

# THE GEBEL HAGG PROJECT

Your driver was lost crossing the Nubian Desert. As if it wasn't bad enough surveying a boring stretch of nothing out in the middle of nowhere, the most boring concession in all of Egypt (all the good ones were snapped up long ago)! To add insult to injury, the driver also managed to get your vehicle thoroughly stuck in a sand dune. Just as you were about to wring his neck, you trip over the corner of a pyramid, peeping out coyly from beneath the sand. A quick examination reveals a previously unknown New Kingdom cemetery! You remember the words of Pharaoh Thutmose I:

*Year 2, second month of the first season, fifteenth day, under the majesty of Horus... the King of Upper and Lower Egypt A'kheperka-Re, Son of Re Thutmose, living forever and ever... He has overthrown the Ruler of Kush, the Nubian is defenseless in his grasp... like a young panther among the fleeing cattle; the fame of his majesty blinded them.*

Who was buried in these lost and forgotten pyramids? Were they Egyptians who followed Thutmose to Nubia? Were they even Egyptians at all, or could they be Nubians who took on the trappings of Egyptian civilization? The best thing is, you're the only one who can address these questions with an excavation, since all the other sites of Lower Nubia were drowned under the waters of Lake Nassar in the 1960's!

Through some good connections at the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), you pulled off a major coup (turning your academic rivals green with envy!) and secured the concession for the site. All those years of carefully maintaining connections with local antiquities officials really paid off! You've got to make the most of this opportunity, though, or your dreaded rival Prof. Belac of the Sorbonne will sneak in and steal your concession right from under you!

With the help of a good PR agent, you make it onto CNN: *Lost Pyramids found in Nubian Desert!* The Daily Shout shouts: *Incredible finds expected!* Pretty soon the wealthy Lord Sandwich (you can imagine the licensing profits – anytime someone uses his name he gets a cut!) offered to fund your expedition and you pull a team together and head back to north Africa.

Uh-oh... you've encountered your first problem. Belac has sent a scurrilous letter to the Director of the SCA, saying you're an unqualified antiquarian, worse than Belzoni! You've got to fire off a response quick. Sandwich would be happy with the fame and notoriety the discovery of a few big statues and some gold jewelry can bring, but of course being a conscientious archaeologist, you have a systematic research design.

Part 1: Write a 1 page letter to Dr. Zahi Hawass, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Antiquities, refuting Belac's libelous accusations:

*How will your approach be different from antiquarians like Belzoni? What specialists will make up your team to make sure you can study every bit of evidence?*

## PROJECT GUIDELINES

The archaeological project will proceed like a real excavation in phases, each with a handout and instructions, culminating in a preliminary report. These will guide the structure of your final 'publication'.

Your responses to these sections will account for most of the paper, which must be *at least* 10 pages double spaced (not including references), and printed on at least an inkjet printer. I strongly suggest you at least make drafts for each phase now, rather than leaving it all until the end!

You should cite the textbooks, readings, or the lectures to support your interpretations where appropriate. The standard anthropological format for references within the text is as follows (Silverman 1997:10-20) = (Name Year:Pages). Anthropological publications rarely use footnotes. You can treat the lectures as a personal communication = (Stuart Smith, pers. comm., 2004). You may add additional outside sources for a little extra credit, but you only need to use the assigned readings from the course (ie: the three books and two articles). Note that the two articles will be *very important* to the successful completion of the project.

A References section should appear at the end of the paper. For the citations you should use an Anthropological format:

Kemp, Barry

1989 *Ancient Egypt. Anatomy of a Civilization*. London: Routledge.

For more details on citations and a guide to essay writing, see links on the course web site or go to my Anthro 3 web page.



## GEBEL HAGG PHASE 2: SURVEY

Good news! The Director of the SCA accepted your assurances that you're technique will be more advanced than Belzoni's (no blasting powder allowed!). He will, however, require periodic reports on your progress, and, of course, you will have an Antiquities Inspector along, as is required for all digs. Better hope he's not Belac's stooge!

After drinking vast amounts of strong minted tea with the Director of the SCA, head of the Tourist Police, assorted bureaucrats at the Abassiya (the SCA's HQ), the Chief Inspector for Nubia, and with various folks at the local Taftish (Inspectorate) at the nearby town of Wadi Namussa, you take your team out to Gebel Hagg and get to work (pew!).

Proving that you've advanced a step or two since Belzoni's time, you begin with a systematic survey. Spreading your crew out into transects, you walk across the site noting important features and collecting pottery and other artifacts from the surface. The cemetery contains both Egyptian pyramids and Nubian tumulus burials. Your crew also finds a Nubian rock shrine at the top of Gebel Hagg with some cool rock art. The outlines of a small temple can be made out on the lower slope. As you're planning the temple remains, you stumble over a loose piece of sandstone (ouch!), only to discover the name "Hathor, Lady of the West" inscribed on the reverse! Based on pottery and lucky finds, like a nifty scarab of Ramses II, you establish that the cemetery has four basic phases: Kerma/Second Intermediate Period; Early New Kingdom; Mid New Kingdom; and Late New Kingdom (Ramesside Period).

Now that you've finished the first phase of your season, the Inspector reminds you that it's time to send in a preliminary report. Write about two pages on the work so far, suggesting some preliminary conclusions that will help guide your excavation strategy. Be sure to consider the following questions:

*How did the cemetery evolve over time? What can you say about the ethnicity and social structure of the tomb owners at each period based upon the type and sizes of tomb superstructure in each phase?*

*How might the Nubian shrine be connected with the cemetery? What does it tell you about the religious beliefs of the tomb owners?*

*Why would the tomb owners want a temple of Hathor next to their cemetery? What does it tell you about the beliefs of the tomb owners?*

*Belac was here, Ha Ha Ha!*

## GEBEL HAGG PHASE 3: EXCAVATION

The SCA is pleased with your preliminary report. In spite of Belac's liberal bribes, you've managed to retain control of your concession for the next phase of the project. You can now move on to excavation. It's a good thing, too, since Lord Sandwich wants a great find that will get him on the cover of *Time Magazine*, and you know that Belac has been in touch, trying to seduce him to the 'dark side' of Antiquarianism. Fortunately, he's still willing to support good archaeology, but you've got to keep the ball rolling.

You decide you have enough manpower and time to excavate three tombs. As a systematic archaeologist, you want examples from as many different time periods/parts of the cemetery as possible, so you can get a representative sample from which to draw conclusions about the cemetery as a whole. But there are also practical concerns. Pyramid 1 (P1) is being destroyed by the road crossing next to the site, so from a conservation/salvage point of view it must be excavated. On the other hand, Lord Sandwich needs a big find, and you know he'll be enthusiastic to excavate P2, the largest and latest pyramid at the site. That's no problem for your research design, so you can please Sandwich, salvage a disappearing pyramid, and still end up with an early-late, north-south sample. To round things out, you pick one of the native tumuli through random sampling—that way you'll have a basis for comparison with the Egyptian burials as well as a window on the earliest phase of the site.

Your excavations are wildly successful. Thankfully, damage from ancient looters was minimal. When you found sealed entrances at the bottoms of the tomb shafts of P1 and P2, Sandwich pressured you to wait for a camera crew from Fox, *Opening the Tombs of the Unknown 3!* But you want to get on with your work, and besides, maybe Hugh Downs isn't available and you *really* hate that Povich guy! Meanwhile, Belac shows up on Springer accusing you of all sorts of strange perversities, and he gets in a real bruiser with one of your grad students. Will Belac win the day and totally destroy your credibility?

Not likely! Right after the bouncers separate Belac and your grad student as the end credits roll, you appear on network news with the Chairman of the SCA announcing great finds from Egyptian Nubia! OK, it ain't King Tut, but you've found several intact burials with incredible finds like a magnificent mirror with the goddess Hathor as the handle. You, Sandwich and Hathor make the cover of *Time Magazine*, "Two Archaeologists and a Lady." You get an agent and publicist and before you know it, you and Sandwich are scheduled to appear on Leno and Letterman, and Spielberg is bidding for the movie rights! Best of all, Belac runs off humiliated with his tail between his legs. Amid all the hoopla, your inspector reminds you that the SCA needs the final report...

*Using plans and the data sheet, you should consider the following questions in about seven pages:*

1. *Place the burials in the context of New Kingdom funerary practice. Are they like other burials from the period? How are they similar or different?*
2. *What can you tell about the cultural affiliation and social status of the individuals?*
3. *Do the grave goods tell you anything about the social position of women?*
4. *Finally, return to your original research question: Who were these Egyptians who followed Thutmose to Nubia? Were they even Egyptians at all, or could they be Nubians who took on the trappings of Egyptian civilization? Look at how the cemetery developed over time. What can you say about the course of Egyptian imperialism in Nubia from your excavation?*