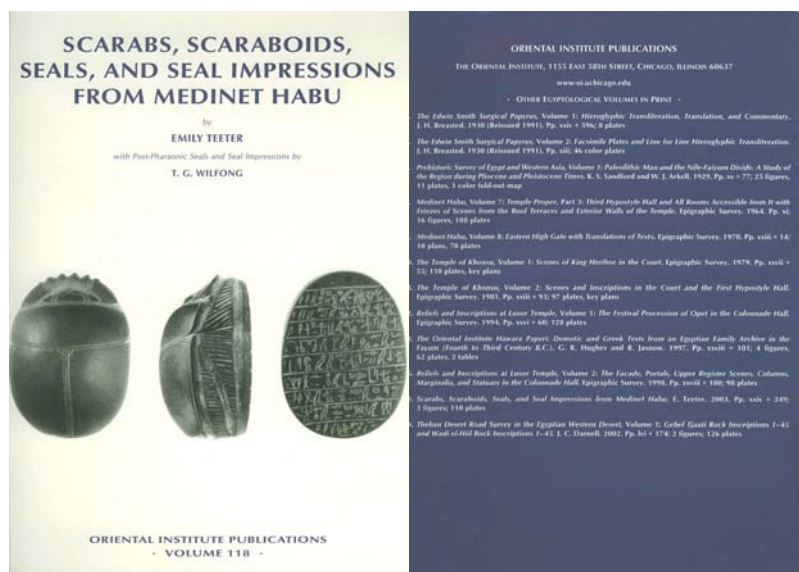


Teeter, E. 2003. Scarabs, scaraboids, seals, and seal impressions from Medinet Habu, with post-Pharaonic seals and seal Impressions by T.G. Wilfong. – Chicago, University of Chicago Press (Oriental Institute 118)

Book review by K.M. Cooney



With this volume Emily Teeter begins the invaluable work of processing the Medinet Habu excavations conducted by the Oriental Institute in ‘Scarabs, scaraboids, seals, and seal impressions from Medinet Habu’. Resurrecting the excavation reports of Uvo Hölscher and Rudolph Anthes (Teeter, 1994), she begins the task of publishing the small glyptic finds found at the site.

The introduction to the volume is an excellent synthesis of Medinet Habu’s very interesting excavation history. The complicated stratigraphy, further convoluted by *sebakh* digging and a long site history, is described providing a chronological synthesis of the location and thus a connection to the small finds. Teeter also lists and describes the many features in the site where small glyptic finds were recovered. This volume is therefore not only a catalogue of scarabs, seals and sealings, but also a useful synthesis of excavation reports as well as an analysis of the early 20th century archaeological methodology. Teeter must cope with all of the shortcomings of early 20th century archaeology. The objects are now in three separate locations (The Cairo Museum, The Oriental Institute, and Luxor West Bank storage magazines). Not all of the small finds were sketched by archaeologists, nor were all of the find spots recorded. Many of the finds were transferred into the Object Register by graphite rubbings rather than drawings.

Teeter must also deal with the loss of many of Anthes’ notebooks and part of his manuscript which catalogued and described the small finds. Anthes’ personal annotated manuscript was lost when his Berlin home was bombed during World War II. A second copy in the Staatliche Museum was taken by Russian forces after Berlin’s fall, not to be returned to the institution until 1961. After the war, Anthes resided in West Berlin, and East German museum authorities refused him permission to take his manuscript for further research. Finally, in 1993, long after Anthes’ death, the Staatliche Museum returned Anthes’ notebooks, parts of his manuscript, and the field registers to the Oriental Institute.

Although Teeter processes previous notes, reports, and manuscripts of the Oriental Institute, this volume is by no means a regurgitation of Anthes’ work. Teeter provides expanded information for each object, including correct measurements, designation of material, photographs (by Yarko Kobylecky), and line drawings (by E. Barbanes, P. Sanders, and J. Brett McClain). Most significantly, she tackles the dating of each object, relying not only on Anthes’ notes, but also findspot (when available), and stylistic comperanda much improved by recent scarab publications (Jaeger, 1982; Keel, 1995; Keel, 1997). Teeter also provides transliteration and translation of all texts as well as commentary on each piece. This catalogue of seals, sealings, and scarabs is invaluable to others working with similar material because the objects are provenienced and, for the most part, found in some sort of stratigraphy. Her stylistic dating methods can therefore be compared to stratigraphic location at the site.

The catalogue is organised according to object type: scarabs and scaraboids, heart scarabs with sons of Horus amulets, and stamp seals and seal impressions. Within each of these categories, the catalogue is organised typologically according to the subject of glyptic representation, rather than date, allowing the researcher to more easily search for comperanda. Each object is accompanied by a description, information about provenience,

translation of the inscription, and a commentary with comperanda. The ‘Description’ includes careful analysis of the form and shape of the object (which can be checked by photos), especially useful for the scarab researcher who dates objects using leg and back seriation. In the ‘Provenience’ section, Teeter is often able to list other objects that were found with a given scarab or sealing, if the reports allow. In her ‘Commentary’, she gives the researcher similar objects from other publications.

One of Teeter’s main tasks is to provide a responsible date range for each object. She avoids providing overly specific dates, but she also criticises those publications which give no dates at all (Hornung & Staehlin, 1976). Because so many of these glyptic objects were found in stratified context, her work is of more value than most scarab catalogues, especially for the researcher studying unprovenienced scarab collections with no such data. On pp. 17–20, Teeter gives the researcher a useful chronological and seriated analysis of the scarabs and scaraboids, and plaques so that decorative typologies of the base decoration can quickly be tied to a particular time period.

Particularly useful is Teeter’s analysis of new scarab examples with cryptographic readings, most of them used to spell the name of the god Amen (Droiten, 1957). She includes many creative, yet responsible, readings of new cryptographic decorative examples. One example (no. 91 on p. 67) depicts “a falcon-headed man with sun disk in center top with a *m3ʿt*-feather to the right,” which “may be a cryptographic writing of Amun ...” On p. 65 (no. 87) she is able to read a standing falcon god with uraeus as “Amen,” and interestingly, the findspot suggests a later date than otherwise known for this type of decoration.

Teeter also includes analysis of thirty-one heart scarabs, allowing discussion of the non-royal Third Intermediate Period and Late Period funerary deposits in the site of Medinet Habu, including information about provenience (from tombs near the God’s Wives’ chapels and in pit tombs in the chapels). Teeter also lists other objects that were found with the heart scarabs, such as shabtis, game pieces, and udjat eye amulets. She also includes examination of sons of Horus amulets, although they do not fall into the glyptic category of the catalogue because they belong to matching heart scarabs from Late Period mummies.

The catalogue of stamp seals and seal impressions is a valuable tool for any researcher of administration, bureaucracy and economy in Thebes from the New Kingdom to the Late Period. Numerous titles appear on these seals, which are indexed in the back of the volume. Seal impressions from jar stoppers and handles mention New Kingdom commodities, including wine, oil, and ale from a number of different estates, the most common of which is “the temple of Horemheb.” A catalogue of the seal impressions on Medinet Habu mudbricks allows the researcher to better understand the New Kingdom building history of the site. Teeter also includes a catalogue of the funerary cones found at the site, even though they are “clearly intrusive,” the most common examples inscribed with the names and titles of Amenhotep son of Hapu and the Late Period fourth priest of Amen, Montuemhat.

The last catalogue in the volume includes seals and sealings from the Post Pharaonic periods, written by Terry Wilfong, who notes that Ptolemaic and Roman seals are associated with temple and funerary contexts, while the later 6th to 8th century BCE examples come from domestic contexts. The inclusion of this late material is fundamental for a complete analysis of the small finds from Medinet Habu. This glyptic material provides a useful glimpse into the bureaucracy, administration, and economy of Christian monasteries. Unfortunately, some of the entries in this catalogue do not include line drawings, but only photographs.

The volume does lack any discussion of the deeper function of these glyptic objects, but it is a catalogue first and foremost, and it therefore provides the source material for other scholars to incorporate into their research. This publication continues the Oriental Institute’s long standing ties to the site of Medinet Habu, its material, and to the researchers that are still working there today. We can only hope that Teeter has the support and time to produce more such volumes of Medinet Habu’s small finds.

Teeter, E. 2003. Scarabs, scaraboids, seals, and seal impressions from Medinet Habu, with post-Pharaonic seals and seal Impressions by T.G. Wilfong. – Chicago, University of Chicago Press (Oriental Institute 118). 247 pp. ISBN 1 885923 22 8. Price £70.00 (hardback). Distributed by Oxbow Books www.oxbowbooks.com.

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