where the undertaking stopped. There is abundant evidence that several (if not all) of the animals were maintained in captivity for a considerable time before being placed in a grave. This is shown by the healed injuries that many individuals sustained as a result of the sometimes poor conditions in which they were kept.

Certain bone deformations, including healed fractures, can be related to tethering or rough treatment. When an animal is restrained by a rope tied round one or more legs, long friction and excessive pressure on a leg can result in an inflammation of the bone where the rope sits. The effect of this is seen for instance on a foot of the hartebeest (Tomb 46, see *Nekhen News* 23: 10-11), where the outside of the canon bone is swollen at mid-shaft. Not all animals accepted captivity with grace and some resisted strenuously, as shown by a healed fracture in the hind leg of a young hippopotamus (Feature H). This hippo calf was constrained by a rope above its ankle, and while struggling to be free, broke its own leg (see *Nekhen News* 21: 12-13). The fact that the fracture healed, a process that takes 4 to 6 weeks, shows that the animal remained in captivity for quite some time before its death. Healed fractures also occur frequently among the baboons, many being so-called

parry fractures, i.e., fractures of the forearm attained while trying to protect the face from blows. The hartebeest also had a broken rib and must have received a heavy blow to the lower jaw that resulted in problems with mastication. Other species exhibiting trauma-related pathologies are the swamp cat (Tomb 12), with its broken femur and humerus, and one of the young aurochs (Tomb 56) that had pathological ankle bones, either as a result of tethering or a traumatic event during capture or captivity. It is clear that the captive wild animals did not always have a pleasant life and they must have suffered more than we can document. It is some consolation that, with time, people learned better how to keep them as shown by the sharp decrease in the number of fractures on the baboons from Tombs 17 and 53 compared to those from the earlier Tomb 12.

No Ordinary Domestic Animals

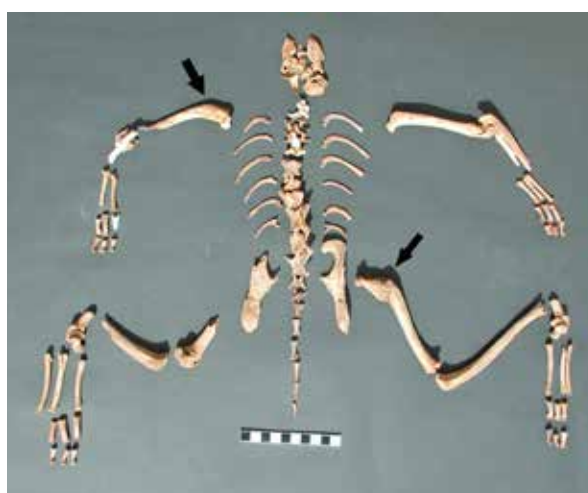
Domestic animals are the most frequently buried species at HK6 and amongst them, as in other Predynastic cemeteries, dogs are by far the most abundant, followed by lesser numbers of cattle, sheep and goat. Pig was only found once (in Tomb 111), but dates to the Naqada III usage of the site, as do three young donkeys presumed to be domestic. Based on size, donkey bones recovered near Tomb 14 also appear to



Baboon with parry fracture on forearm, HK6 Feature B.



Broken bones of baboons from Tomb 12.



Swamp cat with healed breaks on arm and leg, Tomb 12.



Sheep with modified horns (above) compared to normal horn trajectory (below).



A quantity of dogs in Feature C at HK6.

be domestic, but their burial place has not yet been identified. Many of these buried livestock are not 'just' domestic animals. They too are special as shown by their larger size compared to those that served as food as well as by the special appearance of some of them. Moreover, in several cases their burials were extraordinary, either because of the large number of individuals interred in a single grave or because the animals were very young. All of these aspects must have added to the prestige of their owners or their donors.

When it comes to size, particularly large was the bull buried in Tomb 43. With a shoulder height of 145cm, it was so large that, when we first found it, we were unsure if it

was domestic or its wild ancestor, the aurochs. In addition, the two goats in Tomb 35 stood 76 and 88cm at their withers, which is 10-20cm taller than the usual average shoulder height. Sheep of exceptional size also occur in Tomb 54 where all six male animals were very tall: their height at the shoulder varying between 83 and 91cm. In addition to their height, these sheep had very slender long bones with epiphyseal sutures still visible despite the advanced age indicated by the state of their dentition. These are all indications that the animals had been castrated, but this was not the only alteration. Several of them had modified horns. Instead of the typical outwardly directed cork-screw shaped horns, theirs



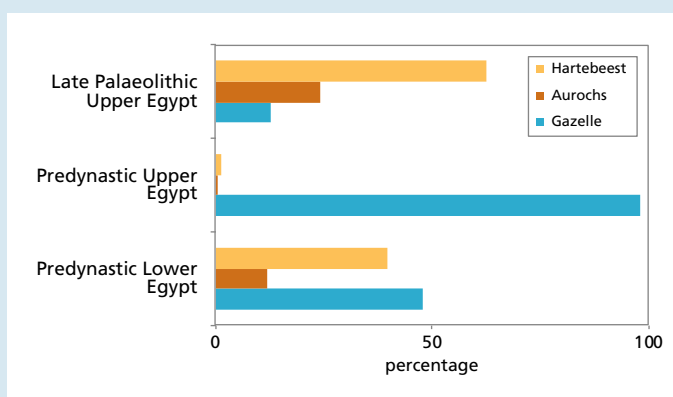
Prestige in plenty: Lots of beef in Tomb 49.



Esteem for the exotic: The elephant in Tomb 33.

Game Hunting In the Prehistoric Nile Valley

Three major game animals were exploited since Palaeolithic times in the Nile valley. They are the small dorcas gazelle, the hartebeest (an antelope) and the aurochs or wild cattle, which is the ancestor of domestic cattle. During the late Palaeolithic, hartebeest was the most frequently hunted species in Egypt, followed by aurochs and gazelle. However, by Predynastic times, aurochs and hartebeest had become extremely rare in Upper Egypt, although they still occurred in fair numbers in the Delta, where the aurochs endured until Roman times, whereas hartebeest went extinct only at the beginning of the 20th century. Their longer survival there is no doubt due to environmental differences. In Upper Egypt, the Nile valley is relatively narrow. As a result, the aurochs and hartebeest, two large grazers requiring a lot of food, suffered from competition with the domestic animals that were herded on the same constricted grazing areas. Moreover, these species were more vulnerable to



Prevalence of game animals over time.

predation by humans in such conditions. At Hierakonpolis we do not find hartebeest and aurochs in the food refuse, with the exception of a single hartebeest bone at HK29A and horn cores of aurochs, which may have been used to embellish the architecture there. The female hartebeest and the two wild cattle interred at the elite cemetery HK6 thus must have been rare animals at the time. 🐘

had been rotated so that they pointed upward, a position which must have required a very elaborate and difficult process to achieve. The reason for changing their appearance in this way is still unknown.

The quantity of animals buried in a single grave is also noteworthy. Examples include 12 adult cattle interred in Tomb 49, nine goats in Tomb 70, and six castrated sheep in Tomb 54. Dogs, in particular, were often buried together in large numbers: Tombs 71 and 84 held 12 individuals each, ten dogs were carefully laid out around the edges of Tomb 48, while Feature C contained nine tightly packed canids. Wild animals were usually buried individually, except for the baboons. They could be interred alone or in groups of up to 6 or 7, as in Tombs 12 and 53. Perhaps because they reproduced in captivity, as suggested by the bones of a newborn or foetus recovered in and around Tomb 53, baboons were available in larger numbers.

In general, funerary gifts can be precious when they are rare or when they are offered in large quantities and, in the case of animals, they can also have a special meaning when they are very young. From the beginning of work in the elite cemetery, we regularly found whitened, often heavily weathered, bones of very young sheep and goat. Mostly these fragile bones were ribs, but now and then pieces of long bone occurred. These bones come from juveniles and newborns but also regularly include foetuses. Their distribution and the weathered condition suggest these young animals were not originally placed in graves. They tend to

cluster on the peripheries of the above-ground architecture surrounding human burials, and thus may have been offered as part of the funerary ritual (see *Nekhen News* 25: 9). It is possible that the newborns and foetuses represented the first fruits of the new season or wishes for rebirth. Whatever the case, this practice was a serious economic investment. In order to offer foetuses, it is necessary to kill gravid females—a sacrifice of valuable resources. Whether the consumption of the females was part of the ritual feast is unknown, as no evidence of food refuse of any kind has been found at HK6.

Conclusion

The extensive faunal assemblage collected from the site over the years demonstrates that the Predynastic inhabitants were familiar with a wide range of species in a variety of different contexts. These animals played important roles at Hierakonpolis: as food, symbols, and sources and indications of power and wealth. The live capture of the wild animals as suggested at both the ceremonial centre and HK6 must have been a potent symbol of bravery and the ability to control nature. The large as well as the young domestic animals used during rituals were a reflection of good husbandry skills in addition to symbolizing fertility and fecundity.

Some of these species held a place in the contemporary iconography, others did not; but thanks to the detailed analysis of their actual remains at Hierakonpolis, we can get closer to understanding human-animal interaction at this formative time. 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘 🐘

Cat Taming in Egypt: The Earliest Evidence

The faunal remains from HK6 are not only of importance for Egyptian history, but also on a wider scale are contributing to the on-going discussion surrounding the domestication of the cat. In the traditional view, cats were domesticated for the first time in Egypt possibly already in the Middle Kingdom, but certainly by New Kingdom times; however, this has recently been challenged by finds from the island of Cyprus. At a site called Shillourokambos, a cat was found associated with a human burial that was 9500 years old. No cats were living on this island before people from the Levant settled there in early Neolithic times, so this cat must have been brought in as a tamed animal. While this may be the earliest known occasion of cat 'taming', it may not be the only one. At HK6, a small pit (Feature E) located on the east side of the cemetery yielded the articulated skeletons of six cats: a male, a female and four kittens belonging to two different litters. Considering their ages at death, it is obvious that they were not all born in the spring, the season when wild cats have their single annual litter. The adult female was only 6–7 months older than the kittens indicating that the natural reproduction cycle of the cats had been disturbed. Litters delivered at different times of the year are a phenomenon typical of cats that are living in a human environment in which they are given food. This extra nutrition alters their physiology and allows them to reproduce outside the natural season. Although we cannot say that the cats were fully domesticated, the change in birthing pattern is a strong indicator of taming and some kind of human control. As such, this is the oldest evidence for cat keeping in Egypt, some 2000 years earlier than previously thought, and while not as old as the Cypriote



The wild cat: *Felis silvestris lybica*.



Jaws sizes show different ages at death.

cat, it suggests that there was a second domestication center in Egypt. Several species, such as the dog, pig, and cattle were domesticated independently in various places and this may well be the case for the cat too. 🐈



Detail of the male cat.



The circle of cats in Feature E at HK6.

Animals in Rock Art at Hierakonpolis

—Fred Hardtke, Macquarie University, Sydney

From 2009 to 2018 the Hierakonpolis Rock Art Survey conducted an in-depth search for, and analysis of, all markings of human agency in the desert portion of greater Hierakonpolis. While rock art from many periods was recorded, the majority can, with high confidence, be considered contemporary with the site's Predynastic remains. Within this early corpus, faunal motifs make up about 15%, with 56 individual depictions recorded at 38 localities. Although the number of examples is not vast, due in part to losses from modern stone mining, the surviving evidence provides a rare opportunity to assess rock art in light of the artistic and ritual practices of the people most likely to have made it.

The variety of animal species identified (in order of the number of sites at which they occur) include: donkeys, giraffes, dogs, hippopotami, bulls/bovids, elephants, Barbary sheep, hartebeest, ibex, oryx, and singly kobus, lion, ostrich and gerenuk (see Table 1). Based on composition and added details, these depictions generally refer to the hunting or control of this wild fauna, the underlying meaning widely considered to be the maintenance or imposition of order over chaos.

A detailed study of Egyptian and Nubian rock art overall indicates that some motifs are regionally restricted. Drawings involving hunted hippopotami, Barbary sheep, donkeys and decorated boats are limited largely to the Egyptian Nile Valley and Eastern Desert, but are relatively uncommon in Nubia. Thus, an 'Egyptian' character is recognisable in the bulk of the rock art at Hierakonpolis despite its southern location and Nubian interactions. Yet, while the motifs and their arrangement correspond to themes typical for the Upper Egyptian region, the corpus is unique in several ways and displays its own distinctive stylistic traits.

Most notable is the use of chevrons and cross-hatching to fill in the animals' bodies, as seen in several of the hippo, elephant, giraffe and donkey depictions. Rock art displaying patterned body infill is rare outside of Hierakonpolis; only very few examples are found within the vast corpus of Egyptian rock art. It is, however, a stylistic detail common on early Predynastic material culture, appearing for example on painted C-ware pottery, potmarks, and incised ostrich eggshells at Hierakonpolis (and elsewhere, see next article). Its presence in the site's rock art suggests a familiarity of the producers with these other media and may possibly be a reflection of the high number of resident artisans. The care taken to include elements such as the incisors on hippos, the chest hair on Barbary sheep and the mane on the donkeys further reinforces this connection.

Despite some differences in detail, both the motifs and the general composition of the hunting scenes in rock art find close comparanda on early Predynastic artefacts. This strongly suggests that the same symbology permeated across the media and that animal-based themes were pervasive around the culture at the time and not simply restricted to a small group of artists and elites. These animals had resonance with the general population too, and they were drawn in a similar manner.

Emphasising the symbolic nature of the renditions is the general reluctance to show a human actor. In fact, among the Hierakonpolis rock art, no anthropomorphic depiction of unquestionable Predynastic date has been found; humans are instead alluded to by the presence of their weapons (lances, harpoons, bows and dogs). This can be seen in the rock panel showing the typical composition of Barbary sheep being harried by dogs, near which two bows have been drawn to evoke the human hunter. Another example of



Detailed donkey with body infill and mane.



Harpooned and hatched hippo.

Species	Sites	Motifs
Barbary Sheep	2	4
Bull/bovid	4	5
Dog	5	6
Donkey	5	7
Elephant	3	4
Gerenuk	1	1
Giraffe	5	8
Hartebeest	2	2
Hippopotamus	4	5
Ibex	2	8
Kobus	1	1
Lion	1	1
Oryx	2	3
Ostrich	1	1
Boats	7	23

Table 1: Animals in the rock art of Hierakonpolis.



Pecked, very pecked, and extremely pecked-at pachyderms.

this is the line extending from the snouts or heads of the hippos, representing the harpoon shot that would prevent the animal from diving. In addition, the tethering ropes hanging from the necks of the giraffes also likely refer to human control and the harnessing of their powers.

The symbolism of power and control in this imagery is clear, yet we are still left wondering why the natural rock was employed for the expression of such concepts. However, it was not just any rock that was used in this way.

While suitable Nubian sandstone is available throughout the rocky ridge framing the southwestern side of Hierakonpolis, the densest concentrations of rock art occur to the southeast of the Wadi Abu Suffian: in the hill behind HK11 (including HK61) and the wadi running to the south of it, which we call Wadi el-Pheel (see page 2 map). Drawings can be scattered, but the majority are found concentrated in cleft rocks, near rock shelters or around constructed rock circles. Such clustering suggests rock art creation was not a random pastime or opportunistic affair, but instead had an intended purpose at designated locations and played a role in specific events.

This is further indicated by the pecking, rubbing and/or incisions made over or near the faunal motifs—and only

faunal motifs—suggesting interaction with the rock art beyond the process of its creation. Certain patterns can be discerned in the way some of these markings were deployed. For example, post-production incisions were applied to the necks or legs of animals such as oryx, ibex and hartebeest, perhaps to neutralize their perceived wild or chaotic forces. Peck marks near some hippo drawings may have served the same purpose. On the other hand, it can be seen that

the elephant motifs were subjected to powerful percussive actions around the head and ears resulting in the flaking of the surface. This deliberate removal of material was perhaps a way to access their potency rather than disable them. In one case, these actions were so intense the image was nearly obliterated. The meanings need not be the same, but these post-

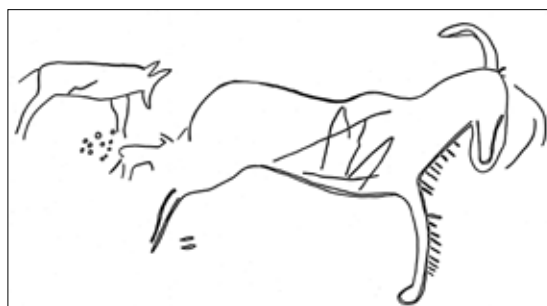
production actions, in addition to other non-figural marking, particularly the notched rows, found predominantly around the fauna, suggest that activities of a ritual nature were taking place, focussed on, and interacting with, the animal images.

At Hierakonpolis, the location of rock art was not always situated for general view. It is therefore not

necessarily a public statement, personal mark, tag or plea for remembrance. The archaeological discoveries at the site demonstrate that animals were important both as icons and



Hartebeest with incisions over legs.



Hairy and harried: Barbary sheep pursued.



in physical form. The animals buried in the HK6 cemetery reflect the living collection maintained by the site's elite as a symbol of power amongst other potential meanings we cannot yet comprehend. Many of these animals also appear in the rock art. The general correspondence between the rock art fauna and the animals presented for ritual sacrifice in the enclosed courtyard at the ceremonial centre at HK29A is also notable. It is particularly at this venue that the archaeological evidence accords with iconographic interpretations, suggesting that the hunt and capture of animals and their ultimate sacrifice in cult rituals were important aspects in Predynastic elite culture. However, the rock art suggests these concepts were not restricted to the elites alone.

The rituals and beliefs surrounding these wild animals might also be reflected through the medium of rock art. Thus, the creation of faunal motifs shown in a hunted context, along with subsequent marking by incision, pounding or rubbing, may potentially be viewed as a symbolic

sacrifice of the animals and analogous to the elite ritual sacrifice actually taking place at HK29A. Thus, via rock art, the non-elite artisans and other residents of Hierakonpolis may have been able to participate in the annual rituals with the means available to them and thereby partake of the benefits that accrued therefrom.

While this explanation may not fit every petroglyph at Hierakonpolis (or elsewhere), the proximity of the rock art to populated areas and their similarities to motifs in other media suggest that these drawings had resonance for their makers, who likely resided at the site. They may have even seen some of the rarer animals in the flesh as part of the royal menageries or those captured for use in elite rituals, enhancing their culturally embedded symbolism. Each species no doubt had its own meaning and perceived powers, and the marks on and around some of the animal drawing suggest they were part, or indeed the focus, of greater and likely repeated activity to access and activate that power. 🏹

Other Rock Stars



Oryx.



Raging bull.



Ibex.



Donkey.



Giraffe.

Animals in Predynastic Material Culture at Hierakonpolis

—Xavier Droux, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Genève, and Renée Friedman

When it comes to animals in Predynastic art at Hierakonpolis, outstanding amongst many significant finds are the remarkable flint figurines from the elite cemetery at HK6 (see back cover). Who could have imagined in 1980, when the flint hippo was found on the surface at the north end of the cemetery, that ten more animal flints would be recovered from the site? Portraying ibex, Barbary sheep, donkey, elephant, and dog(?), these new finds provide strong evidence that the three flint figurines in Berlin's Ägyptisches Museum, including a lovely hartebeest, also hail from the site, while the stunning crocodile, now in Basel, can hardly come from any place else.

Comparing the animals depicted in flint with those buried at HK6 is revealing. Almost all of the flint figurines find counterparts among the creatures interred, with the notable exception of the elusive ibex. No grave of a confirmed ibex has ever been found anywhere in Egypt, and isolated bones

although they will enter the corpus later on, and in a big way (see pages 24-28).

Given the disturbed condition of the cemetery, we are very fortunate to have found so many of these fantastic flint creations. This is mainly due to the fact that the figurines were not placed within the graves, but rather deposited by or inside the above-ground architecture of the pillared halls or superstructures (see green dots on pages 20-21 centrefold: hereafter CF). As a result, they escaped most of the ravages of plunder. This is also the case for many of the other treasures we were to discover here.

Relatively unscathed, Structure 07 was the best preserved of the pillared halls and also the most prolific. The star piece from within it is arguably the malachite falcon (CF2). Found broken in fragments, it is thanks to the skilful mending of Lamia El-Hadidy that we were able to reconstruct



Five flint ibexes in a row. (Middle image ÄM15775, courtesy of the Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin).

occur with extreme rarity at only a few sites (Maadi and Hierakonpolis). Yet, with five figurines, it is the most frequently knapped species and, in fact, together with the Barbary sheep, it is the only one that appears in multiples or as sets. The ibex was also popular in other media across early Egypt, such as on vessels of C-ware (10 examples) and D-ware (37 examples), not to mention countless rock art occurrences. Clearly, its prevalence in art does not reflect the frequency of its slaughter, be it for burial, rituals, or as a food source. Insofar as HK6 is concerned, it suggests that the species represented in flint did not all have the same symbolic meaning and may have served different purposes within the cemetery. It is also notable that not all of the buried animals have corresponding flint portraits; chosen are those that already had resonance in the art of the early Predynastic and would have been immediately recognizable. So while exotic baboons and cats were included among the burials, they are not yet present in art,

it and see the distinctive way the wings were carved away from the body with just a small point of attachment. This allowed us to identify curious objects found previously clearly as falcon wings. Two carved in steatite were discovered on the south side of the Tomb 16 complex, while another set in red breccia came from its northwest side, and a third pair in calcite was recovered around Tomb 23. These are the earliest falcon statuettes known from Egypt and they show just how ancient the long-standing connection between the site and the falcon is. Close by was another outstanding object: an ivory wand with tiny hippos carved along its upper edge (CF2). In the same corner was a tiny, but well carved, steatite figurine of a hippo, measuring just 3.3cm long, which ranks among the smallest known three-dimensional depiction of this massive creature, and can be contrasted to the largest, estimated to be at least 1.5m long, which we found on the cemetery's northern tip (CF9).



Falcon and falcon wings: The collection so far.

The circumstances of these discoveries within the pillared halls suggest that, just like the flint animals, these items were not grave goods, but rather served as objects for ritual use at funerals or later on. They appear to have been placed in the corners of the structures, but the disturbed find contexts of many pieces means we can't tell whether they were originally on display or cached after use. This includes the fragments of at least three (based on paw numbers) steatite carvings of felines. One set of legs comes from a small figurine and the others from larger ones, possibly suggesting a family grouping. Part of one head survives, but the bodies are missing. Without characteristic details, such as mane or spots, it is hard to determine which big cat was represented: lion or leopard. Until the very end of the Predynastic period, representations of large felines are almost non-existent outside Hierakonpolis. Big cats are also extremely rare in the faunal record, with the leopard from HK6 Tomb 50 the only example to date. That tomb was most likely subsidiary to the rich Tomb 72, within which was an unusual brown-polished jar incised before firing around its belly with the delicate outline of a large feline (CF6). Here again, there are no features to indicate which species was meant, or whether the distinction between lion and leopard was even relevant at this time.

The small size of most of the objects suggests that they were not meant for all to contemplate; however, definitely meant to be seen was the large ceramic hippo standing at the north tip of the cemetery rise (CF9). This area, if not the statue itself, was the focus of much attention. Several human figurines have been recovered there (see *Nekhen News* 32: 19-21), as well as one small clay hippo figurine that was likely appended to the rim of a vessel (CF9). The flint hippo (CF11) found in the vicinity so long ago probably also comes from this rich context. In addition, the area also yielded statuettes of a feline and birds, crudely carved in soft sandstone with sockets in their base (CF10), which were apparently meant to be attached to poles, perhaps as standards or architectural embellishments. Discovered near Tomb 11, which yielded



Steatite felines: Paws and claws from at least three figurines.

lapis fly and shell beads as well as a limestone vulture pendant (CF7), their date and association are still uncertain.

From within the tombs at HK6 there are only scant remains of what were no doubt originally much richer inventories. Tomb 72 gives us some indication of the diversity and special quality of the animal imagery present (CF6). In addition to the brown-polished jar with felid mentioned above, two of the ten ivory combs in the tomb were also adorned with animals: respectively a donkey and a stunning hippo—a creature that, while frequent in various other media, is only rarely found on combs. Far more common in this position are what we can generally call ungulates (hoofed critters) into which category we can place three fragmentary ivory carvings with heads missing from the Tomb 30 area and the charming little giraffe recovered near Tomb 78 (CF5).



Fragmentary quadrupeds from ivory combs at HK6.

So far unique to Hierakonpolis are the three calcite scorpion figurines from Tombs 23 and 26 (CF16-17), which along with five stinger tips from the pillared halls, reflect the long and intimate connection of this arachnid with the site, as will be seen more clearly later. Rounding off the HK6 animal round up are two clay cattle figurines, one a fragmentary but free-standing figurine from Tomb 23 (CF17), the other, from Tomb 18, possibly an applique on a vessel (CF13). Numerous other clay figurines are preserved only as horns—presumably bovine—and in a few cases legs, but exactly what animals are meant is lost. As wild animals were most favoured for depiction, the extravagant horns may suggest that aurochs was



The Tomb 26 scorpion with tail reconstructed and stinger tips of others from HK6.



Horns and legs of ceramic figurines from HK6.

intended; however, a pre-firing potmark on a roll rim jar from Tomb 6 seems to show short horned domestic cattle (CF20). Of painted pottery, the most frequent medium at other sites for animal representations, we have only one example from HK6. A single sherd preserves the head of an animal rendered with a unique inward curving configuration of horns (CF12). It possibly portrays a hartebeest, or some type of gazelle, a species whose physical remains, so common elsewhere on site, are notably absent at HK6.

Moving on to the various non-elite cemeteries at Hierakonpolis excavated over the years by different teams, only a limited picture can be compiled due to plunder and poor recording. Aside from the greywacke palettes in the common fish, bird and turtle shapes, there is a lovely example of a Barbary sheep found by F.W. Green in the HK43 area, one of only 11 known. A calcite hippo pendant from the same cemetery is also rather nice, while the D-ware fish- and bird-shaped jars, while not common, are similar to those known from other sites during the Naqada IIC-D phase. All these items are known throughout Upper Egypt at this time and were likely produced in workshops not located at the site.

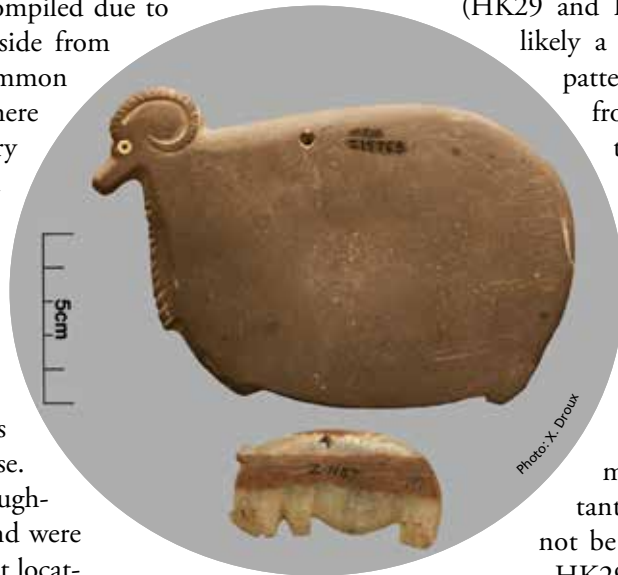
However, more interesting are images created by the inhabitants themselves, in particular the marks applied to pottery. Potmarks are rare in the HK cemeteries, but two of the most elaborate were applied to straw-tempered bottles at HK43. The one from Burial 104 depicts a large giraffe and a long-legged bird (ostrich) in the company of another motif that is harder to understand. Ostriches also

feature on the other bottle, deposited in the intact grave of a small child (Burial 213). A notch in the rim suggests it may have been a feeding jar.

Animal marks are also found within the settlement remains, although in many cases it is clear these incised motifs were not applied to pots, but rather to the sherds, and served to transmit a message. Best known in this category is the black-topped sherd carefully incised with an ibex and fish on one side, and 'countersigned' on the back with a gazelle (HK49). Other examples include various quadrupeds, probably antelopes which cannot be more fully identified (HK29 and HK29A), and one bird (HK25), likely a crested ibis. Given the breakage pattern, a sherd with two ostriches from HK29 may also be placed in this group.

Amongst the marks that were most likely applied to full pots, notable is a hartebeest and Barbary sheep incised on a thick vat sherd from the brewery at HK11C Operation B, both of which being very similar to rock art (see page 12). Unfortunately, many other fragments only retain tantalizing parts of animals that cannot be further identified, but from the HK29A area two vat sherds preserve images of gazelles and a bovid.

Animal imagery in other materials from the settlements is much more limited. In flint, there are two crude figurines of dogs. Of painted motifs, one C-ware sherd retains the head of a gazelle (HK24B) and another depicts a hippo (HK25), both examples standing out amongst the quantity (though highly fragmented) of painted pottery in the settlement that bear geometric or floral designs.



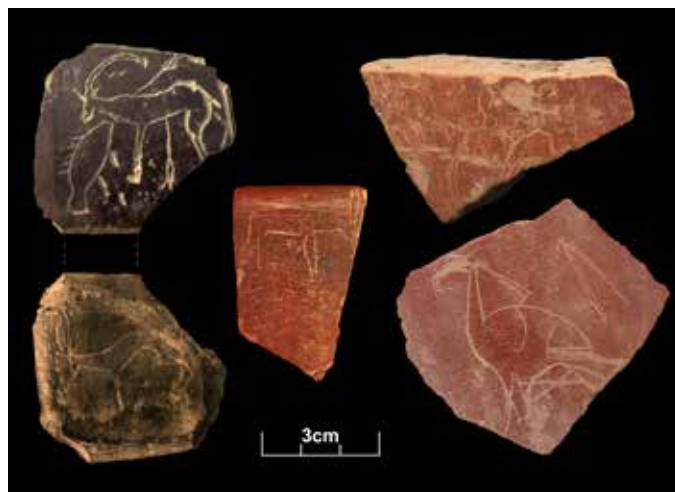
Barbary sheep palette and calcite hippo pendant from HK43.



Potmarks on bottles from HK43: Giraffe and ostriches.

It is perhaps not surprising that a greater quantity of animal-bearing objects comes from the area around the ceremonial center (HK29A-B/HK25). In addition to the objects mentioned above, there is a finely carved hippo-shaped vessel in calcite, the only one of this type with known provenance. A relatively large clay hippo recovered as a surface find in this area makes it likely that the collection of figurines found by Henri de Morgan, which includes over a dozen cattle and two hippos and one elephant, may come from this part of the site, but sadly we cannot know for sure.

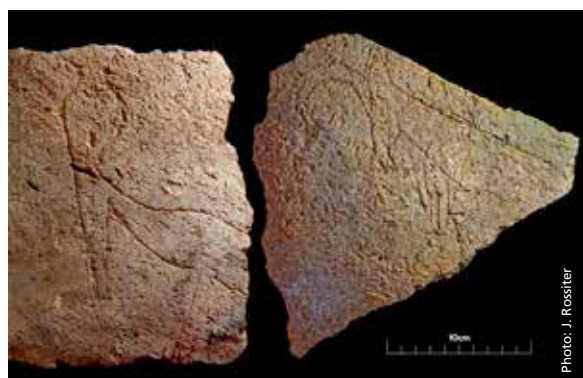
Looking at all of the material together shows that the inhabitants of Hierakonpolis made full use of animals and animal imagery, employing species that already resonated in their culture as well as experimenting with new forms to convey messages, ideas, or concepts. The disturbed state of the settlements makes it difficult to determine how prevalent or varied animals were in the visual culture of daily life for the general population. To what extent animal imagery was present on materials that have not survived, such as house or enclosure walls, textiles, painted leather, or even tattooed



Sending a message: Animal marks on sherds from the settlements.

skin, we cannot say. What remains, notably the pot markings, shows a definite preference for the wild rather than the domestic animals around which they worked and lived. Yet, not all were used to convey the messages of the marking: non-threatening animals were definitely favoured. This contrasts markedly with the elite's use of animals, both at the ceremonial centre or in their extraordinary cemetery. For them, powerful creatures took centre stage with the hippo amongst the favourites, a situation that is comparable to the elite cemetery of Abydos. However, while the Upper Egyptian elites may have used the same or similar wild species in their mobile art, they did not always express precisely the same concepts. For example, the hippo is mostly shown as hunted and annihilated in the north, while at Hierakonpolis, it seems to have been revered for its might and fierceness, powers they sought to obtain through ownership and control of the actual beast.

Every new discovery adds to this very incomplete, yet beautifully crafted puzzle, as we endeavour to find the key. The past decades of work at Hierakonpolis have greatly enhanced our understanding of Predynastic people and their relationship with their environment and the animal world. Let us hope for more fabulous finds in the future! 🐾



Vat sherds incised with hartebeest and Barbary sheep.



Calcite hippo jar from HK29A.



Elephant figurine found by H. de Morgan.

'Bowtied' Donkeys at Hierakonpolis — a Riddle Solved?

—Frank Förster, University of Bonn

Despite their small dimensions, the considerable (and probably still growing) number of figural flints rate among the most impressive discoveries made within Predynastic Hierakonpolis. These encompass representations of wild animals such as ibex, elephant, hippopotamus and Barbary sheep, but also a hunting dog and the stunning figure of what seems to be a bow-legged dwarf, all of them testimonies to the outstanding creativity and exceptional craftsmanship at this unique site.

Among the flint artefacts there is also a number of enigmatic objects which, due to their distinctive shape, have been dubbed 'bowties'. These are roughly rectangular flints that were notched in the centre, resulting in two opposing trapezoids with sides sloping in toward the middle. Five examples, or fragments thereof, were found during excavations around the Tomb 16 complex at HK6, while a sixth one, purchased near the site in 1902, now resides in the Liverpool World Museum. Remarkably, all of them are made from the same fine beige-coloured flint using similar knapping techniques, and have comparable dimensions (L: 6.6–7.55cm; W: 3.2–3.8cm; Th: 0.58–0.75cm). The four examples, found in 2011 near Tombs 48 and 49, are even virtually identical in terms of size, material and production technique, each with the same specific corrective measures applied to small mistakes on their surfaces. This suggests that they not only derive from a single workshop, but were made by the same craftsman (see *Nekhen News* 23: 18).

Despite their homogeneity and distinctive shape, the identity and possible function of these mysterious objects remain unknown. Considering their dimensions, form and

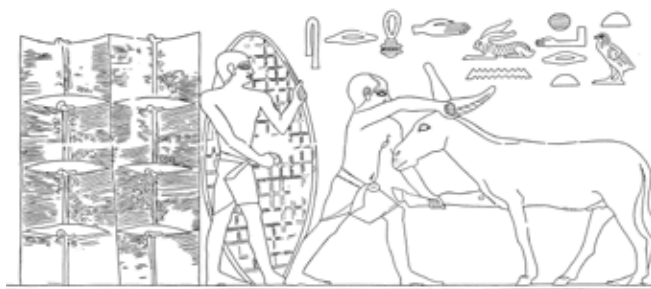
weight (c. 14 grams), they could not have been used as projectiles or arrowheads. Instead, a tentative identification will be proposed here taking into account two specific aspects: the possible figural character of the objects; and a potential, perhaps even physical, relation to another flint eccentric: the donkey figurine (11.6 x 6.8 x 0.8cm). It too was uncovered in 2011 by the north edge of Tomb 49, just a few meters to the north of the find spots of three of the bowties.

When viewing the donkey and the bowties together, and considering the typical work of the (domestic) donkey, one is struck by certain similarities with harvest scenes, such as the one represented in the 5th Dynasty tomb of Ti at Saqqara. Here, sheaves of grain are shown piled up, awaiting transport on donkey-back to the threshing floor. These sheaves of bundled grain, tied in the middle by a cord, bear a strong resemblance to the general shape of the bowties. One can even imagine that the notches in the flints were used to affix cord, or even stalks of grain, in order to create small models of such sheaves. To some extent, their function would be comparable to the same motif in historic heraldry, which is used to represent the agricultural wealth of a specific region or locality.

Yet, there might be an even closer conceptual link between the donkey and the bowtie flints. Apart from their possible identification as sheaf models, the bowties might alternatively represent a double pannier, i.e., twinned bags of trapezoidal shape that in reality flanked both sides of a donkey's body, but in two-dimensions were often depicted in top view as a double trapezoid. This is well-known from a number of First Intermediate Period tomb scenes.



Flint donkey and selected bowties with line drawing showing dimensions of all bowties compared.



Above: Bundled sheaves of grain in the Tomb of Ti, 5th Dynasty. Below: Bundled grain in modern heraldry used as symbols of agricultural wealth.



Donkey with double pannier shown in top view. Tomb of Iti and Neferu, Gebelein. Museo Egizio, Turin.



Pair of model bags tied together for transport. Tomb of Iti and Neferu, Gebelein. Museo Egizio, Turin inv. S. 13094.

Moreover, hundreds of model bags have been found in various late Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period tombs at Gebelein and Qubbet el-Hawa, often tied together as pairs, implying transport on donkey-back, some still holding remains of grain or other organic matter. In the Middle Kingdom, wooden tomb models of loaded donkeys show that such double panniers were regarded as units, and were created separately as one piece.

Thus, foreshadowing the pictorial renderings of later times, it can be imagined that two flint bowties were fixed by a cord to each side of the donkey figurine, either horizontally as grain bundles or, perhaps somewhat more likely, vertically as double panniers. Of course, there is a huge chronological gap between the Hierakonpolis flints and dynastic depictions, but models or imitations of bags and slings denoting transport are also attested in Early Dynastic times.

Throughout the dynastic period, the depictions and models convey the same idea, regardless of whether sheaves or bags full of grain are represented, alone or on pack animals: the infinite supplying of the deceased with agricultural products. The same concept might therefore also be applied to the flints at HK6.

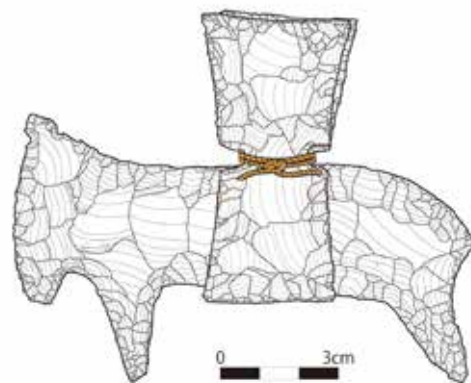
If this (admittedly speculative) interpretation of the bowtie flints is correct, it has some interesting, albeit not completely surprising, implications. It would mean that the range of animal species depicted by the Hierakonpolis

figural flints would also encompass, in addition to the hunting dog, another domestic creature: the donkey, as the principal beast of burden. Almost all species represented in flint are also attested by physical remains buried at HK6, and this includes four potentially domestic donkeys (one from around Tomb 14 and three babies in Tomb 111). The identification as domestic and the association with the bowties would then add to the overall picture of a well-organized ritual landscape displaying the basic concepts of 'order over chaos', apotropaic magic and the eternal provisioning of the deceased. The distribution of the flint objects, often found at the corners or boundaries of mortuary buildings and complexes, certainly seems to reflect a ritual purpose.

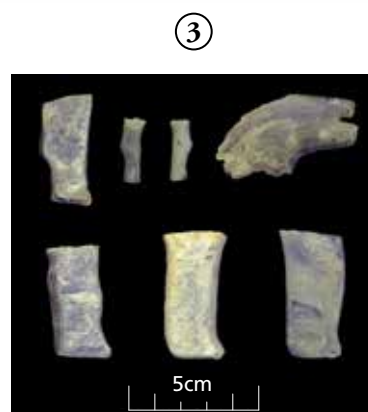
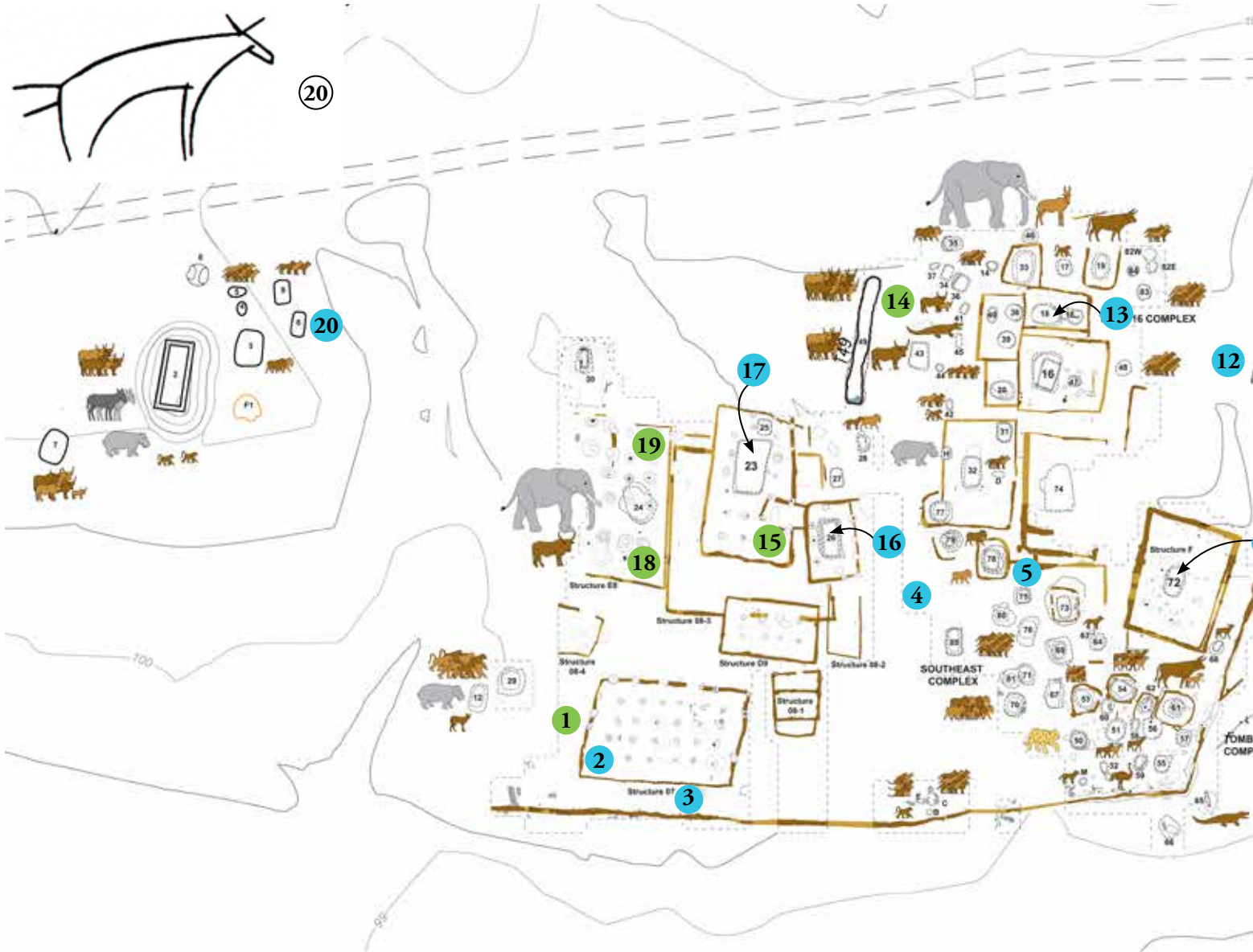
Finally, recent research suggests that the figural flints from HK6 were commissioned, and in some cases created as sets, specifically for use in this elite cemetery. In view of the six bowties so far attested and the burial of the three baby donkeys mentioned above, I would propose that at least two more donkey flints were originally present. Alternatively, instead of three, representing the plurality or even the totality of potential pack animals, a set of four donkey flints might plausibly have been created, representing the cardinal points from which such provisions could or should be received. It is to be hoped that, despite these difficult times, ongoing excavations at HK6 will discover answers to this and related questions. 🐴



Wooden tomb model of donkeys with separately modeled panniers. Middle Kingdom. Roemer-Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim, inv. 1891.



Flints together: A tentative reconstruction.





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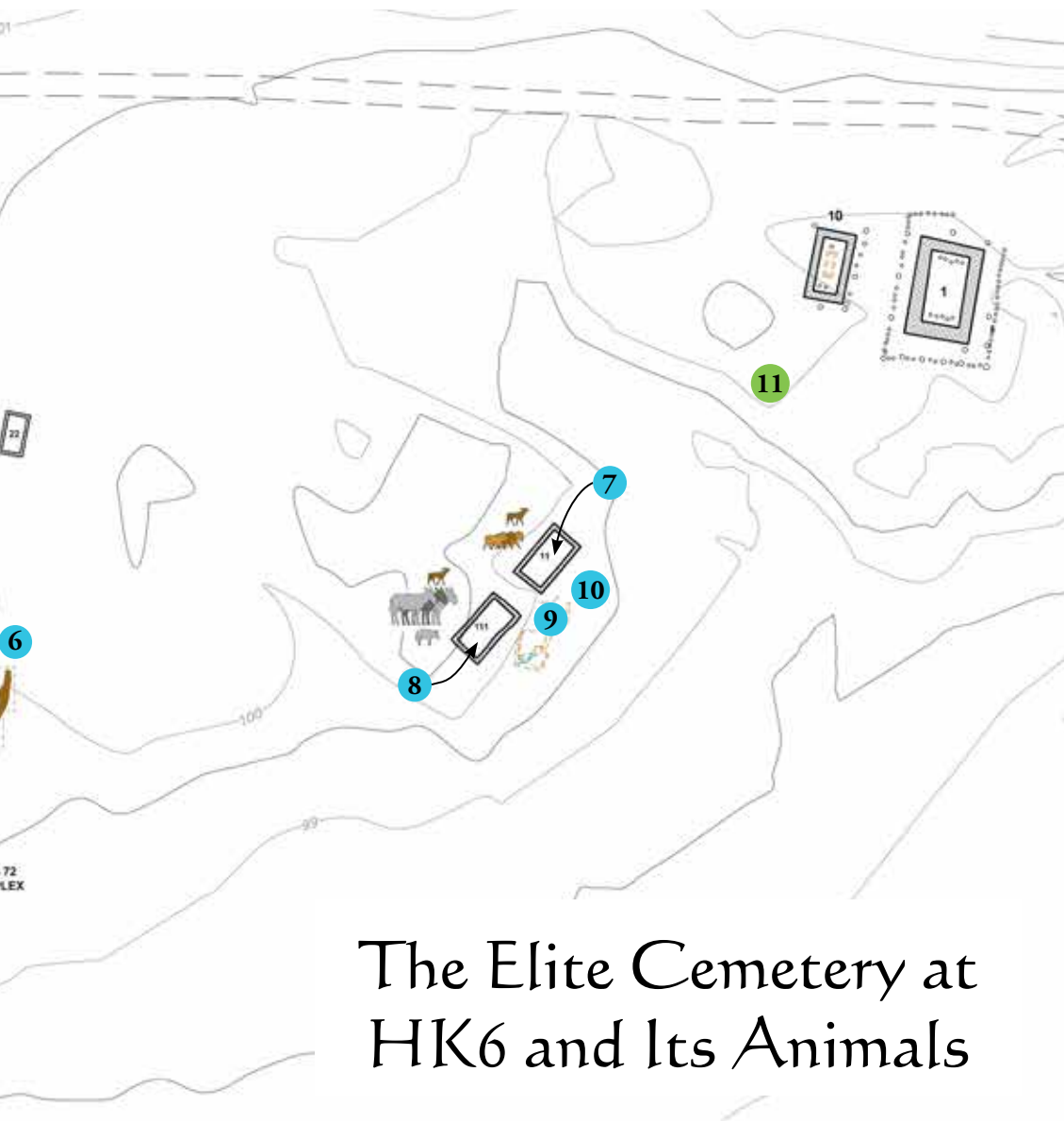
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The Elite Cemetery at HK6 and Its Animals



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2cm

The Art of Intrigue: The Hierakonpolis Painted Tomb

— Renée Friedman and Xavier Droux, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Genève

Whether it represents episodes in an epic cycle, highlights of a funerary ritual, an early royal festival or simply isolated vignettes, the Painted Tomb (Tomb 100) remains as fascinating today as it was when discovered over a century ago (on February 5, 1899). Few finds from Hierakonpolis have generated so much discussion, and rightly so. The surviving grave goods date it to Naqada IIC/D, making this tomb the earliest in Egypt to have painted walls, and it is still the only Predynastic example known. Yet what do we really know about it? It seems the answer is both a lot... and very little.

Striking is its size. The main panel is nearly 5 meters long, allowing for greater detail and complexity than is usual in Predynastic art. In addition, it provides us with a very rare glimpse of a world in colour: a desert yellow hue for the background; figures in white, red, and black; and boat hulls filled with green. While it is the spectacular boats that attract the eye, and the human figures in their various poses that have prompted much discussion, here we concentrate on the plethora of animals spread throughout the decorated space. Species include ibex, gazelle, oryx, hartebeest, aurochs, donkey, lion, dog, and a variety of birds.

Full comprehension of the tableau and the animals within it is hampered to some extent by the state of preservation: the right side of the painting was heavily damaged, giving the perhaps erroneous impression that the figures are more numerous on the left, the direction in which the boats are heading. In actuality, the composition may have been more balanced than it now appears. Nevertheless, the first and most obvious observation is that we are not viewing a naturalistic landscape. While the boats suggest a riverine

milieu, Nilotic fauna, such as hippopotami and crocodiles, so prevalent in the mobile art of the earlier Predynastic, have given way to desert dwellers. The river clearly remains central, but it is no longer symbolized by the dangerous and powerful creatures lurking in its waters. Instead, the Nile is now tamed and ordered, an avenue for movement and transport marked by the large and elaborate boats, which wend their way through the wilderness represented by the fauna of the deserts. The same dichotomy can be seen in the scenes applied to the numerous so called 'boat-pots' of Decorated ware, which are contemporary with the tomb painting, and with which it is often compared. However, crucial differences exist between them with regard to the species portrayed and the way they are used. While desert animals are shown being hunted, captured, and sacrificed in the tomb painting, this is hardly ever the case on pottery.

Filling at least one-third of the wall on the upper right are dynamic scenes of hunting. Just preserved on the top edge is a male figure lassoing a long-horned aurochs (?), while nearby a large black canid (?) pursues several oryx, perhaps causing the wild donkeys below to scatter. Further to the right, in a composition reminiscent of earlier art, two dogs (one with collar) attack two ibexes while a human hunter cheers them on. There can be little doubt that these scenes were designed to show the traditional theme of chaos being brought under control, and this same concern is developed in other parts of the wall in some new and different ways.

In the lower centre of the tableau, a series of vignettes, possibly meant to be considered as a group, show the control of both animals and humans through sacrifice and combat



Left side of the Painted Tomb main tableau. Compiled by Joel Paulson from the facsimile of F.W. Green.


apparently in a ritual setting. Perhaps framing this ensemble are gazelle, identified by their forward pointing horns, which are presented in some rather uncomfortable positions. On one side, two are bound together head to foot; on the other, four gazelles and a hornless kid (?) are confined in a circular trap. Notable are the colours applied to them. While the outlines are relatively naturalistic, the colours filling them are not, and have been applied mainly for decorative effect. Near the bottom of the scene is a hartebeest with characteristic lyre-shaped horns that looks backwards, as if startled by the lasso that ensnares it, while above is a trussed cattle effectively portrayed in the process of being sacrificed. Notably, all of these species have counterparts in the faunal remains at HK29A.

More ambiguous are the various antelopes and birds shown meandering above this grouping. One is clearly an oryx, rendered in a very realistic form and colour, suggesting actual familiarity with this species, which is known for living preferably in the remotest desert. The birds, large and black (guinea fowl?) and small and white, are interesting additions, heralding the increased importance and diversity of avian fauna (along with oryx and lions) that will become a feature of later art, as seen most clearly in the ivories of the Main Deposit (see next article). None of these creatures show any indication of being hunted or disturbed and their meaning and associations are unclear. The same is true for the four recumbent ibexes resting on a ground line positioned above the large boat at the top edge of the wall. They appear quite disconnected from the dynamic activities taking place below and may represent the animals the way they were observed in their natural setting, resting on a steep hill or atop a cliff.

While all of the motifs in the painting are of interest, the most intriguing are certainly those on the far left side.

The most eye-catching is the so called ‘master of animals’, a male figure, with black featureless face—possibly masked—standing between and holding up two rearing lions. The core motif is of Mesopotamian origin and redolent of triumph on its own, but here it would seem the story is expanded and enhanced. In the top left corner, two other, or possibly even the same, large felids are shown within a poorly preserved scene of hunting and trapping. Notably, they are also ‘controlled’ by a male figure with the same featureless black head who raises a mace above his head in what will become the classic smiting pose. Mirroring this action, on the lower left, another man in the same pose subdues human captives. The message is clear, and while not new, the use of large carnivores and shackled humans to tell the tale anticipates their greater use in the succeeding Naqada III period.

Considered all together, the animals presented in the Painted Tomb can be understood within themes of great symbolic importance: power, ritual sacrifice, and control. Yet the disjunction between animals portrayed and those known from the faunal remains (e.g., oryx, ibex, lion), cautions us that these creatures may have been imbued with other meanings, above and beyond the hunt, and may reflect the spiritual or political aspirations of its owner.

While the contemporaneity of all the painted elements on the tomb wall has been questioned, we see no distinctive stylistic nor thematic differences to support the adding or updating of the image on separate occasions. Instead, having been built and decorated at a time of crucial transition in both society and the arts (in which Hierakonpolis certainly played an important role), we feel it should be viewed as a unique window onto the evolving and ever intriguing way the Hierakonpolis elite chose to express changing concepts and rituals of power in the lead up to the dawn of the dynastic age. 



Right side of the Painted Tomb main tableau.

Animals from the Hierakonpolis Main Deposit

—Liam McNamara, Lisa and Bernard Selz Curator for Ancient Egypt and Sudan, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Ranging in date from the late Predynastic period to the earliest dynasties (Naqada III), the objects from the Main Deposit on the town mound at Hierakonpolis constitute the largest and most diverse group of the so-called ‘temple deposits’ excavated in Egypt to date. As such, they provide a valuable window onto this dynamic period of transition in the development of ancient Egyptian civilization and the ways of expressing concepts that were important to it. Among the hundreds

of artefacts found in the Main Deposit, representations of animals are numerous and varied, yet only a few examples were illustrated by Quibell and Green in the original excavation reports (*Hierakonpolis I and II*), providing a limited impression of the full range of the finds.

Perhaps the best-known depictions of animals from the cache occur on the Two-Dog Palette. Its two sides are carved with a variety of creatures, both real and imaginary, arranged in a lively composition within which predatory carnivores pursue weaker herbivores (see *Nekhen News* 30: 33–34). Featuring leopards, lions, wild and domestic dogs, as well as gazelle, Barbary sheep, hartebeest, aurochs and giraffe, many (but not all) of these animals would have been familiar to the early elite at Hierakonpolis who captured, kept and sacrificed living exemplars. To what extent such animal-gathering activities continued to be practised at the time this palette was made remains to be determined, but the correspondences



The Two-Dog Palette depicting animals real and imaginary (Ashmolean AN 1896-1908 E.3924). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

among the species depicted and those captured or interred may not be entirely fortuitous.

Many of these animals were also known in the iconography of earlier times, but are now shown in a more naturalistic style. Augmenting the corpus are new additions, including leopards and wild dogs, as well as composite creatures such as serpopards and griffins. Other species to enter the repertoire are baboons and a variety of birds, while old favourites like hippos and crocodiles almost completely disappear. Accompanying this increase in the range of species, there is also an apparent division in the media on which they are depicted, likely reflecting the purpose of the objects and the meaning(s) invested in specific animals.

For example, a wide variety of fauna is represented in three-dimensional figurines, with at least 12 different species modelled in faience, while the range becomes more restricted as the value of the raw material and the quality of the workmanship increases (see table). This is particularly evident in the case of ivory, which was more often used for carving human figures in the round

(see *Nekhen News* 31: 15–17). Of the 20 examples of animals in ivory from the Main Deposit, the majority are either lions or dogs, both only very rarely known in any other medium. A number of the dogs have slots for securing separately modelled legs and tails, suggesting that they were freestanding and perhaps intended to be displayed



Faience models of animals: dog, maribu stork, hippo, baboon and Besia oryx (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.1, E.3, E.5, E.7, E.191). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Ivory dog with collar; separately modelled legs and tail are now lost (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.310). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Scorpion models carved from serpentine, rock crystal and malachite in iron-rich sandstone (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.194, E.205, E.204). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

in tableau scenes together with the human statuettes. The single ivory figurine of an ox (Cairo JdE 32171) is similarly constructed, with holes for attaching legs and horns, and may have been exhibited in a comparable manner.

Cheaper materials, mainly faience, were used to model hippo, fish, pig, hyena, oryx and trussed cattle, perhaps to serve as representations of animal sacrifice or food offerings. However, the majority of the figurines seem to have carried a different significance and the animals portrayed occur in a more varied range of materials. Baboon figurines are the most frequent and are generally believed to refer to ancestral spirits. The baboons buried around the elite tombs at HK6 remain the only physical evidence for this exotic animal in the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods, and it is tempting to suggest that the memory of those buried in the cemetery influenced the adoption of this icon.

An association with another early divinity can also be suggested for the models of scorpions, already known from HK6, that were very popular in the Main Deposit, where they occur in a variety of sizes, materials, and qualities. There are 11 examples in faience, at least three in ivory, as well as 12 spectacular specimens in various stones (limestone, serpentine, malachite and rock crystal), which rank among the finest sculpture of the time. Several frogs in rock crystal, serpentine and travertine may also evoke a divinity, as well as figurines in various materials depicting falcons and other birds, although divine associations here are less assured.

Representations of animals carved in raised relief are particularly prominent among the ivory and bone artefacts

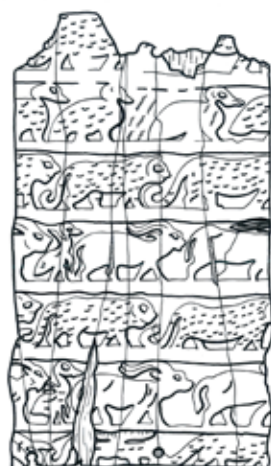
from the Main Deposit, but appear to favour a different range of species. The fragmentation of these objects and the poor preservation of their surfaces, compounded by early attempts to conserve them (see *Nekhen News* 31: 15), make many of the motifs difficult to decipher. Identification of the animal species is often a challenge, as is determining the type and number of objects on which they were carved — some appear to be parts of furniture fittings, sceptres, wands, or decorative inlays. Much remains unclear and there is little comparative material, since outside of Hierakonpolis (other than on knife handles) relief carving on ivory is extremely rare.



Bone cylinder with maces, giraffe and collared dogs (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4714).

Compositions for two-dimensional depictions mainly involve animals arranged in rows, often (but not always) on ground lines. This arrangement dominates on a group of bone cylinders from the Main Deposit. These tubes were perhaps originally slotted or tied together to form handles, with holes at the top and bottom for securing them to each other, or for attaching stone mace-heads. The decoration on one cylinder (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4714) appears to depict four maces mounted on handles standing upright in a central register of animals, which includes a (probable) gi-

raffe — an animal rare on the Hierakonpolis ivories, but better known in a recurrent sequence carved on knife handles. The quadrupeds in the rows above and below are likely dogs, with short erect tails, which appear to wear collars, implying human control. Rows of animals on the cladding of ceremonial mace-handles would have been a particularly appropriate symbol to carve on a weapon that could be deployed to contain 'unrule'. When rotated, the cylindrical shape of such handles creates the impression of a continuous



Bone cylinders with alternating rows of leopards (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.163, E.4987). Drawings by L. McNamara. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

procession of animals, and in this way they are comparable to the decoration on other carved objects from the late Predynastic period on which long rows of animals are arranged to represent the ordered natural world.

One series of cylinders features registers of spotted felines, presumably leopards, alternating with rows of other animals. This is well illustrated by a previously unpublished bone cylinder (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.163), which preserves seven registers. Every other row is filled with two large leopards with long curling tails and spotted coats indicated by a series of curved incisions. However, in the bottom row — although difficult to distinguish because the animals have been compressed to fit the space — one of the leopards is replaced by a winged griffin, a creature that makes an appearance on several other ivories. Between the rows of leopards is one register containing three birds with short legs and small beaks, while two further rows are filled by two horned animals (oryx and gazelle?) together with a bird with outstretched wings, a combination that also recurs on other ivories.

Additional members of this series include Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4987, which features rows of leopards alternating with horned animals; some cylinders in the Petrie Museum (UC27651 and UC27653); and a number of objects that are usually curved (perhaps wands, magic knives, or sceptres). The same alternating sequence of spotted animals may also be present on the flat side of the knife handle from HK6 Tomb 111 (see *Nekhen News* 30: 7), a pattern not seen on any other knife handles, where leopards do not occur in the animal processions. The significance of the leopard skin was well known throughout ancient Egyptian civilization, although the animal itself is more rarely pictured. An unpublished ivory model of a couchant leopard from the Main Deposit (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4924), with a small hole drilled in its

under-belly, may represent a standard that was originally mounted on a carrying pole. The frequency of leopard depictions among the Hierakonpolis ivories (in general and by comparison with lions, which are relatively rare) is notable and may suggest the animal had local resonance.



Ivory model of a spotted leopard (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4924). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Another animal also favoured at the site is the scorpion, as evident from its prevalence among the models. Although not common in two-dimensional representations, a large scorpion is intricately carved on the top of a spectacular sceptre head (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.312), where it appears to be leading an array of varied species arranged behind it. With a similar placement, another large scorpion is also present on the boss side of the HK6 Tomb 111 knife handle. By contrast, the falcon is given no special prominence among the ivories (perhaps surprisingly, considering the site's later association with this bird) and instead varieties of ducks, ibis and storks are far more common.

There can be no question that these representations and patterns were governed by a syntax in which certain



Ivory sceptre head showing a large and detailed scorpion leading the way for a varied selection of real and mythical animals (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.312). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



The ivory knife handles of Hierakonpolis. Above: Handle from HK6 Tomb 111 with scorpion in bottom register heading a procession of animals. Below: Handle from Main Deposit with elephant on snakes motif (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4975). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

combinations of animals had specific meaning(s). Other 'syntactic combinations', appearing on several decorated ivory knife handles, include a recurrent arrangement of storks and giraffe, as well as elephants on snakes. The latter motif is given special prominence on a knife handle from the Main Deposit (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4975). Below a representation of a shrine and behind what may be a seated king, there is an African elephant standing on the intertwined bodies of two large snakes whose rearing heads are level with the elephant's trunk. Explanations of this motif range from the crushing of evil (referring to the supposed enmity between elephants and snakes in the natural world) to the combination of powerful forces, with the elephant carried along by the snakes serving perhaps as proto-uraei. Whatever the meaning, the location of this large elephant on the Hierakonpolis knife handle indicates a connection to royalty, much as the actual elephants buried at HK6 must have implied when alive.

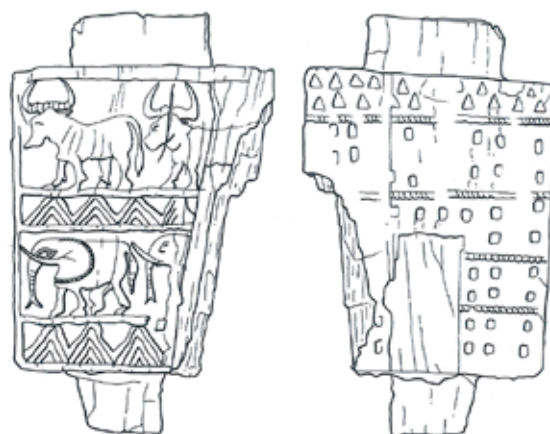
The African elephant also features in another recurrent motif among the Hierakonpolis ivories, particularly on items with projecting tenons at the top and bottom that suggest they were slotted into elaborately decorated furniture. On one side of a thick rectangular panel (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4716) are two registers, the upper one showing two bulls and the lower two intricately carved elephants moving left atop a horizontal band of triangular

Animal Species in Main Deposit	3D models			2D depictions
	Faience	Ivory	Stone/other	X= ivory/stone, P= palettes
Baboon	26		3	
Barbary sheep				X;P
Birds general	4		3	X;P
Cats wild/unid				X
Cattle domestic	1	1		X
Cattle wild				X;P
Dogs	2	5		X;P
Dogs wild				X;P
Elephant				X
Falcon	1	1	2	X;P
Fox/jackal				X;P
Fish	1	1	1	
Frog	1		3	
Gazelle*				X;P
Giraffe				X;P
Hartebeest				X;P
Hippopotamus	1		1	
Hyena	1			X?
Ibex				X;P
Leopard		1		X;P
Lion		8		X;P
Oryx	2			X;P
Ostrich				X;P
Pig	1			
Sheep/goat				X
Scorpion	11	3	12	X
Vulture				X

* Includes unidentified horned quadrupeds



Photo: L. McNamara



Animals on hills: Ivory furniture fitting featuring bulls and elephants. (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4716). Drawings by L. McNamara. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

chevrons, presumably stylised representations of mountains. A similar ivory panel (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.101) preserves an ibex and, below, a canid (possibly a jackal) moving right atop mountains. Elephants on mountains again feature on a heavily degraded ivory plaque in the Petrie Museum (UC14863), which also includes a register showing human figures carrying crooks. Another long panel in the Ashmolean (AN1896-1908 E.100 + E.4740) is decorated with a bovid on mountains above male figures standing atop palace façades. All of these examples situate the motif in a more diverse context than other compositions.

The 'animal-on-mountains' motif is not restricted to Hierakonpolis. It also occurs among the signs carved on the sash of one of the Min colossi from Koptos (Cairo JdE 30770), on labels from Abydos Tomb U-j and in rock art. Its reading and meaning are much discussed, with proposals suggesting they signify the names of early rulers of Dynasty '00', or that they designate places or clans. However, perhaps for the examples at Hierakonpolis, interpreting these images as representations of exotic animals originating in mountainous foreign lands is less speculative and retains a reference to the importance of the capture, control and display of the wild forces of nature so evident in the faunal remains at the site. Even if only used in a decorative fashion, the original symbolism of such motifs could have remained in the minds of the artists who created them.


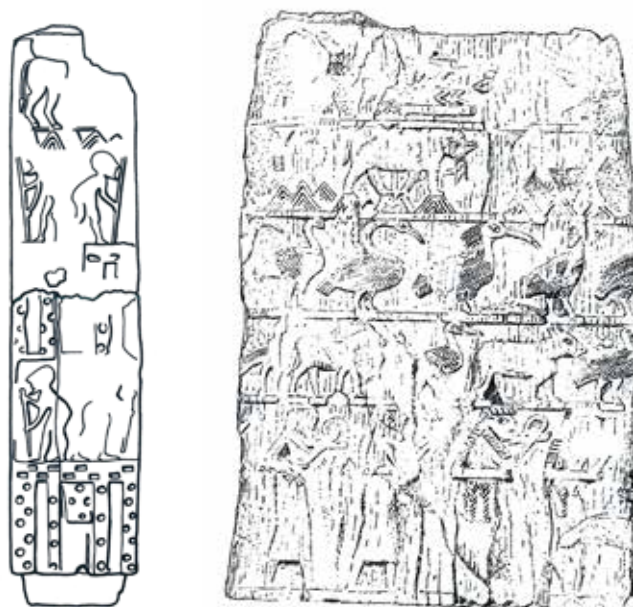
Clearly, through the medium of animals at Hierakonpolis, a message was being sent. Unfortunately, the meanings of so many of the beguiling, albeit relatively short-lived, motifs from the transition to the Early Dynastic period preserved in the Main Deposit are now lost to us. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see in them a special relationship with, and an active memory of, the spectacular menagerie of animals that were interred with the site's early elite in the cemetery at HK6. 



Photo: L. McNamara



Furniture fitting with ibex and canid on hills (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.101). Drawing by L. McNamara. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Animals on hills in wider contexts (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.4740+E.100 and Petrie Museum UC14863).

Ashmolean Object in Focus: Pottery Lion

—Liam McNamara, Lisa and Bernard Selz Curator for Ancient Egypt and Sudan, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

This spectacular pottery statue depicting a lion on an oval base was discovered during excavations at the site of ancient Nekhen conducted by James Quibell in 1897–98. It had been cached together with two copper statues of King Pepi I (see *Nekhen News* 18: 27–28) and a siltstone statue of King Khasekhem (pair to the limestone example in Oxford – see *Nekhen News* 29: 25–26) in a pit below the floor of one of the rooms in a five-chambered building in the centre of the temple enclosure. In this context of objects spanning Dynasties 2–6, the lion probably dates towards the end of the range on stylistic grounds.

The statue is modelled in Nile silt that has been imperfectly fired so that the core of the material is black and porous. The outer surface, however, has been coated with a layer of red haematite and burnished to a high gloss before firing. It is the moist soil in which the statue was found that has caused flaking and mottling across parts of the surface. Examples of ancient Egyptian ceramic sculpture on a large scale are very rare, but not unknown even from earlier times, as shown by the nearly life-sized hippopotamus from HK6 (see page 21). The modelling and firing of such large pieces in this medium must have posed considerable artistic and technical challenges.

The lion's face, muscular body and paws are modelled with striking realism, while the circular mane around its face (running into the ears) and the square, bib-like fall of hair onto the chest are highly stylised. The tail curled around its rump and rear leg suggests repose and the animal's toes appear relaxed, yet its bared claws threaten a powerful strike. The size of the mane may be significant: lions grow large manes in cool, wet environments, so the relatively modest mane on this example may indicate adaptation to the warmer climate in Egypt around the time the statue was created. The oval base was perhaps added for technical as well

Object Factfile

Findspot: Five-chambered building, Temple enclosure, Hierakonpolis

Material: Fired clay

Height: 42.4cm

Date: about 2325–2175 BC

Museum No.: AN1896–1908 E.189

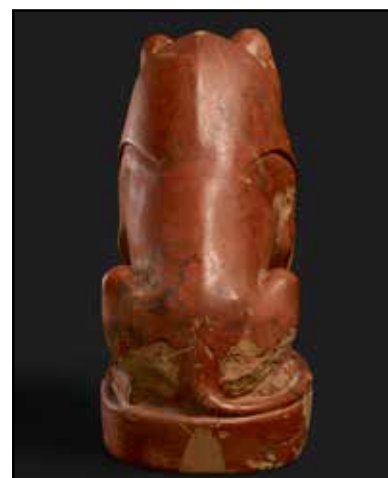
Source: Egyptian Research Account 1897–99



© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

as functional reasons, possibly serving as a shallow trough to collect libations poured over the statue.

The head is disproportionately large for the body, but the overall impression is one of power and majesty; however, royal connotations here are unlikely. Instead, the lion's power is put toward protection. In ancient Egyptian mythology, paired lions often served as the guardians of entrances, and leonine sculptures performed the same function in temples. This figure may have had a companion as the excavators report finding fragments of another pottery lion elsewhere in the temple enclosure, and together the two probably stood on alert within the precinct. This surviving example is a masterpiece not only of ceramic craftsmanship, but also of the animal art for which Hierakonpolis is well-known. 🦁



On guard: Pottery lion, front, side and back. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Animals in the Dynastic Tombs at Hierakonpolis

—Renée Friedman and Vivian Davies

With the dawn of the Dynastic era the central role of animals recedes, and broadly speaking, in later tomb scenes, animals are depicted mainly for their utility as a food source or beasts of burden, ensuring the continuity of supplies in the afterlife. Such compositions, though not without their charm, tend to follow a set formula. This can be seen in the decorated Dynastic tombs at Hierakonpolis with scenes of cattle crossing a water course or used in ploughing, as in the early Middle Kingdom tomb of Nyankhpepy or the 18th Dynasty tomb of Djehuty. Another common trope, the general herding and parading of cattle, is present in both the late Middle Kingdom tomb of

Horemkhawef and Nyankhpepy's, though here a fairly uncommon vignette of two bulls fighting is also included. When it comes to wild animals and scenes of hunting, however, it is here that artistic creativity can truly be unleashed. Despite the battered condition of the tombs at Hierakonpolis, we are lucky to still have some rather exceptional compositions that serve as excellent examples of this originality and imagination. In the tomb of Nyankhpepy, some of the scenes may even depict events that actually occurred.

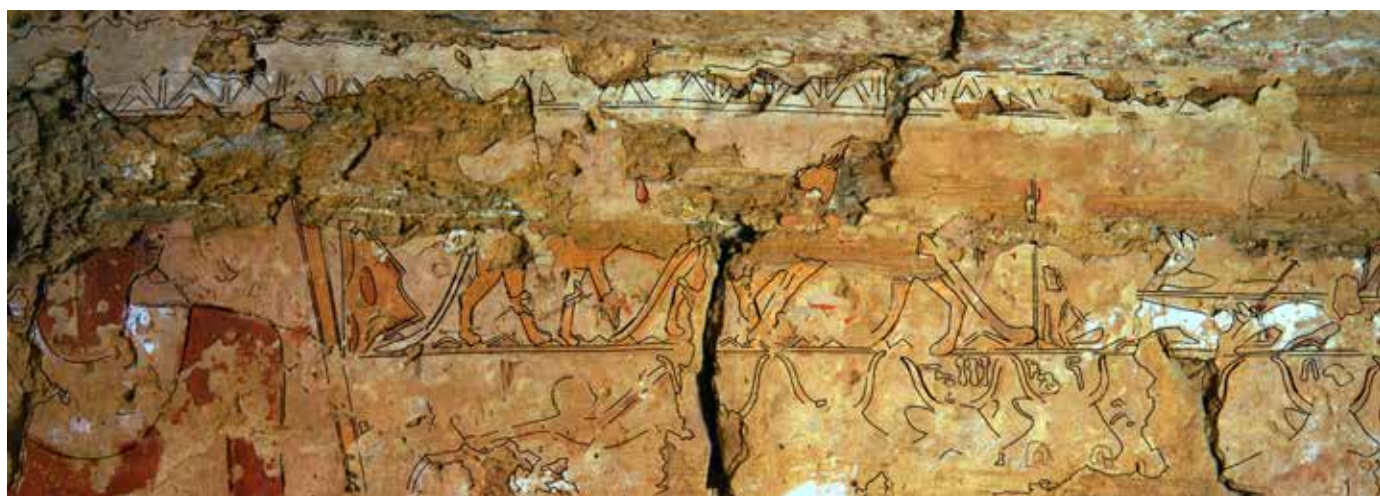
Case in point is the capture of the crocodile that threatened the crew as they endeavour to free the tomb owner's boat from a sandbank. This unique and lively scene takes center stage, and is the first image one sees upon entering the tomb chapel. Once the evil crocodile was safely and valiantly caught in the net, clearly, this lucky escape was an event Nyankhpepy wished to be remembered.



Capture of a crocodile (lower right). Tomb of Nyankhpepy.

The south wall may also reflect a spectacle that was actually witnessed. A large figure of the tomb owner fills the left side of this wall. Level with his gaze and apparently engaging his attention, the top register begins with an unparalleled scene of cats fighting. Framing this vignette on the left and right are angular yellow ob-

jects decorated with irregular red spots, possibly animal skins attached to poles being used as hunting blinds, or the walls of a corral in which there are three large felines. Although their heads are not preserved, their identity is made clear from the inscription that once graced the scene reading: 'Lion fighting with leopards...'. From the surviving traces of legs and tails, it is still possible to make out the action: two leopards are attacking a lion from both directions. On the right, the lion and leopard confront one another in battle, while the leopard



Big cats fighting—lion versus leopards. Tomb of Nyankhpepy.

on the left plays its part by apparently biting the tail of the lion as it rears up on its hind legs. Traces of black detailing on the lion's mane are still present, and the leopard on the left has retained a light speckling of small black spots throughout its yellow coat as well as its white tail. The action takes place in the desert and the uneven ground is shown as a series of yellow triangles, some decorated with red spots. To the right, a row of Nubian bowmen (possibly those buried at HK27C) are seated together with their slumbering white dogs. They only watch the fight; their task of capturing and bringing the cats to this location for this memorable event apparently complete.

The approach to hunting scenes takes on a more whimsical turn in the tomb of Horemhawef as was the wont of its celebrated artist, Sedjemneteru (see *Nekhen News* 31: 28–29). To one side of the door, the tomb owner looks onto a tableau containing various wild fauna (including a leopard), while bounding onto the scene from above is a large dog, legs astride, mouth agape. The hieroglyphs written above him give us his name: Khem, meaning 'ignorant' or more affectionately, Dummy. No doubt meant to be humorous, the artist has rather skillfully captured Khem's lack of intellect together with his surfeit of enthusiasm.

In another part of the tomb, the chaotic nature of the hunt is put to particularly good use on an especially unruly element: a large flint nodule protruding from the wall that

could not be dislodged, try as they might. Here the artist has been able to fill the irregular surfaces through changes of pose and orientation, all serving to enhance the sense of panic and movement. One face of the nodule features a man capturing a wild donkey that has been snared in a trap, its right leg held firmly by a rope attached to a large round boulder. On the curve of the rock just above the man, a determined and rather well-endowed dog is shown running at full stretch, his long tail, curled at the tip, extending behind him. He is likely part of the

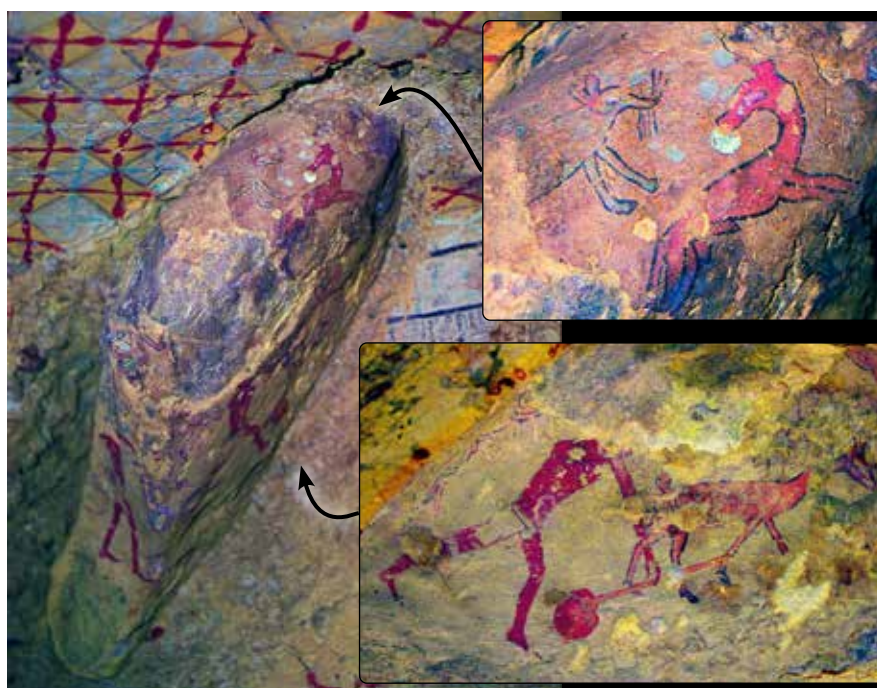
lively scene on the other face of the nodule. Here, a group of animals are being chased not only by dogs, but possibly also by a blue-painted baboon, one of Sedjemneteru's favourite motifs, sadly now preserved only as hands and feet. The fleeing creatures have an unusual appearance with a long bewhiskered snout, short rounded ears and a thick-set body. Wim Van Neer suggests they may be representations of the Egyptian mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*), an animal not otherwise shown as hunted. Again, Sedjemneteru is probably having a bit of fun, as corralling these creatures is probably much like herding cats (and removing the nodule)—simply impossible!

In the well-ordered and idealized world of the tomb chapel, domestic

animals played their defined roles and were important components of the decorative program, but it is in the realm of untamed nature that artistic creativity could really run wild, with the power to amuse and impress even today. 🐾



A dog named Khem. Tomb of Horemkhawef. D-stretch enhanced.



Images of chaos on a chaotic element: The flint nodule and its hunting scenes in Horemkhawef's tomb. Routing mongooses and trapping a wild donkey. D-stretch enhanced.

Animals at HK64

—Renée Friedman

Way back in 1996, when we resumed work at Hierakonpolis, the first indication of the remarkable faunal discoveries to come was uncovered not at HK6 or HK29A, but at an isolated hill on the far north edge of the desert site called HK64 (see map page 2). Here, at the base of the graffiti-covered rocky outcrop, we found a deposit of hundreds of ostrich feathers, all carefully placed in a pit about 50cm in diameter, and topped with a small stone bearing hieroglyphs reading: ‘The Gold, she appears in glory’, referring to the goddess Hathor in her solar function as the wandering eye of the sun.

Based on the pottery (both Egyptian and Nubian) and the plethora of inscriptions left by the many visitors on this remote site, the ostrich feather deposit has been dated to the Second Intermediate Period and connected with a popular celebration when people went out into the desert to welcome Hathor (i.e., the inundation) back from her sojourn in the south. The first inklings of her arrival were possibly visible in the raised water table of the nearby spring and the sprouting of surrounding desert vegetation. Later ritual texts mention that special offerings were made in Hathor’s honour, amongst them the feathers off the backs of ostriches, and the unique deposit we discovered suggests they did exactly that. However, recent reanalysis of the faunal remains by Wim Van Neer and Bea De Cupere shows that the celebrants brought to the festivities more than just feathers. Although the majority of the heavily weathered remains were unidentifiable splinters of long bones mainly from large bovids,

three wild species were identified: notably ostrich (3 bones); Barbary sheep (2 bones); and dorcas gazelle (1 bone). Interestingly, this assemblage is also reflected in the rock art covering the hill.

Amongst the dense accumulation of hieroglyphic inscriptions, sandals and various geometric shapes at HK64, faunal imagery is relatively rare. Perhaps not surprisingly, ostriches are the most frequent (10+ examples), some quite spirited, with wings raised in fright as the hunter approaches, symbolized, as in Predynastic times, only by his bow. Rock art is notoriously difficult to date, but by location and association these ostriches date to the Dynastic period and must relate to the celebrations, whether or not accompanied by an actual ostrich. A drawing of a large cat, likely a lioness, and a cow probably represent Hathor in her various manifestations as an agent of destruction as well as fertility. A few other cattle, endowed with extravagant horns, are in a pecked style better known further south, and together with the Nubian pottery found here may reflect the participation (and hunting help?) of resident Nubian populations who had their own approaches and uses of animals (see next).

More intriguing is the remarkable drawing of a boat and Barbary sheep found painted in black pigment over the densest concentration of petroglyphs on the site. The attributes of the boat date it to the New Kingdom, but the highly stylized rendering of the Barbary sheep below is a bit unexpected for this time. While it may represent the name or emblem for the boat crew pictured above,



Ostriches, ostriches everywhere — in image and in feathers. The inscribed stone with the feathers dedicates the deposit to Hathor.



Big cat: Hathor in one of her guises.

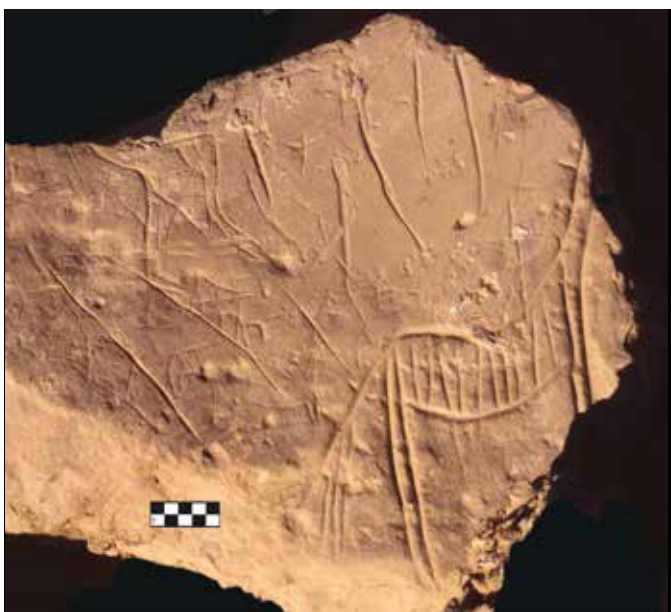


Painted boat and Barbary sheep.

in light of the physical evidence for this animal, it is fun to think it may commemorate their actual contribution to the Hathor party. As desert species, both ostrich and Barbary sheep were evocative of the dry and disordered time that Hathor's return would refresh and contain. The presence of both creatures shows the continuation of the deep-rooted concept of the control of chaos, going back to prehistory, and the use of animals to express it.

Deep roots apply not just to the concept but also to the location itself. A sondage excavation undertaken close to the ostrich feather deposit revealed layers of superimposed campsites with ceramic evidence for activity going back to the Badarian. Rock art likely produced during

the Predynastic was observed on loose stones, some with the appearance of having been forcibly removed from the rock face, perhaps to make room for new inscriptions. One block preserves a gazelle accompanied by a row of notches similar to those well-known in the early rock art elsewhere on site, especially around fauna (see page 12). Two others depict giraffes, an icon that seems to have a particular habit of showing up at locations of significance and repeated use (e.g., the HK11 hill cave and HK61A). Its presence at HK64 attests to the widespread significance this animal had across the site at this time, despite its on-going (and frustrating) absence in the faunal assemblage. 🦒



Giraffe on fallen block with Barbary sheep and other animals behind.



Pecked cattle with elaborate horns in the Nubian style.

Animals Among the Nubian Residents at Hierakonpolis

—Renée Friedman

The importance of cattle in the symbolic world of the Nubian C-Group is well known from their depictions in rock art (see page 33), as clay figurines, and more rarely on pottery. Fragments of one such decorated pot were recovered in our C-Group cemetery at HK27C (see *Nekhen News* 13: 22–28). Together with the companion piece, collected by Henri de Morgan in 1908 and now in Saint Germain-en-Laye (77.740), the reconstructed jar shows two long-horned cows with large and detailed udders. This emphasis suggests their value was more as a source of milk than meat and this impression is further reinforced by the minimal role actual cattle play in the outfitting of the dead (at least in early stages of this culture). Instead, it was ovicaprids (sheep mainly), whole and articulated, that were placed with the deceased, as companions or food offerings, in the graves of Lower Nubia. However, in the C-Group cemetery at Hierakonpolis, this faunal contribution was far more limited. Excavations recovered only elements of the feet, the least meaty part of sheep that were usually fairly young. Yet, these bones were not the random refuse from the funerary meal, but rather a specific selection of one metacarpal and one metatarsal, preferably from the right side and probably from the same animal. Similar remains in the C-Group cemetery at Kubbania (located 17km north of Aswan) suggest this type of offering may have been a regional custom specific to the northern reaches of the culture, perhaps reflecting differences in subsistence methods or funerary beliefs from those living further south. Outside of the domestic herd, a few crocodile scutes and the foot of an eagle owl are the only elements of the wild found at HK27C, but how much interaction with the actual animal they represent is unclear. Within the figural world, other than the cow pot, one bowl bears an ink drawing of what is possibly

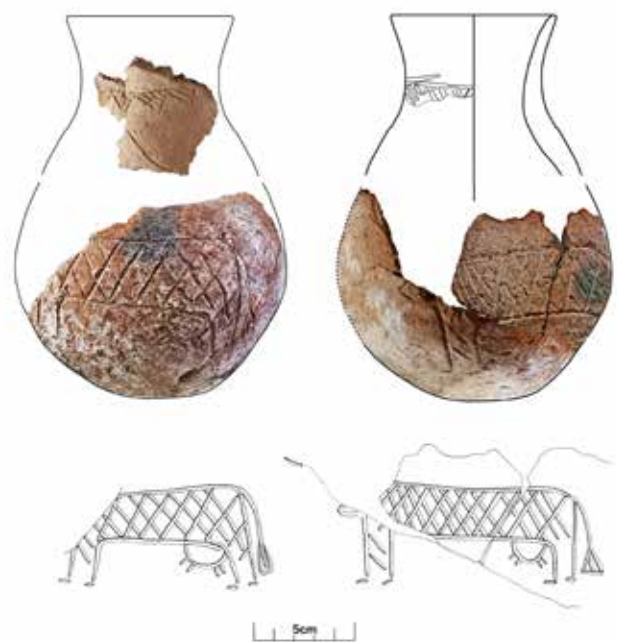
a turtle, and a lightly incised image on a large storage jar depicts what appears to be a two-headed creature of unknown identity.

The nomadic Pan Grave people, on the other hand, appear much more lavish with their animal resources when it came to honouring and equipping the dead. Two customs have been observed in both of the Pan Grave cemeteries at Hierakonpolis, HK21A and HK47. One involved placing a whole sheep on the floor of the grave with the deceased. Although rarely observed at other sites, four out of the 11 adult burials uncovered in our two cemeteries contained a complete animal. At HK21A, each of the two graves that were still well enough preserved to tell had one whole (and still fuzzy) young lamb, while at HK47 subadult and infant sheep were interred (Burials 23 and 21, both males). The second type of animal offering, and perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the Pan Grave culture, concerns the specially prepared and often painted skulls of livestock. These were usually placed on the surface or in a shallow trench surrounding the burial pit. At HK21A, around one of the graves mentioned above, we were lucky enough to find the cut-out frontal bones and horns from the skulls of at least six goats, a few seemingly still in situ (see *Nekhen News* 29: 21).

At HK47, on the opposite side of the concession, the evidence was somewhat better preserved and certainly more spectacular. Burial 23, the largest and richest of the graves so far found in this cemetery, thrilled us with the nearly



Sheep feet: Paired metacarpals and metatarsals from C-Group tombs at HK27C.



C-Group jar decorated with cows. HK27C Tomb 5.

complete skeleton of the large subadult sheep inside the burial pit, while on the surface above it were the frontal parts of four cattle skulls, each painted with patterns in red and/or black pigment. A different design appears on each one, but all were painted in a similar style. Only one has horns. Examination of the others by Wim Van Neer suggests their horns had been intentionally removed when the animals were very young, leaving only the bony stubs that are still visible. This practice of horn removal, or polling, is something we are still investigating. Today it is used to render the animal less dangerous to humans and safer to herd. Cattle crania were not the only offering. In addition, the surface around Burial 23 yielded the skulls of at least six goats, some bearing red paint. Such gifts were not reserved just for men. The neighbouring grave of an adult female (Burial 13) had a number of goat and just a few sheep skulls deposited in a semi-circular ditch. Analysis of better preserved deposits at other sites suggests that the crania were arranged by species and may reflect the composition of the owner's real or ideal herd, with fecund female animals far outnumbering males. Other disturbed finds within the HK47 cemetery included more horn and skull fragments of domestic species as well as one gazelle.

It has been proposed that the decorated skulls commemorated the deceased at or after the funerary feast. However, given the time it may have taken to prepare them (defleshing, cleaning, cutting, drying and painting), they were either prepared well in advance of the burial or were produced after the interment and deposited later. Whatever the case, the way they are laid out suggests they were installed in a single event. Only selected adults were provided with such skulls, but so far there is no apparent pattern at Hierakonpolis, or elsewhere, as to who was honoured with animals and who was not. At HK47, the tomb assemblage placed with the adult male in Burial 23 suggests that he was a person of some importance in his community. His four cattle skulls are above the general average and may have provided him with a suitably special send off, but many other layers of meaning may also be embedded in this act and offering, which we are yet to comprehend.

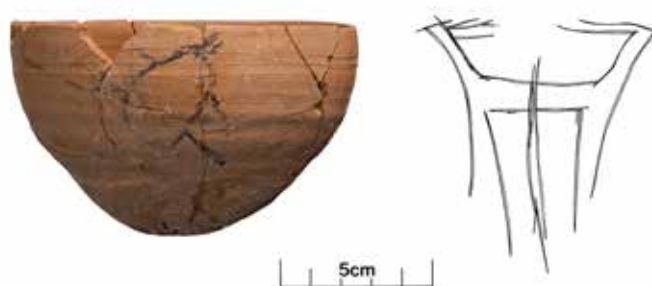
From foot bits to painted skulls, it is mainly the species of the domestic flocks that played varying but also specific roles in the funerary rituals of the Nubian residents at Hierakonpolis. Although patterns can be detected, we still have much more to learn about their customs and beliefs, choices and influences, before we can begin to decipher their intriguing and often colourful language of animals.



Pan Grave provisions: Skulls of cattle with and without horns (above); skulls and horns of sheep, goat and gazelle (below).



The painted cattle skulls emerging above Burial 23 at Pan Grave cemetery HK47.



C-Group drawings: Bowl with turtle and potmark of double animal.

Only at Hierakonpolis: Animal Iconography at the Very Beginning of State Formation

—Stan Hendrickx, Hasselt University, Belgium and Frank Förster

It has long been known that a number of object types are found earlier and often in a more prestigious manner at Hierakonpolis than at any other Predynastic site. Some are even known only from Hierakonpolis. This was already obvious at the end of the 19th century from the spectacular discoveries of Quibell and Green on the town mound at Nekhen, mainly of late Predynastic and Early Dynastic date. For example, while many ivory statuettes from the Main Deposit have parallels at other sites, the ones from Hierakonpolis are generally larger and more carefully made (see *Nekhen News* 31: 15–17). More recently, the exceptional character of Hierakonpolis has become even more explicit from the findings in the early cultic centre at HK29A/HK25, and especially in the elite cemetery at HK6. Although predating by several centuries the ivories from the Main Deposit, the 32cm tall ivory figurine from HK6 Tomb 72 has few contemporary parallels of even remotely the same size. To make this statuette, an exceptionally large hippopotamus tusk must have been selected. This is only one indication of the unique position Hierakonpolis has in the Predynastic landscape, which is not restricted to materials and dimensions, but also concerns iconography and socio-economic concepts.

The statuette from Tomb 72 should represent a leading person, most likely the tomb owner himself, who can already be considered a Predynastic ‘king’. This exalted status is reinforced by the unique pottery vessel found deposited with the ivory figure, possibly together in a wooden box. This pot was impressed before firing with a stylized representation of a large cat, which is probably a lion, an animal that no doubt already carried the royal connotations seen centuries



Ivory statue and decorated pot from HK6 Tomb 72 as found together and after conservation.

later, for example on the Battlefield Palette. Of course, this is just a single find, but it sets the context for the elite iconography at the site.

Another unique find from pillared hall Structure 07 at HK6 is a pair of wands, one of which was decorated with tiny animal figurines carved along its outer curve. Nothing like this has ever been found at any other site. Although the figures are generally considered hippopotami, a hypothetical reconstruction of some broken off elements with the surviving attachments on the wand suggests the animals originally had long tails. Although no actual mends could be made among the loose fragments, nevertheless, identification as lions in our opinion seems more likely. Notably, from the same pillared hall, several pieces of steatite lion figurines were also recovered

(see page 15). Since representations of lions at this early time are very limited, their appearance in different materials and on exceptional objects can hardly be coincidental. This fearsome feline must already have been attributed a specific meaning. These early examples from Hierakonpolis may not be the only depictions known from Egypt at this time, but they are certainly the most remarkable.

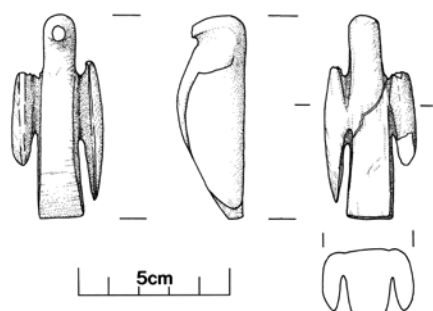
Two other animal representations also stand out at Hierakonpolis: those of falcons and scorpions. Both of them have been found as small stone figurines at HK6, which are by far

the earliest examples known, dating to the early Naqada II period (see page 20). The remarkable malachite falcon figurine from Structure 07 already has the shape of the many falcon images known from late Predynastic and Early Dynastic times, when they occur, for example, as amulets and palettes all over



A lion by the tail? The ivory wand from Structure 07 with hypothetical replacement of the loose elements indicated by underline.

Egypt. However by this time, the extraordinary effort to carve the wings away from the body has been abandoned, while in contrast, the highly stylized rendering of scorpions first known from Tombs 23



The malachite falcon from Structure 07.
Drawing by Jane Smythe.

and 26 (see CF 17–18) will become more naturalistic (see page 25). A number of scorpion tail fragments from Structure 07 and a set of falcon wings from Tomb 23 suggest that these two icons were meant to occur together. This pairing of falcon and scorpion is still reflected in the Main Deposit, where they appear in tandem on a number of objects. In several examples, the falcon sits atop a throwing stick, which it holds in its claws. On the Narmer Palette, it holds a harpoon in the same way. The iconographic combination of falcon

and throwing stick/harpoon could well be an allusion to the way falcons attack at speed from great heights. It is possible that the attribution of anthropomorphic characteristics to the falcon began at Hierakonpolis as well.

Accepting the tomb complexes at HK6 as belonging to regional kings allows us to suggest that the origin of the falcon and the lion (and for a limited time, scorpions) as royal symbols started at Hierakonpolis long before Early Dynastic times. It can hardly be a coincidence that these two important later royal animals were already present in buildings that must have played an important ritual role at HK6. And of course it should not be forgotten that Hierakonpolis



Limestone vessel from Main Deposit with scorpions and falcons on throw sticks (Ashmolean AN1896-1908 E.347). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

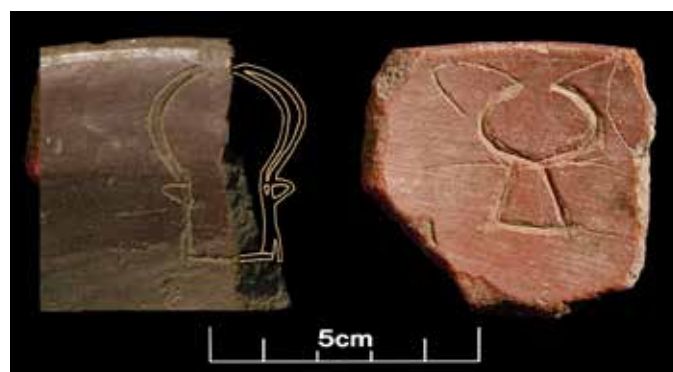
was the 'City of the Falcon' and home to the famous cult statue of gold and copper.

Both the wild bull (aurochs) and domestic cattle are among the animal burials of HK6, and the bull, in particular, will also become an important aspect of royal iconography. Yet, bovids are relatively rare in the iconographic record at the site, probably due in part to the vagaries of preservation. Nevertheless, the various clay figurines known mainly from the settlements at Hierakonpolis (as well as at several

other sites), appear to represent cattle more mundanely as symbolic supplies in a ritual or funerary context or even as possible tokens in an economic context. Thus far, in the early Predynastic period, it is only in the Abydos region that the bull is shown on C-ware as a symbol of power. Obviously, not everything has to come from Hierakonpolis, but bovid-derived symbolism is not lacking at the site. Instead the Hierakonpolis elite appear to have developed their own distinctive motif: the Bat head/emblem. At present, all of the earliest examples of this remarkable iconographic element come from Hierakonpolis.

The Bat emblem, in the form of a stylized bovine head, figures on pottery and sherds from HK6 and HK29A, both, it should be noted, being elite contexts. Representations of this long-lived motif remain exceptional before the Naqada III period, the most exquisite being the examples on the two sides of the Narmer Palette. It is most significant that the abstract Bat head was already a meaningful symbol during the early Naqada II period and not simply an image inspired by nature. In our opinion, there can be no doubt that, in the same way, the depiction of lions, scorpions and falcons was not an arbitrary artistic choice, but already had strong symbolic meaning at this time. The selection of these specific animals reflects their power and threatening character in different environmental contexts, and consequently also the violence that must have been an inherent part of social stratification and, in a broader context, of state formation.

The lion, falcon, scorpion and the Bat head are not part of the 'standard' Predynastic iconography known mainly from White Cross-lined and Decorated pottery. This is an impor-

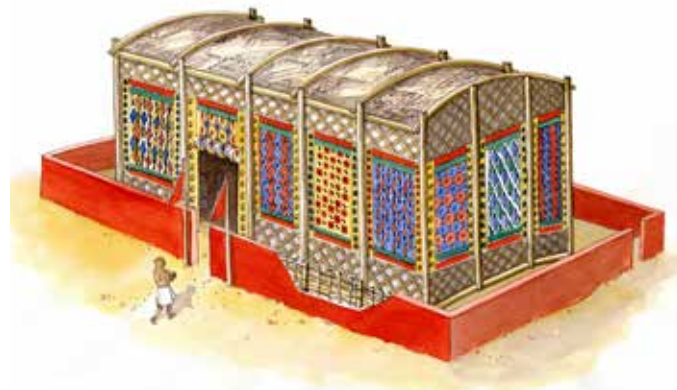


The Bat emblem in its earliest form on sherds from HK6 and HK29A.

tant characteristic for the ensemble of exceptional elements from Hierakonpolis. They are part of another 'tradition'. As a working hypothesis, it can be suggested that at Hierakonpolis an elite iconography (and no doubt lifestyle) was developed that was partly at the origin of dynastic semantics, but remained restricted to elite contexts and possibly resonated only at the site. It only became wide-spread from the early Naqada III period onwards, when state formation was entering its

final phase, and included the development of symbolism centred on the royal image. This was a time of transition and experimentation, but part of the iconography was clearly based on a very old tradition — one deeply rooted in the symbolism developed for the early Naqada II kings at Hierakonpolis.

Despite all the exceptional finds mentioned above, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Hierakonpolis and its elite Predynastic cemetery is the above ground architecture. Built in wood, reeds, wattle and daub, the structures were nevertheless imposing. More significantly, their enclosure walls were at least partially decorated in vivid colours and the complexes must have stood out strongly in the landscape. This necropolis was not just a place to dispose of the dead and forget about them. On the contrary, the large-scale beer and food processing centre at nearby HK11C indicates that it played an important role in socio-religious life, presumably for the entire community. While the small and fine objects used and deposited within were aimed directly at the elite, the elaborate buildings and the



A colourful landscape: Conjectural reconstruction of a pillared hall at HK6. Drawing by Claire Thorne.

festivities organised in or around them conveyed the visual messages to the entire population. This exposure and display may have been essential for the transmission of early Naqada II elite iconography into the final stages of state formation several centuries later. 🏠

Richard L. Jaeschke: In Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart that we note the passing of long-time team member and dedicated conservator, Richard Jaeschke, who left us far too soon at the age of 74 on January 4, 2022. A member of the Hierakonpolis Expedition since 1983, it is no exaggeration to say that almost every object mentioned in this volume (museum collections excepted) benefited from his skilful attention, be it the reconstruction of broken fragments, removal of disfiguring grime and salts, or the consolidation of fragile surfaces. Working sometimes under pretty primitive field conditions, no material was beyond his ken and no artefact was too hopeless to help. Perhaps his greatest triumph was restoring the unique ivory wand from HK6 Structure 07. Found splintered into hundreds of bits, he meticulously refitted the numerous ivory slivers and the tiny carved figures to resurrect this remarkable treasure. With the same determination, he faced even greater challenges at the Fort (Enclosure of Khasekhemy), where he directed the major conservation efforts on its crumbling mudbrick walls from 2004 to 2020, developing the precise recipe for making new bricks and devising the methods for stabilizing its most threatened and dangerous areas. We couldn't have done it without him, and as we continue to follow his road map to complete the restoration and consolidation critical for the monument's long-term survival, it is here that his legacy and memory will certainly live on.

In the coming volume we will celebrate and explore more of Richard's amazing career and achievements at



Richard cleaning the ivory statuette from Tomb 72.

Hierakonpolis and elsewhere. In the meantime, we mourn his passing as we learn to adjust to the loss of his boundless energy, thoughtful and practical advice, patient instruction and endless good cheer, all combined (on cold days) with a piping hot mug of his favourite hot chocolate.

On behalf of the entire Hierakonpolis Expedition and all the local workmen who came to know him so well, we say goodbye, dear friend. You will always be missed. 🏠

The Friends of Nekhen

Nekhen is the ancient Egyptian name for the site of Hierakonpolis, the city of the hawk, and one of Egypt's first capitals. The Friends of Nekhen is a group of concerned individuals, scholars and organizations that is helping the Hierakonpolis Expedition to explore, conserve, protect and publish all aspects of this remarkable site. The largest Predynastic site still extant and accessible anywhere in Egypt, Hierakonpolis continually provides exciting new glimpses into this formative—and surprisingly sophisticated—age, and more.

In return for your contribution you will receive the annual newsletter, the *Nekhen News*, produced exclusively for the Friends. Lavishly illustrated, the *Nekhen News* keeps you up-to-date on all of the Expedition's latest discoveries.

Help the Hierakonpolis Expedition to continue its important work. Your contribution (tax-deductible in the USA) will support vital research that might not otherwise be possible. Share in the excitement and the sense of commitment by making a genuine contribution to the search for understanding. Join the Friends of Nekhen. 🦅

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I would like to help the Hierakonpolis Expedition to explore and conserve the site of Hierakonpolis, ancient Nekhen. In return for my contribution (tax-deductible in the USA), I will receive the annual newsletter, the *Nekhen News*.

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The big task ahead: The Fort's northwest corner.

The Last Major Challenge

In his road map for the rescue of the Fort, Richard Jaeschke always knew the biggest task would be in the northwest corner. Here, almost all of the masonry has fallen away, leaving the north and full-standing west walls without vital lateral support. Estimated to require 80,000 bricks to rebuild, work in the corner was never going to be easy, fast, or cheap. We put it off as long as we could, but have now risen to the challenge! In 2022 we cleared the debris, reinforced the foundations, and set the brick machine in motion. We hope to put in place the first and most critical 1.5 meters in the coming season. But it's a long way to the top. Please help us get there. Now more than ever, your past and future support is deeply appreciated. 🧱

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Animals in Stone and Bone



A Hierakonpolis speciality: Flint critters from HK6 (pages 14–17).



Bea and the crocodile from Tomb 65.



Only at Hierakonpolis: A leopard from HK6 Tomb 50 (pages 5–10).



Pan Grave painted cow skulls (pages 34–35).



Main Deposit imagery (pages 24–28).



Big fish from HK29A (pages 5–10).



Animals in rock art (pages 11–13).