
Quseir al-Qadim

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For the past two winters we have surveyed a portion of the Wadi Qash, a major east-west wadi parallel to the Wadi Hammamat. Until recent times, this wadi was used as a major camel-caravan route between Quseir and the Nile valley; this use is attested by campsites with pottery scatters and by a number of "cliff-burials." In a wadi connecting the Wadi Qash with the Wadi Hammamat, we discovered a collection of Old Kingdom private graffiti (and one Middle Kingdom royal cartouche). These materials have now been published (in *JNES*) accompanied by an initial discussion of what prompted people to venture along these routes from Old Kingdom times until the present. We were accompanied on these surveys by Lanny Bell and members of the Chicago House staff, by Jean and Helen Jacquet of the French Mission to Karnak, and by Rabia Hamdan of the Qena Antiquities Inspectorate.

Now our first priority for the Quseir al-Qadim project is the publication of a preliminary report on the third season, which took place in 1982. This report will include discussions not only of the actual excavations but also of the major artifact categories discovered—pottery, glass, wood, coins, textiles, flora and fauna, and inscribed materials. For example, an interesting fact which emerged from the papyri is that there was a *curator* (the holder of a *cura*, or charge) at

Quseir during the Roman period who had under his command perhaps fifty soldiers (with Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Semitic names). This third season of excavations tested typologies for various artifact categories found in this Roman and medieval port and we will now be able to publish these tested typologies in addition to presenting the artifacts themselves. Work on this report hopefully will be completed in 1984.

Part of the problem we have encountered in publishing these artifacts is the lack of comparative materials from stratigraphic excavations in Egypt; this is true for both the Islamic and, somewhat more surprisingly, the Roman periods. For the port of Quseir this has meant that imported goods from India, China or the Mediterranean are often more easily identifiable than the Egyptian component. In 1983 Whitcomb examined a number of comparative ports in Egypt and the Sinai (see O.I. Annual Report, 1982-83: pp. 21-23). This winter we were able to begin investigation of possible comparisons at Luxor. Although the natural terminus of routes to Quseir were the towns of Coptos (Quft) in the Roman period and Qus in the medieval, both of the towns are just north of Luxor and fall within the same cultural tradition as Luxor. Study of the Roman and medieval Islamic periods at Luxor has the advantage that Luxor was inhabited during both periods (as well



as in earlier periods) and should provide a reasonably typical sample of artifacts from both periods.

This interest in medieval Luxor was facilitated by a chance coincidence, as such things often occur in archaeology. Dr. Peter Grossmann, an architect for the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, had just completed a short excavation in Luxor of the last remnants of a Coptic church located directly in front of the pylon of Luxor temple. Grossmann felt that, based on architectural criteria, the church had undergone two major building phases, one in the 6th century and a later rebuilding in the 13th. Grossmann asked Whitcomb to examine the ceramics from this excavation, which turned out to confirm his conclusions. The last period of occupation of this church, in the 13th century, coincided with the time when Sheikh Abu'l Hagag began his organization of the Muslim community in Luxor and came to be buried in the corner of this temple. This period also saw the development of trade through the port of Quseir and, indeed, the ceramics of the Luxor church make very interesting compari-

A view of the Medieval City Mound between the Avenue of the Sphinxes at Luxor Temple and the Nile.

son with those from the excavations at Quseir. One of the most interesting aspects is the strong influence of both Aswan and Nubia on the artifacts and presumably the culture of Luxor and Quseir during this period.

The study of materials in Luxor was facilitated through the hospitality of Chicago House and the assistance of its director, Lanny Bell. Our interest in the remains at Luxor temple encouraged a broader examination of the possibilities of research into Roman through medieval remains in Luxor, which we hope will be a logical continuation of the research begun at Quseir into the cultural history of upper Egypt during these periods.

It is also our pleasant task here to acknowledge with thanks the efforts of those volunteers here in Chicago who have given so much time and effort helping prepare the Quseir materials for publication. These include Sally Zimmerman, Fred Hiebert, and Carol Meyer.