Contents

Preface ................................................................................................................................. IX

Introduction: Why write a book about ancient Asyut?.................................................. 1

Chapter One: Asyut: a wounded city............................................................................... 3
Chapter Two: History of research .................................................................................... 21
Chapter Three: Asyut: its sacred landscape................................................................. 35
Chapter Four: The mountain at the desert edge: functions and changes ................. 59
Chapter Five: Living and dying at Asyut ....................................................................... 107
Chapter Six: Men of influence and power ..................................................................... 129
Chapter Seven: Popular religion in Asyut (Meike Becker) ........................................... 141
Chapter Eight: Ateliers, school, and knowledge ......................................................... 151

Map 1: Gebel Asyut al-gharbi ..................................................................................... 155

Chronology of Ancient Egypt ....................................................................................... 157

Bibliography ................................................................................................................... 159

Indices ............................................................................................................................... 177
This book would not have been completed without the support of many a person. The commitment of Prof. Dr. Ursula Verhoeven (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz) and assoc. Prof. Dr. Mahmoud El-Khadragy (University of Sohag) was and still is invaluable. Together with the author, they have directed the Asyut Project and have contributed considerably to the revival of the extensive fieldwork done in Asyut after more than eighty years of interruption. Furthermore, thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schenkkel and Dr. Mahmoud el-Hamrawi. I owe it to them and their good offices that the German-Egyptian cooperation was able to work out as well as it did.

I am also very much indebted to the Supreme Council of Antiquities, particularly to Dr. Zahi Hawass, Dr. Sabri Abd el-Aziz, and Mr. Magdy el-Ghandour; the General Director of Middle Egypt, Mr. Samir Anis Salib; the Inspector General at Asyut, Mr. Ahmed el-Khatib and his predecessors, Mr. Hani Sadek Metri and the late Mr. Mohamed Abd el-Aziz; the inspector of the magazine at Shutb, Mrs. Nadia Naguib, the accompanying inspectors Emad Bostan Ata, Rageh Darwish Khalaf, Magdy Shaker, and Mohamed Mustafa Al-Shafei; as well as the restorers Ahmed Abd el-Dayem Mohamed, Khalid Gomaa Sayed, Gamal Abd el-Malik Abd el-Moneam, Naglaa Abd el-Motty Fathy, Helal Qeli Attalaa, Mahmoud Hasan Mohamed Sallam.

I am equally indebted to Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (2004), the Fachbereich 9 Philologie of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (2004) and the German Research Foundation (2005 up to the present). Fieldwork to this extent would not have been possible without their financial backing.

Fieldwork would have never succeeded so well without the genuine support of the local ghafirs, especially the Urgestein Quraim (Mohamed Saad Moursi), as well as the police, the military, and reis Ahmed Atitou and reis Zekry supervising the numerous workmen—not to mention the driving skills of Sobhi, who all participants in many ways owe their safety and well-being to.

I cannot thank all of them enough.

In the same fashion, the following colleagues and assistants in the field also deserve to be mentioned. For the last four years, through their own indefatiguable efforts, they have contributed to expanding our knowledge of ancient Asyut and the surrounding area. Participants of the previous four seasons were (in chronological order):

Mahmoud El-Khadragy, Egyptologist (2003-2006)
Eva-Maria Engel, archaeologist (2003-2005)
Ursula Verhoeven, Egyptologist (2004-2006)
Ulrike Fauerbach, surveyor (2004-2006)
Monika Zöller, Egyptologist (2004-2006)
Preface

Omar Nour el-Din, Egyptologist (2004)
Sameh Shafik, epigrapher (2005-2006)
Meike Becker, Egyptologist (2005-2006)
Dietrich Klemm, geologist (2005)
Rosemarie Klemm, Egyptologist (2005)
Christiane Dorstewitz, Egyptology student (2005)
Diana Kleiber, Egyptology student (2005)
John Moussa Iskander, Egyptologist (2005)
Ilona Regulski, epigrapher (2006)
Ammar Abu Bakr, draftsman (2006)
Fritz Barthel, photographer (2006)
Hazim Saleh Abdallah, Egyptologist (2006)
Eva Gervers, anthropology student (2006)
Andrea Kilian, Egyptology student (2006)
Mohamed Naguib Reda, Egyptologist (2006)
Laura Sanhueza-Pino, Egyptology student (2006)

For permission to reproduce photographs I am grateful to Bodo von Dewitz (Museum Ludwig, Köln), James Ede (London), Regina Hölzl (Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien), Christian Leitz (Eberhard Karls-Universität Tübingen), Gertrud Platz (Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), Christiane Ziegler (Musée du Louvre, Paris), and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston.

This book owes its final form to the invaluable support of my wife, Eva-Maria Engel. Christoph Engel produced the layout, the English correction was in good hands with James Goff, Terence DuQuesne, Troy Sagrillo, John Daly, and the Flying Fish Theatre. I feel much obliged to all of them. Finally I am indebted to the Verlag Otto Harrassowitz for publishing this manuscript.

Vienna, May 2007

Jochem Kahl
INTRODUCTION

WHY WRITE A BOOK ABOUT ANCIENT ASYUT?

In pharaonic times Asyut never played a central role in the ancient state. It was never the capital of the splendid empire of those kings who made history for nearly three thousand years from 3200-332 BC.

Asyut was often an important support for the royal court, but sometimes even the opposite. It seems always to have had its own and original creative power. Sometimes in accordance with the canon of the royal court, but more often by seeking and developing its own concepts of art, architecture, and religious beliefs, ancient Asyut as far as modern researches concern is today well known for its own school, a school of craftsmanship and theology, which produced many unique pieces of art and texts, which were highly valued in ancient times and that also have today a permanent place in the scientific discipline of Egyptology.

Not only did Asyut have a relatively distant position with respect to the high culture of the court, but it also provided important impulses to the court and other towns. Often it is mentioned in religious texts as being one of the most important towns in Middle and Upper Egypt. This special role of Asyut, i.e. its position between residential influence and regional traditions, deserves to be examined as an example for high culture outside the royal court.

Due to a poor history of research and the deprival of many of its monuments, Asyut had been forgotten for a long time. Only some of its most beautiful objects, today found in museums and collections all over the world, receive any attention at all. The ancient site, its town, its temples, and its necropolis had not been the focus of any interest since the 1920s. In the 1980s and the beginning 1990s some attempts to start scientific work in Asyut failed due to the danger of terrorism. Only in 2003 a new field-project began: The Asyut Project. A joint mission of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (Germany) and of the University of Sohag (Egypt) surveyed the ancient necropolis, and in 2004 members of these Universities, as well as members of the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Germany), conducted the first archaeological fieldwork there in more than eighty years. According to modern understanding of archaeology, the goals of this fieldwork are not the discovery of single objects, but the reconstruction of the history of the ancient necropolis, and thereby of the ancient town and its different fortunes as a city of culture, as a border town, and as a wounded city, as well as the determination of various phases and functions concerning the use of the western mountain at Asyut. Goals are also safeguarding and restoring ancient monuments in the necropolis, which have suffered much through stone quarrying, tomb robberies, and climatic influences.
This book is intended to contribute to establishing ancient Asyut's place in the memory of modern mankind. It will provide an overview on our present knowledge about the history, the art, and the people of ancient Asyut—an overview, which will hopefully be enlarged by further studies and ongoing fieldwork activities in the near future.