

## THE OASIS PAPERS 10





# **THE OASIS PAPERS 10**

**The Land Where the Sun Goes Down  
The Archaeology of Egypt's Western Desert**

**Proceedings of the Tenth International  
Conference of Dakhleh Oasis Project**

edited by

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with the assistance of  
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ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

13-14 Market Square

Bicester

Oxfordshire OX26 6AD

United Kingdom

[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978-1-80583-223-2

ISBN 978-1-80583-224-9 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: Remains of the temple complex at Mut al-Kharab, Dakhleh Oasis (photo Colin A. Hope).

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## Preface

The volume readers hold in their hands is the tenth in *The Oasis Papers* series, established by the Dakhleh Oasis Project in 2001 and the second to be published by Archaeopress, Oxford. It presents the proceedings of the Tenth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project which was entitled ‘The Land Where the Sun Goes Down – Archaeology of Egypt’s Western Desert’, and took place at the British Museum, London, on 7–8 September 2023. The event formed part of the British Museum’s Annual Egyptological Colloquium and was held in the Stevenson Lecture Theatre. In early September 2023, London offered particularly sunny and hot weather, most fitting for a conference dedicated to the archaeology of Egypt’s Western Desert.

The conference was a joint effort of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, the Dakhleh Oasis Trust, and the Department of Egypt and Sudan in the British Museum, which not only hosted the symposium but also supported it financially and logistically. The organisers, Julie Anderson and Loretta Kilroe from the British Museum and Paweł L. Polkowski from the Dakhleh Oasis Project, were assisted by several colleagues, to whom we are deeply grateful. Among them were Daniel Antoine, Keeper of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, and the Trustees of the Dakhleh Oasis Trust, with Glenys Carter, then Chair of the Trust, Catherine Baines, Judith Trowell, and John O’Carroll in particular. As always, the *spiritus movens* behind it all was Anthony J. Mills, founder of the Dakhleh Oasis Project and its director for several decades. We wish to thank Tony wholeheartedly for his dedication and the unique atmosphere that only he can create.

Like previous conferences, the symposium focused on research in the Dakhleh Oasis and the broader Western Desert. The call for papers generated considerable interest, resulting in 26 presentations, 18 of which were directly related to Dakhleh, including a keynote lecture presented by Colin A. Hope. This is particularly encouraging given that almost no archaeological fieldwork has been conducted in the oasis over the past decade.

Not all presentations were submitted to the proceedings, but those that were convey the spirit of the conference very effectively. The volume contains 19 papers that touch upon a variety of topics, from heritage management (Lamiaa Sayed Abdallah), the spread of domesticated animals in Egypt (Juliet V. Spedding *et alii*), rock art studies (Nourhan Moustafa Ahmed, John C. Darnell, Rita Simon, Paweł L. Polkowski, Nikolaos Lazaridis and Salima Ikram), dynastic and later iconography (Olaf E. Kaper, Laure Pantalacci, Günter Vittman), Ptolemaic and Roman settlements and temples (Roberta Casagrande-Kim, Arnault Gigante and Gaëlle Tallet, Colin A. Hope, Gillian E. Bowen and Iain Gardner, Paul Kucera, Marina M. Serena Nuovo), to Christianity in Dakhleh and Kharga (Gillian E. Bowen and Christian Turney, Victor Ghica, Rhiannon Williams). The paper by Colin A. Hope ranges across all periods from the late Neolithic to late Roman as represented at Mut al-Kharab in Dakhleh. The contributions by Paul Kucera and Günter Vittmann were written specially for inclusion in this volume and not presented at the conference. Such a collection of papers offers a thorough overview of recent archaeological, environmental, prehistoric and historic research and analyses, and related issues across a broad chronological scope.

The Oasis Papers series is among the achievements of the Dakhleh Oasis Project, which celebrated the 45th anniversary of its first survey season during the year of the London conference. Now, with this volume published, we are approaching the 50th anniversary, providing an apt

occasion for reflection. The Dakhleh Oasis Project is one of the longest-running archaeological endeavours, with a substantial record of accomplishments. This is more remarkable given the aforementioned interruptions to fieldwork caused by security concerns and the lack of permissions from relevant authorities. Consequently, the project has focused on desktop studies and new publications recently, while continuing efforts to facilitate a return to the oasis for field research. We sincerely hope that this challenging situation will improve, allowing the Dakhleh Oasis Project, along with many colleagues working elsewhere in the Western Desert, to resume field research. It is our great wish that, when the 11th International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project is announced, the call for papers will attract numerous submissions presenting the results of new fieldwork at Dakhleh and throughout the wider Libyan Desert and beyond.

Paweł L. Polkowski and Julie Anderson  
Poznań/London  
1 September 2025



# Conference Programme

The Annual Egyptological Colloquium 2023

The Land where the Sun Goes Down  
The Archaeology of Egypt's Western Desert

The Tenth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project

7–8 September 2023

The Stevenson Lecture Theatre  
The British Museum

Thursday, 7 September

**Preliminary Remarks** Daniel Antoine, Keeper of Egypt and Sudan, The British Museum

Introduction Anthony Mills, Director, The Dakhleh Oasis Project

**Western Desert Imagery** CHAIR: Julie Anderson

*Seal Carving in Balat in the Late Third Millennium* Laure Pantalacci, Université Lumière Lyon 2, IFAO

*Protodynastic Rock Inscriptions in Two Desert Hinterlands* John C. Darnell, Yale University

*Power and Prestige in Rock Art Depictions of Animals from the Western Desert and Dakhleh Oasis*  
Sebastián Maydana, Universidad de Buenos Aires

CHAIR: Loretta Kilroe

*Reconsidered Interpretation of a Petroglyph Croup at Djedefre's Water Mountain* Rita Simon, Eötvös Loránd University

*The So-Called 'Water Mountain' Symbol in the 'Chufu' Region, Egyptian Western Desert. Insights and Interpretations*  
Nourhan Moustafa, Cairo University and the University of Cologne

*The Future of Rock Art Research in Dakhleh: Prospects and Challenges* Paweł L. Polkowski, Poznań Archaeological Museum

**From the Nile Valley to the West** CHAIR: John C. Darnell

*Bearing Witness: the Late Professor Fred Leemhuis and His Restoration at al-Qasr in the Dakhleh Oasis*  
Yasser Sayed Ali Ahmed

*The Spread of Domesticates across Egypt and their Potential Impact on Indigenous Wild Animal Species during Societal and Cultural Transitions* Juliet V Spedding (University of Liverpool), Salima Ikram (American University in Cairo), Steven Snape (University of Liverpool), Ignacio A. Lazagabaster (University of Liverpool), Chris Thomas (York University), Irene Solano Regadera (University of Liverpool) and Jakob Bro-Jørgensen (University of Liverpool)

*The In-Between – The Fifth Dynasty at Balat* Clara Jeuthe, DAI Kairo

*Preliminary Report about the Archaeological Survey in Abu Gerara* Mohamed Gamal Saleh, Nader El Hasanen, Yasser Farouk and Samar Mahmoud, Grand Egyptian Museum

*Re-Linking Unprovenanced Mummy Masks to the Egyptian Western Desert via 3D Laser Scanning and Photogrammetry* Carlo Rindi Nuzzolo (Yale University/Monash University)

**The Annual Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology** CHAIR: Anthony Mills

*Mut al-Kharab: 3000 Years of Activity at a Cult Centre in Dakhleh Oasis* Colin A. Hope, Monash University

Friday, 8 September

**Roman Dakhleh** CHAIR: Paweł Polkowski

*Recent Discoveries in Bir el-Shaghala Necropolis, the South-Eastern Section* Magdy Ebrahim, Ministry of Antiquities of Dakhleh and Farafra

*The Abandonment of Kellis* Colin A. Hope, Gillian Bowen and Iain Gardner, Monash University

**News from Trimithis** CHAIR: Colin Hope

*NYU Excavations at Ancient Trimithis: Preliminary Report from the 2023 Season* David M. Ratzan and Nicola Aravecchia, New York University and Washington University in St. Louis

*Plaster Architectural Decorations from Amheida's Domestic Contexts* Roberta Casagrande-Kim, New York University

*Lighting Trimithis: Lamps from Late Roman Domestic Contexts* Marina Maria Serena Nuovo, Ministry of Culture, Direzione Regionale Musei Abruzzo

*The Stela of Seth/Horus from Amheida* Olaf Kaper, Leiden University

**Archaeology of the Kharga Oasis** CHAIR: Olaf Kaper

*The Hills of the Temples: Discovery of a New Temple at el-Deir, Kharga Oasis* Gaëlle Tallet and Arnault Gigante, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

*Coptic Texts from the Kharga Oasis* Matthias Müller, MF Oslo and University of Basel

*Christian Archaeology of the Kharga Oasis: Recent Fieldwork* Victor Ghica, MF Oslo

*Dayr Mustafa Kashif and the Episcopate of Oasis Magna in Late Antiquity* Rhiannon Williams, MF Oslo

*New Evidence for the Dating of the Triconch Churches in Egypt* Gillian Bowen, Monash University

**New Insights, Projects and Surveys** CHAIR: Loretta Kilroe

*Managing the Preservation of Archaeological Heritage in the Wadi el-Gedid: Towards Sustainable Development* Lamiaa Sayed Abdallah Abdallal, Central Department of Antiquities of Middle Egypt

*Footprints in the Rock: An Inscribed Outcrop in North Kharga Oasis* Salima Ikram and Nikolaos Lazaridis, American University in Cairo and Sacramento State University

*The People of the Crypt of Amheida Church B7* Peter Sheldrick, independent researcher

*The Manufacture-Related Activities of Women who Inhabited al-Qasr at the turn of the 20th Century – The Case of Handmade Cooking Pots and Basketry Manufacture* Anetta Łyżwa-Piber, The Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures Polish Academy of Sciences (IMOC PAS)

**Closing Words** Paweł L. Polkowski, Poznań Archaeological Museum