The Social Setting of the Temple of Satet in the Third Millennium BC

(PLATE 3)

By Richard Bußmann

Introduction

The temple of Satet on Elephantine island plays a pivotal role for a discussion among Egyptologists about the nature of Third Millennium BC Egypt. Due to an exceptionally well preserved stratigraphy it was possible to trace the development of the temple through to its origins at the beginning of Pharaonic history in the late 4th millennium. As a result, the temple of Satet has entered the textbooks as a standard model of the history of early provincial temples in Pharaonic Egypt: starting as a local temple at the beginning of the Third Millennium and developing into a royal institution by the early Middle Kingdom. Barry Kemp has argued that Egypt was a country of two disintegrated cultures in this period, a residential and a provincial culture, and that the development of provincial temples is indicative of the gradual colonisation of local communities by kingship. The discussion raises wider questions on models for the integration of socio-cultural centres and peripheries in Ancient Egypt and it has become evident that the central perspective reflected more strongly in royal and elite culture needs to be seen as a distinctive tradition constructed within and responding to a more diverse social and cultural universe.

The exemplary nature attributed to the temple of Satet can easily suggest that all provincial temples of the Third Millennium developed in the same way. It may even seem as if this process was natural, automatic, and not requiring further explanation. However, the development of the temple of Satet has to be seen as the result of both wider macro-historical processes addressed in Kemp’s model and a specific local environment.

The aim of this article is to outline the social setting of the temple of Satet from a local perspective. It will be demonstrated that an integrated approach of material culture, iconography, and textual data helps reveal the complexity of Ancient Egyptian local institutions beyond an elite perspective that tends to dominate the record and interpretation. I will briefly review the archaeological evidence at Elephantine, compare it to other provincial temples and set the results against some observations on the local administration of the temple of Satet. It will be argued that the temple of Satet is deeply rooted in a local social and administrative network and attracted royal interest prior to Mentuhotep II primarily due to its specific location at the southern border of Egypt at the First Cataract.

Elephantine

Traditionally, the history of the temple of Satet is reconstructed on the basis of royal objects. The early mudbrick shrine is centred on a natural niche of granite rocks and lacks any reference to kingship. Royal names appear increasingly in the archaeological record of the later Old Kingdom. The most important object is the naos of Pepi I which may have served a royal cult in the forecourt of the temple (Fig. 1). Royal evidence of the 6th Dynasty also includes in-

2 J. Assmann, Ägypten. Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur, Stuttgart 1991, pp. 48–50, Fig. 4; D. Arnold, Die Tempel Ägyptens. Götterwohnungen, Baudenkämper, Kultstätten, Zürich 1992, p. 94.
5 C. Ziegler, Catalogue des stèles, peintures et reliefs égyptiens de l’Ancien Empire et de la Première Période Intermédiaire vers 2686–2040 avant J.-C., Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris 1990, pp. 50–53; R. Bußmann, Der Kult im frühen Satet-Tempel von Elephant-
scriptions of Merenre and Pepi II on one of the granite rocks\(^6\) and faience plaques inscribed with the names of Pepi I and II\(^7\). The integration of the temple with the natural landscape led to an idiosyncratic architectural layout. Antef II and III maintained the overall design according to KAISER'S reconstruction\(^8\) and added stone lintels, door posts, architraves and columns (Fig. 2). Menthuhotep II replaced the temple with a large building part of which is a monumental basin for the local flood festival (Fig. 3)\(^9\). Menthuhotep III furnished the temple with finely carved reliefs\(^10\), and the stone temple of Sesostris I\(^11\) marks the final stage of the first phase of monumentalization (Fig. 4).

Votive objects were found re-deposited in and under walls and scattered on the floors of the temple. Those made of faience outnumber by far objects of greater intrinsic value made of ivory, travertine, limestone, other hard stones and semi-precious stones as well as simple votive objects made of mud (Fig. 5)\(^12\). Many votive objects represent human beings (Pl. 3a), baboons (Pl. 3b), and other animals (Pl. 3c). ULRIKE DUBIEL has shown\(^13\) the strong overlap of their shapes

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Fig. 1 Elephantine, author's reconstruction of temple of phase IV with naos for cult of Pepi I placed on decayed pillar and wooden posts serving as a new support for the organic roof (9 m \(\times\) 10 m), based on G. DREYER, Elephantine VIII, AV 39, Mainz 1986, Taf. 2a

Fig. 2 Elephantine, reconstruction of the temple of Antef III (10 m \(\times\) 10 m), after W. KAISER, Die Entwicklung des Satettempels in der 11. Dynastie, in: W. KAISER ET AL., Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. 19./20. Grabungsbericht, in: MDAIK 49, 1993, pp. 145–151, Fig. 7

Fig. 3 Elephantine, reconstruction of the temple of Menthuhotep II (18 m \(\times\) 13,50 m), after W. KAISER, Die Entwicklung des Satettempels in der 11. Dynastie, in: W. KAISER ET AL., Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. 19./20. Grabungsbericht, in: MDAIK 49, 1993, pp. 151–152, Fig. 8

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7 G. DREYER, Elephantine VIII, cat. no. 428–445.
9 W. KAISER, op. cit., pp. 151–152.
12 G. DREYER, Elephantine VIII.
also beads and other pieces of jewellery (Pl. 3d). Together with unworked flint pebbles (Pl. 3e) they form a substantial body of easily accessible objects offered in the temple.

**Tell Ibrahim Awad**

At first glance, the small mud brick temple of Tell Ibrahim Awad located in the Eastern Delta is an exact northern counterpart of the temple at Elephantine (Fig. 6). The full documentation of the votive material was published only after the manuscript of this article was submitted and will not be explored on quantitative grounds here. However, some qualitative differences are to be noted. No royal name is attested on any of the objects. Faience seems to be the votive material most often used, but quite a few items are made of ivory and are morphologically comparable to the fine ivories of Hierakonpolis. A dwarf made of carnelian is the most precious object among the finds.

Compared to Elephantine, the temple has never attracted royal attention prior to the erection of the large temple of phase 1 (Fig. 7). However, the quality of some votive objects and the choice of materials point into a slightly more elite sphere of material culture than the votive material of Elephantine.

**Hierakonpolis**

Recent excavations at Hierakonpolis have concentrated on the low desert strip and brought to light, among other things, an elite Predynastic cemetery (Hk 6) with a series of proto-royal tombs. The contemporaneous settlement is located between Hk 6 and the modern cultivation and includes an arena or plaza (Hk 29a) which could have been used for cultic

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19 D. Eigner, *A Temple of the Early Middle Kingdom at Tell Ibrahim Awad*, in: E. C. M. Van den Brink (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition. 4th – 3rd Millennium B.C.*, Tel Aviv 1992, pp. 69–78. It may be questioned, however, whether the temple of phase 1 was erected by kings because no royal name was found associated with the building.

Fig. 6  Tell Ibrahim Awad, temple of phase 2c (7.50 m × 12 m), after D. Eigner, *Tell Ibrahim Awad. Divine Residence from Dynasty 0 until Dynasty 11*, in: Ägypten und Levante 10, 2000, pp. 17–36, Fig. 3
purposes. It seems that, over the time, the settlement followed the river Nile which migrated towards Elkab. The late Predynastic and Early Dynastic temple was established on what appears as a shallow mound in the modern cultivation.

The archaeological situation of the huge temple area of Hierakonpolis is difficult to understand due to the low quality of the excavation reports (Fig. 8). Only two aspects will be highlighted here, the chronological and sociological setting of the temple. Royal names attested in the temple area date to Dynasty 0, the Early Dynastic Period, the early Old Kingdom and Dynasty 6. Eleventh Dynasty kings are not represented at all. Votive objects made of ivory, travertine, limestone and other hard stones prevail over faience objects (Fig. 9). A series of votive objects is

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21 B. J. KEMP, Ancient Egypt, pp. 147–149, Fig. 53 with critical comment and references.
made of costly semi-precious stones. The distribution of votive materials at Hierakonpolis shows that far more prestigious objects were offered in the temple than at Elephantine.

The stone vessels are chronologically the most distinctive votive type. Most of them represent morphological traditions deriving from the Predynastic and fading out during the First Dynasty26. The most characteristic types are flat bottomed travertine and limestone bowls with slightly convex sides (Figs. 10 and 11). They have the closest parallels among stone vessels from cemeteries dated to the transitional phase between the Predynastic Period and the First Dynasty27. In contrast, flat bottomed bowls with incurved rims, typical of the entire Early Dynastic Period28, round and flat bottomed bowls with recurved rims, typical of the early Old Kingdom29, and the forms of the later Old Kingdom30 are not attested among the stone vessels of Hierakonpolis. The entire corpus can therefore be dated to Dynasty 0 and 1.

The same date may apply to the ivories. Different from ivory objects of other provincial temples several types of Hierakonpolis were also discovered in burials (Fig. 12). Lions, knife handles, bull's legs and some other ivory objects were found in tomb L.19 at Qustul31, tomb 11 at Hk 69, in tombs of cemetery U at Abydos32, the royal tombs of the First and Second Dynasty at Abydos and their subsidiary graves33, the tombeau royal34, the Great Tombs of Saqqara North35 and Giza Mastaba V and its subsidiary graves36 and in the larger tombs of the Early Dynastic cemeteries of the Memphite region like the Montet cemetery at

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32 Bull’s legs made of ivory and wood: B. ADAMS, *Excavations in the Locality 6 Cemetery at Hierakonpolis 1979–1985*, BARIntSer 903, Oxford 2000, pp. 97[no. 162], 109–111[no. 211], Fig. 12, Pls. 33b–34.
34 Lions, dogs, bull’s legs: W. M. F. PETRIE, *RT I*, Pl. 37[17–18] ‘in hard wood’; Id., *RT II*, Pls. 6[3–4], 32[1–9, 12–13], 34[1–7, 21–22], 37[1–11], 38[30–31], 39[1–20, 51–53], 40[3–9, 15–20], 43[1–4]; Id., *RT, Special Extra Publication*, London 1901, Pl. 6a[7, 9, 12]; Id., *Tombs of the Courtiers*, Pls. 7, 20–21 (sub-subsidiary tombs 473, 485, 507, 787 of Djer and 126, 156, 426 of Djet). The bull’s legs which PETRIE and the German Mission found in dump areas of former excavations are not listed here but confirm the large amount of this type in the royal cemetery of Abydos.
36 Lions, dogs, bull’s legs: W. B. EMERY, *Hemaka*, Pl. 19; Id., *Excavations at Saqqara 1937–1938. Har-Abu*, Cairo 1939, Pl. 15b; Id., *Tombs of the First Dynasty I*, Pl. 11 (tomb 3472, wooden bed); Id., *Tombs of the First Dynasty II*, Pls. 26 (wood), 27, 29 (tomb 3504); Id., *Tombs of the First Dynasty III*, p. 84, no. 73–74, 124, Pl. 102 (tomb 3507).
37 Bull’s legs: W. M. F. PETRIE, *Gizeh and Rijh*, BSAE 13, London 1907, p. 4, Pls. 4, S[28](subsidiary tomb 000).
Late predynastic
super-elite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late predynastic super-elite</th>
<th>Early dynastic kings</th>
<th>King-like persons</th>
<th>Persons of elite social networks</th>
<th>New residential elite</th>
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<td>Qustul: L 19</td>
<td>Abydos: Royal tombs</td>
<td>Naqada: Tombeau Royale</td>
<td>Abydos: subsidiary graves</td>
<td>Abu Roash: Montet cemetery</td>
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<td>Hierakonpolis: Hk 6, No. 11</td>
<td>Saqqara North: Great Tombs</td>
<td>Giza Mastaba V: subsidiary graves</td>
<td>Abu Roash: Klasens cemeteries</td>
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<td>Abydos: cemetery U</td>
<td>Giza: Mastaba V</td>
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<td>Tarkhan: Hill and Valley cemeterie</td>
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Fig. 12 Tombs with parallels to specific Hierakonpolis ivories

Abu Roash\textsuperscript{38}, the Klasens cemeteries at Abu Roash\textsuperscript{39}, Tarkhan\textsuperscript{40}, Aburis el-Meleq\textsuperscript{41}, the Archicha Mastabas\textsuperscript{42} and the Cimetière Archiaque of Saqqara\textsuperscript{43}.

The majority of votive objects from Hierakonpolis points into a specific chronological and sociological horizon. They represent the material culture of the late Predynastic and early Early Dynastic Periods. Sociologically, they are associated with the super-elite of the late Predynastic and their successors, the Early Dynastic kings, with king-like individuals of the Early Dynastic Period and persons of their social networks who are buried in the subsidiary graves, and with the new elite of the upcoming residence at Memphis. Reducing the temple of Hierakonpolis to key pieces like the Narmer palette and mace head (Fig. 13) is methodologically inadequate. Historically, it is not entirely

\textsuperscript{38} Lions, dogs and bull's legs: P. MONTET, Tombeaux de la Ire et de la IVI\textsuperscript{me} Dynasties à Abou-Roach, in: Kêmi 7, 1938, pp. 34, 48; Id., Tombeaux de la IIe et de la IVI\textsuperscript{me} Dynasties à Abou-Roach II. Inventaire des objets, in: Kêmi 8, 1942, pp. 186–193, Pls. 7–8 (tomb I, III and VIII). MONTET mentions an ivory handle found in tomb III which might be similar to the cylinders or the knife handles from the Main Deposit: Id., Tombeaux de la IIe et de la IVI\textsuperscript{me} Dynasties à Abou-Roach, in: Kêmi 7, 1938, p. 34. For a recent update of the material cf. Y. TRISTANT/J. SMYTH, New excavations for an old cemetery. Preliminary results of the Abu Rawash Project on the M cemetery (Dynasty II), in: R. F. FRIEDMAN/P. N. FISKE (eds.), Egypt at its origins III. Proceedings of the Third International Conference "Origin of the State: Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt", London 27th July–1st August 2008, OLA 205, Leuven 2011, pp. 313–332.


\textsuperscript{40} Bull's legs of ivory or wood: W. M. F. PETRIE/G. A. WAINWRIGHT/A. H. GARDINER, Tarkhan I and Memphis V, BSAE 23, London 1913, pp. 23–26, Pls. 8–9, 14[16–18] (tombbs 144, 54, 117, and tombs without number).


\textsuperscript{42} Bull's leg: J. E. QUIBELL, Excavations at Saqqara (1912–1914). Archaic Mastabas, Cairo 1923, p. 6, Pl. 11[4, 6] (tomb 2171H which was supplanted by a large mastaba of the Second Dynasty).


wrong. These pieces depict the kind of people whose material culture is found among the votive objects of Hierakonpolis: the king and the court society of the so-called state formation period.

Abydos

Similar to Hierakonpolis, Abydos sees the emergence of a highly stratified local community during the Naqada period⁴⁴. It finally becomes the burial ground of the Early Dynastic kings and it could be expected that the temple of Abydos would have profited from this environment (Fig. 14)⁴⁵. Surprisingly, it did not. Most of the votive objects are made of faience, and royal names of the Early Dynastic Period are rarely attested (Fig. 15)⁴⁶. The repertoire is similar to Elephantine and, maybe even more, to Tell Ibrahim Awad because at Abydos, too, a reasonable amount of elite objects like ivories and stone vessels was found. Different from Hierakonpolis, however, Abydos does not seem to have attracted the countrywide elite in the Early Dynastic Period.

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⁴⁶ As a general rule, the finds from the votive pits M 69, M 64 and M 65/89, as well as anthropomorphic, theriomorphic and model objects and stone vessels from the temple are included in the study. Moreover, the “Neufunde” which appeared in several collections and are said to come from the temple of Abydos are included, compare G. DREYER, Elephantine VIII, pp. 54–58. The inclusion of this material with uncertain provenance does not substantially affect the quantitative distribution of votive materials at Abydos.

⁴⁷ W. M. F. PETRIE, Abydos II (1903), Memoir EEF 24, London 1903, Pl. 16.
Fig. 15 Abydos, distribution of votive materials (n=449)

and kings start to erect statues and stelae in the temple which indicates perhaps that royal cults were set up in local temples already before the Sixth Dynasty. The temple had its first heyday in the Sixth Dynasty. Many door lintels, including two previously unpublished examples in the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago (Inv. no. 8307) and the Museum and Art Gallery Bolton (Inv. no. BOLMG 1903.46.7)1, and the decrees of Neferirkare, Teti and Pepi II witness a comprehensive royal building activity. The prestigious nature of the late Old Kingdom temple is also reflected in non-royal votive objects, such as a series of cylindrical travertine vessels.

In the early Middle Kingdom, Menthuhotep II and III erect new buildings which JOSER WEGNER argues might have belonged to royal ka-houses.

Results

A fuller review of the archaeology of provincial temples would need to consider other sites as well, including the Theban temples at el-Tod, Armant, Karnak and Medamud, erected by Menthuhotep II and III; the temple at Koptos, the late predynastic twin sister of Hierakonpolis and cult centre of the First Intermediate Period; the temples of Elkab and Gebelein with royal buildings of the Early Dynastic Period and Menthuhotep II; and the temples at Helopolis, Herakleopolis Magna, in the Delta and at

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85 W. M. F. Petrie, op. cit., Pl. 18 = Pl. 14(293); Id., Abydos I (1902), Memoir EEF 22, London 1902, Pl. 55(2).
87 W. M. F. Petrie, Abydos I (1902), Memoir EEF 22, London 1902, Pl. 54 (top and middle); Id., Abydos II (1903), Memoir EEF 24, London 1903, Pls. 20 (top and bottom left), 19 (left) = Pl. 21(16).
94 A. H. SAYCE/S. CLARKE, Report on certain excavations made at El Kab during the years 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, in: ASAE 6, 1905, p. 239; J. CAPART ET AL., Fouilles de El Kab. Documents, Bruxelles 1940, pp. 21–22; Pl. 30a–b; S. HENDRICKX/D. HUYGE, Elkab IV.
97 Several stone elements of kings of the Old Kingdom were found at Herakleopolis Magna and at Delta sites. DIETER ARNOLD argues that they belonged to Old Kingdom temples at these sites: Hypostyle Hall of the Old and Middle Kingdom, in: P. DER MANUELJAN/R. E. FREED (eds.), Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson, Boston 1996, pp. 39–54. However, these temples would display a monumentality unparalleled throughout the whole Nile Valley during the Old Kingdom. Therefore, the traditional hypothesis of a provenance in the royal pyramid complexes seems more plausible: E. P. UPHILL, The Temples of Per Ramesses, Warminster 1984, pp. 230–232. Archaeological remains are attested at Bubastis most recently: E. LANGE, Die Ka-Anlage Pepis I. in Bubastis im Kontext königlicher Ka-Anlagen des Alten Reiches, in: ZAS 133, 2006, pp. 121–140. At Mendes (D. B. REDFORD), Report on the 9th season of Excavation at Tell el-Rub‘a‘ (Mendes), in: ASAE 75, 2000, pp. 17–22, and at Tell el-Farkha (K. CIAŁOWICZ, Kościelko).
Balat. However, most of the available evidence reflects royal building activity only and does not fully bear on the question of this paper. The discussion concentrates, therefore, on the archaeologically richer temples reviewed above.

Hierakonpolis is a supra-local centre during the so-called state formation period in Dynasties 0 and 1. The local elite, the upcoming kings, king-like individuals and persons of their social network, and the new residential elite make offerings to the god of Hierakonpolis. Elite votive objects cease to be offered already during Dynasty 1. The building activity of Khahekhem in the late Second Dynasty is no longer part of an existent tradition of royal and elite interest in the temple and looks like an individual initiative of this specific king at the site. Evidence for the temple of Hierakonpolis fades out during the early Old Kingdom, and the royal activity of the Sixth Dynasty is not backed up by a contemporary stream of non-royal votive offerings. Only in the early 12th Dynasty is royal building activity attested again.

The rise of the temple of Abydos starts only in the Fourth and Fifth Dynasty. In the Sixth Dynasty, it becomes the most important provincial temple in Upper Egypt. This is also reflected in the local prosopographical and inscriptive evidence. The viziers Ppjiw-nḥḥt and Ḥdji of the Sixth Dynasty, the highest state officials, were overseers of priests (probably of the local temple) and buried at Abydos. Moreover, the royal family had a statue cult installed in the temple of Khontamenti.

The temple of Tell Ibrahim Awad is the closest parallel to the temple of Satet. The range of votive materials used points into a slightly more elite sphere. It is interesting to note in this context that larger First Dynasty tombs of a local elite were discovered in area B at Tell Ibrahim Awad. They indicate that individuals with access to more costly and exclusive materials were buried at the site while similar tombs are, at present, unknown at Elephantine.

The temple of Satet is part of the countrywide programme of royal temple construction in the second part of the 11th Dynasty. The situation is different in the first part of the 11th Dynasty. Antef II and III build temples only at Elephantine and in their home town at Karnak. Antef II praises Khnum as the opener of the catacarat region in one of his inscriptions. The evidence, however fragmentary, suggests that the temple of Satet attracts the interest of Antef II and III in the first place because Elephantine is located at the southern frontier of Egypt.

The same pattern could apply to the royal activity in the temple of the Sixth Dynasty. In the rock inscription mentioned above, Pepi II does not refer to the goddess Satet but to the striking down of foreign rulers. Similarly, Menenre might have left inscriptions in the rock niche and on the naos of Pepi I only because Elephantine was the last Egyptian town on his way further south evidence for which is provided through graffiti in the region of Aswan.

Different from Abydos, royal activity did not result in more non-royal elite votive objects being offered in the temple. Only two stone vessels from the temple of Satet can be dated to this period. One of them is an ape-shaped limestone vessel inscribed with the name of Pepi I. While, in principle, a prestigious object it is of lesser material value and quality than finely carved travertine vessels of this type. Other "elitist" objects from Elephantine also seem to be imitations of more exclusive models. The ivory woman from Elephantine, for example, is very small and roughly carved in contrast to the ivories from Hierakonpolis, Abydos or Tell Ibrahim Awad, and the four mace heads from Elephantine are crude and only

62 A stela with a decree (?) and two door posts dated to Pepi II might be reconstructed as parts of the local temple: A. Fakhry, Dachia, Nos. 28, 38, 39; L. Pantalacci, De Memphis à Balat. Les liens entre la résidence et les gouverneurs de l'oisis à la VP dynastie, in: C. Berger/B. Mathieu (eds.), Études sur l'Ancien Empire et la nécropole de Saqqara dédiées à Jean-Philippe Lauer, Orientalia Monspeliensia 9, Montpellier 1997, pp. 341–349, Fig. 5.
69 G. Dreyer, Elephantine VIII, cat. nos. 345, 455.
71 G. Dreyer, Elephantine VIII, cat. no. 40.
72 G. Dreyer, Elephantine VIII, cat. nos. 368–370.
half as big as the items from Hierakonpolis where they are one of the most common votive type.

This is in complete accordance with the overall distribution of votive materials. Many objects are of low intrinsic value, e.g. natural stone pebbles, simple faience beads and discarded tools like flint knives, blades and others. This represents a range of material culture accessible also for lower social groups. It is dif-
difficult to tell whether similar objects were found in substantial quantities at other sites or simply escaped the interest of the excavators. Some natural pebbles from Hierakonpolis and Abydos suggest that they are a common feature across Third Millennium Egypt, independent of the status of individual temples.

Architecturally, the temple of Satet is not separated by a large enclosure wall like the temple areas of Abydos and Hierakonpolis, and it stands in close contact with the settlement houses. The measurements of the temple and its skew layout within the natural landscape are comparable to the houses on Elephantine island, and the use of wooden posts in the temple of the late Old Kingdom is known also from the local settlement architecture (Fig. 16).

To sum up, the votive objects of the temple of Satet range sociologically below the corpora of Hierakonpolis, Abydos and, to some extent, Tell Ibrahim Awad during the entire Third Millennium. Architecture and finds from the temple demonstrate that it is deeply rooted in the local community of Elephantine. It is controversial to what extent kings are involved in the emergence of early local temples. The comparison above shows that kingship materialises very differently in local contexts and needs to be considered individually for each site. The correlation between the origins of sacred kingship and local cults may be of a more indirect nature rather than reflecting direct patronage.

Local administration

JEAN-PIERRE PÄTZNICK published 35 seals and seal impressions from 'Satet-Süd' and dated them to the Early Dynastic Period. Their exact relationship to the temple administration is difficult to establish from the find context but if the material is accepted to reflect the administrative setting of the temple the discussion above can be extended from archaeology to prosopography.

None of the inscriptions includes a royal name, and titles which would relate the seal bearer to the royal sphere are rarely attested. Most seal inscriptions mention only local institutions and titles or epithets typical of local administration, such as *kh*nj, *rn*w, *sdj*j, mjtr, and *nfr*-qd-*M*'. The temple of Satet seems, therefore, to have operated in a primarily local network.

One of the highest-ranking individuals is a *rh*-njjsjr and *rn*w called *Trj*-wmt/*Nj*-wmt. His titles *ššm*-c-hm*w and *ššm*-c-hm*w might indicate that he was the leader of some kind of local institution and the fact that he has sealed a door suggests that he was physically present in the town, if not an internal official living in Elephantine. The combination of the courtly title *rh*-njjsjr with the epithet *rn*w connects him to both the local community and the (lower end of the) central administration. *Trj*-wmt/*Nj*-wmt is the kind of official who provided a bridge from the local network to the king.

However, the actual interface between local and central administration was not the temple but the Eastern Town, the successor of the Early Dynastic royal fortress. Most of the so-called 'Amtssiegel' with a royal name come from this site and show that the Eastern Town was embedded in a network of officials with stronger connections to the court. Even on the local level, the temple of Satet turns out to be more provincial than other institutions in the settlement.

There is surprisingly little prosopographical evidence for the temple of Satet in later periods of the Third Millennium. *Hwfr*-w-r was overseer of priests and belonged to the local elite of the early Old Kingdom. Yet, it is debatable whether the link between the office of overseer of priests of the local temple and the local elite, well-known from other late Old

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72 One extraordinary pebble was published by W. M. F. PETRIE, *Abydos II (1903), Memoir EEF 24*, London 1903, Pl. 9(203). It is kept by the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford together with further pebbles from the votive pit M 64 (1903.22.11–1903.22.16). Two pebbles from Hierakonpolis are kept by the Museum for Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (Z15569, Z15576) and another one by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (E.92.1898).


79 J.-P. PÄTZNICK, *op. cit.,* cat. nos. 26, 32.


Kingdom sites, was of a structural nature at Elephantine. The sparse evidence from Elephantine does not fit in this picture. *Si-k3*, the only attested nomarch at Elephantine, was not affiliated to the local temple, and the two known priests of Satet *Hrw* and *Hpj* mentioned on pot inscriptions from the Qubbet el-Hawa were not nomarchs. While the empirical basis is admittedly thin, the evidence suggests that the temple of Satet has never had the status of a prestige institution used as arena of display by the local elite as temples at other sites did.

**Conclusion**

The comparative method applied in the discussion shows that early provincial temples in Egypt are not only local institutions in a generic sense but respond to specific settings composed of wider historical developments and individual social environments. The development of the temple of Satet was definitely not normal or typical in every respect. It is more local, more provincial and less prestigious than other temples of the period. The kings seem to have been interested in the temple primarily as a last whistle stop on Egyptian ground during expeditions to the south and due to the location of Elephantine in the border region of the First Cataract. Late Old Kingdom royal interest, however, is not paralleled by an increase of more costly votive objects offered in the temple by a local elite. Archaeology and the prosopography of seal inscriptions suggest that the temple remained on this level until the rise of the Middle Kingdom.

While knowledge of Ancient Egypt is still biased towards elite contexts it is possible to reveal the local dynamics of social developments behind the more static scenes of elite culture. For a fuller understanding of local Egyptian temple development, it would be necessary to write more local histories and to combine the results obtained from external comparison with more internal data from individual sites.

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3a Elephantine, faience boy, H: 7,7 cm, after G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII*, cat. no. 73, Taf. 20

3b Elephantine, faience baboon, H: 4,9 cm, after G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII*, cat. no. 132, Taf. 26

3c Elephantine, faience frog, H: 5,9 cm, after G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII*, cat no. 170, Taf. 32

3d Elephantine, beads and spacers, length of spacers: max. 3,8 cm, after G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII*, cat. nos. 327, 328, 330, 332, 333, Taf. 43

3e Elephantine, natural pebbles, after G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII*, cat. no. 457, Taf. 57