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OLD KINGDOM STUDIES

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OLD KINGDOM ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Alejandro Jiménez-Serrano Hamada M. Ashour (Editors)

> EGIPTOLOGÍA COLECCIÓN ARQUEOLOGÍAS



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Old Kingdom Studies 9

1. Introduction

Alejandro Jiménez-Serrano Hamada M. Ashour

The Old Kingdom is a period that epitomizes the general public's perception of Egypt, as the most monumental and best-preserved pyramids. At first glance, it might be considered a well-known period, but in reality, many aspects remain to be unraveled. This book presents to the scientific community and specialized audience new insights into administration, archaeology, art and iconography, the functioning of the center and periphery, the funerary world, historiography, and papyrology, contributed by some of the foremost specialists in the Egyptian Old Kingdom.

Understanding how the administration functioned is key to comprehending not only how a state operated but also how one of the oldest states in human history was organized. In other words, it reveals how human society faced the challenge of creating a complex structure to manage a country that spanned a thousand kilometers along a river and the relationships it established with neighboring human groups.

As in other historical periods and settings, the center plays a fundamental role in the organization of the state. In the case of the Egyptian Old Kingdom, the center disseminates political and economic decisions, as well as cultural, religious, and ideological elements to the rest of the country. All these aspects are crucial since the periphery always emulates the center. In this regard, the funerary world becomes a prime example of the transfer of many of the aspects aforementioned.

Currently, numerous Egyptian and foreign missions have excavated or continue to excavate in Egypt, specifically at levels contemporaneous with the Old Kingdom. The new data are crucial for understanding various aspects related to necropolises and the urban and agricultural world. For instance, funerary architecture becomes an ideal projection of the Egyptians' vision of their own environment. In this regard, art and iconography are key disciplines for understanding the different ways of representing it.

Egyptology is a discipline that recently celebrated two centuries since its inception following Champollion's decipherment of hieroglyphs. Many researchers are focusing their efforts on understanding how the discovered material culture was interpreted or how museum collections were formed. This analysis not only provides new information about artifacts or old archaeological excavations but also reveals the mindset of past Egyptologists. Moreover, well-known sources must be constantly reread and reinterpreted in light of the new perspectives and knowledge provided by ongoing scientific advancements.

The editors of the present book are happy with the variety of topics as well as the quality of the studies. However, there is still a lot to be done in future Old Kingdom research. One of the most important aspects must be aimed at making it easier for our Egyptian colleagues who are developing their research on the Third Millennium to open up the possibility of participating in these international conferences. The results they are getting are rarely known by the rest of the researchers in other countries. Likewise, we have to strengthen ties with those researchers working in the peripheral regions of Egypt: Levant, Nubia and the Deserts. Definitively, their knowledge and visions will enrich our perception on how the Near East (including Egypt) worked in an international level: diplomatic, cultural and economically.

The present book is the result of the collaboration of different scholars, who discussed their contributions in the 8th International Conference "Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology" (OKAA) organized by the University of Jaén between June 21st and 25th, 2022, but not all. Effectively, the situation surrounding the 8th OKAA was not easy, as we were still in an international pandemic scenario. In fact, that was the main reason why it was not held in 2021, when it should have been celebrated. However, the speakers, after the development of vaccines, demonstrated that this type of event, in which researchers meet face to face to discuss our research, is essential for the development of academic disciplines. And it is that, in coffee breaks, lunches or evening events, we can exchange ideas or knowledge that can hardly be done during formal academic sessions. I want to express my gratitude to all of them, who show their commitment with this conference.



We are sure that in the next monographies on Old Kingdom Art and Archeology new lines of research will also be included after the rapid development of new techniques and methodologies.

We do not want to end without acknowledging the economic and institutional support that the University of Jaén, the Junta de Andalucía gave us, specifically the staff of the Museo Ibero de Jaén, the Jaén City Council, and the Jaén Provincial Council.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the students of the Archeology Degree of the University of Jaén for the assistance, help and support given to all of us who participated in the 8th Old Kingdom Art and Archaeology: Alicia Cañas Lerma, Carmen Romero, Elisa Jiménez Portillo, Tania Maderas Cabanillas and Pablo Santiago Laverde Gómez.

Jaén and Damanhour, 1st of July 2024