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Thomas Hikade

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Hiw (Predynastic) منطقة هيو (ما قبل الأسرات)

Thomas Hikade

Hiw (Prädynastisch)

Hiw (Predynastique)

The Predynastic remains of the Hiw region (Diospolis Parva) are mainly from cemetery sites first excavated by W. M. Flinders Petrie at the end of the nineteenth century. They cover the material culture of most of the 4th millennium BCE. Although reportedly more than 1100 Predynastic tombs were excavated, the sites have remained some of the poorest published Predynastic cemeteries in Egypt.

أن البقايا الأثرية من عصر ما قبل الأسرات من منطقة هيو (ديوسبوليس بارفا) تأتي غالبيتها من مواقع الجبانات التي كان فلنדרز بتري هو أول من قام بعمل حفائر بها في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر. تغطي البقايا الأثرية معظم فترة الألفية الرابعة قبل الميلاد. وعلى الرغم من أنه يقال أن أكثر من 1100 مقبرة تم الكشف عنها من عصر ما قبل الأسرات، إلا أن هذه المواقع لاتزال الأقل حظاً في النشر.

The Predynastic sites of the Hiw region are located on the west bank of the Nile approximately 50 km south of Abydos. They stretch from south of the modern settlement at Hiw along the modern el-Ranan Canal to south of the modern village at Semaina. Hiw was known during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods as Diospolis Parva and was situated in the 7th nome of Upper Egypt.

From 1898 – 1899, the area was excavated by W. M. Flinders Petrie on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) with the assistance of R. MacIver and A. C. Mace, while Hilda Petrie and Misses Lawes and Orme worked on the documentation of pottery, small finds, and skeletal remains. Upon arrival, the area had already been “superficially plundered” by antiquity dealers from Luxor (Drower 1985: 249). The excavation was later published as *Diospolis Parva. The Cemeteries of Abadiyeh and Hu 1898-9* (Petrie and Mace 1901).

The Predynastic remains in the Hiw region itself consist of six cemetery (A, B, C, H, R, and U) and three settlement sites (F, HG, SH). A first group of burial grounds include Cemeteries U and R, about 1 km east of the modern settlement of Hiw. A group further east comprises Cemeteries A - C as well as settlement remains at site HG near modern day Abadiya (also known today as el-Halfaya Qibli and el-Halfaya Bahari). Site F lies between Abadiya and Semaina where at the latter Petrie excavated Cemetery H and Settlement SH (fig. 1).

The cemeteries of the Hiw region were all heavily plundered. According to W. Kaiser (1957: 74) there were more than 1000 excavated tombs of which only 5% were described by Petrie, although in a cursory way (Petrie and Mace 1901: 31 - 36). A higher total of at least 1167 tombs is given by Bard (1994: 12).

Cemetery U, excavated by MacIver, is a larger burial ground with the majority of

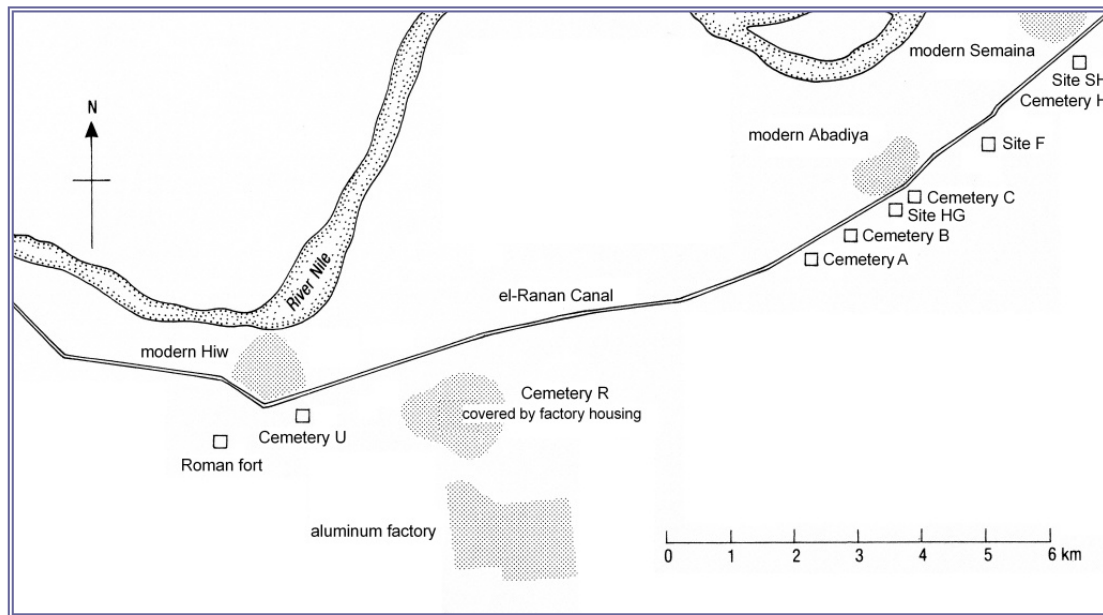


Figure 1. Predynastic sites in the Hiw-Abadiya-Semaina (Diospolis Parva) region.

tombs dating to Naqada I/II, but also with graves of Naqada III (Petrie and Mace 1901: 35 - 36). The major difference to the other cemeteries in the Hiw region is the enormous depth of some of the tombs, which measure up to 3.5 m (U 39). Among the finds were pottery, beads (U 349), and copper tools (U 74; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VII bottom right). In one case, six flint bracelets were found around the left arm of the deceased (U 354). Tomb U 160, dated to Naqada I, supplied the rather unusual find of a “model sandal” made of ivory (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. X, no. 19). One grave of Naqada III, U 12, also contained an ivory cylinder seal with some hieroglyphs found next to the shoulder of the deceased. In another grave of similar date, a man was buried in a pottery cist containing pottery vessels, carnelian beads, and a double bird palette (Petrie and Mace 1901: 36). Small finds encompassed decorated cones and combs made of ivory or bone, basalt vessels, and also clay figurines similar to ones from Cemetery B (Petrie and Mace 1901: pls. IX and X). Among the flint tools were fishtail knives and truncation knives (Petrie and Mace 1901: pls. VII and VIII).

Cemetery R is of overwhelmingly Naqada II/III date; only seven tombs are mentioned

by Petrie (1901: 35). Some of the burials seem to be rearranged, and finds include—apart from pottery—carnelian and blue glazed beads, desiccated scarab beetles, and round and oval slate palettes with decorated edges (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. XI).

Of the eastern group, Cemetery A is predominantly Dynastic, yet some pits were discovered with up to 65 cm high black-topped vessels. One tomb (A 13) of late Naqada III was brick-lined and still contained a wooden coffin, pottery, some flint implements, and the remains of a child burial (Petrie and Mace 1901: 32, pls. VIII and XIV).

Cemetery B was one of the largest cemeteries in the Hiw region with 570 graves and covers the time from Naqada I - III (Petrie and Mace 1901: 32 - 34). The graves were generally long-oval or straight-sided square. Usually, the bodies were in a crouched position with the head to the south facing west. In several tombs, multiple burials were individually wrapped in goat skin (for example, B 37), and in one case, seven individuals were interred over time (B 102). Multiple burials did not occur after Naqada II at Cemetery B. In a few cases, beetles were placed deliberately in jars indicating that the

veneration of beetles was noted in Predynastic times (B 17, B 217 with several thousands in one L40 type jar, B 234, and B 328; Petrie and Mace 1901: 33). Among the earlier slate palettes, one frequently sees rhomboid forms (for example, B 56), in one case with the engraving of an elephant (B 102; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. XII), and bird-shaped palettes (for example, B 51 and B 109; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VI and in general pls. XI - XII). Tomb B 101 of late Naqada I/early Naqada II was the richest and largest grave of Cemetery B (Petrie and Mace 1901: 33, pl. V). It was plundered, but part of the roof made of sticks and matting was still in place. Apart from rhomboid palettes and several palettes in the shape of a hippopotamus, it also contained many pottery vessels, stone cones, hippopotamus figurines, ivory combs, clay beads, malachite, and resin. Models of ostrich eggs in clay were found along with a bracelet of carnelian beads still around the arm of a child. In regards to stone vessels, tomb B 56 of late Naqada I/early Naqada II (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. V bottom left and pl. IX) stands out, as it not only contained a rhomboid bifacial flint knife and an early bifacial fishtail knife but also two footed basalt vessels indicating contacts with the Buto/Maadi culture of Lower Egypt. These interregional contacts might have been instigated by the elite of Hiw. Three such elite individuals, for example, were interred in tomb B 86 each with a mace, two of which still had their handles—one of ivory and one of horn—in place (Petrie and Mace 1901: 33, pl. V top right); one of the individuals possessed seven fishtail knives (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VII). A rather intriguing find made in tomb B 83 was a clay model of a town wall with men looking over the wall (Payne 1993: 17, no. 27, fig. 6; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VI top left).

In tombs of late Naqada II/early Naqada III, the tomb equipment also encompassed objects of lapis lazuli (B 323) and copper bangles (B 57); a clay coffin was discovered in B 190 (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VI where it is labeled as B 180). One grave of this later phase contained an almost perfectly preserved

skeleton, pots lining the tomb pit, and one decorated vessel showing a bird and a crocodile (Petrie and Mace 1901: pls. V and XVI). In general, Cemetery B is quite rich in respect to stone tools. There are early bifacial fishtail knives and rhomboid knives, but also at least four so-called ripple flaked knives (B 74, B 191, B 217, B 408; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VII) with one knife possibly being unfinished (B 168; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. VII).

Cemetery C is quite small with just 16 tombs and is definitely of a different character than the rich Cemetery B. The circular graves here are much smaller and measure approximately 1 m in diameter and up to 50 cm in depth. The bodies were wrapped in goat skin and laid down in a contracted position. The tomb equipment generally consisted of one cup of black-topped pottery; in one tomb a small copper needle was found. Petrie's conclusion was that Cemetery C was the earliest burial ground of a small community in the Hiw region (Petrie and Mace 1901: 34).

The tradition of simple round pits, however, continued in the area with Cemetery H of Naqada III date. This cemetery was excavated by Mace and Iles and is only very cursorily described, based on their notes (Petrie and Mace 1901: 34). Multiple burials did not occur here, and the rectangular or round slate palettes with decorated edges attest to their later date (for example, H 54, H 56, H 63; Petrie and Mace 1901: pls. XI and XII). A few graves also contained a wooden coffin (for example, H 56, H 60, and H 90), and in H 43 a thin, long oval copper blade was retrieved (Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. X, no. 32).

Special mention is due to a few vessels of Petrie's Black Incised Pottery (N-ware). One vessel comes from Cemetery B (B 107) and one was found in grave R 131 (Petrie and Mace 1901: 14 - 15, pls. VI and XIV). The ovoid N-ware vessels at Hiw feature a distinct lip on the interior to support a lid; this characteristic has been interpreted as an indication for Hiw being a center for the manufacturing of N-ware during Naqada II/III by a part of the people of the Hiw

region with a Saharo-Sudanese cultural background (Glück 2007: 38 - 40).

Finds of exotic and imported raw materials are relatively rare at Hiw, and all have a Naqada II context. One obsidian blade (U 207; Petrie and Mace 1901: pl. X, no. 33) and one disc bead of obsidian without exact locality (Wainwright 1927: 88) have been published. Finds of lapis lazuli are known only from Cemetery B (B 75 and B 323; Petrie 1920: 44 and pl. LII; Petrie and Mace 1901: 34). The latter is actually a lapis lazuli fly pendant with a golden head. Resin, which had to be imported from southern Arabia, Ethiopia, or Somalia, was discovered only once (B 101; Payne 1993: 254, 286).

Overall, the publication by Petrie of the finds from the prehistoric sites in the Hiw region remained rather cursory. Most of the publication is in fact dedicated to the study of his system of a relative chronology for prehistoric Egypt known as "Sequence Dates" (Petrie and Mace 1901: 4 - 30). Petrie first discussed this system in a paper for the Royal Anthropological Institute in Great Britain and Ireland (Petrie 1899). Here he outlined in a general discussion on relative chronology how he used 917 pottery types from 900 Predynastic Egyptian tombs to form the system of 50 Sequence Dates (SD) based on the evolution of pottery types and their association in the graves. As Petrie had already published 700 pottery types in Naqada and Ballas (Petrie et al. 1896), little apparently was added based on finds from the Hiw region. Petrie's Sequence Dates ultimately comprised 3 phases: a) the Amratian (or later known as Naqada I) ranging from SD30 - 38, b) the Gerzean (or Naqada II) from SD39 - 60, and c) the Semainean (Naqada III) corresponding to SD60 - 80.

It has been suggested that Petrie was in fact in need of a publication to correct the earlier interpretation of the finds from his Naqada excavation and to widely publish his relative chronology of Predynastic Egypt using the Sequence Dates (Sowada 1996). In his Naqada and Ballas publication, he actually explained the Predynastic remains by an incursion of the

so-called "New Race" and dated them to the First Intermediate Period (Petrie et al. 1896: 59 - 61). In the same year, Jacques de Morgan, the French Director-General of the Egyptian Antiquity Service from 1892 - 1897, identified and described for the first time Predynastic remains from Egypt (de Morgan 1896). In spite of the dislike Petrie had for de Morgan, further fuelled by the political rivalry between France and England, he had to recognize de Morgan's results. The publication on the Predynastic remains of the Hiw region provided him with an instant medium to correct his previous chronological conclusions (Sowada 1996: 92 - 93). Hence, the Predynastic remains of the Hiw region have remained one of Petrie's most poorly published excavations (Sowada 1996: 89).

In 1989, a survey and geoarchaeological investigation in the Hiw region was launched by Boston University and Washington University in order to locate the sites described by Petrie and to study their present condition (Bard 1989a, 1989b, 1994). Two of the Predynastic burial grounds were actually destroyed, the Old Kingdom mastaba mentioned by Petrie at Cemetery A was partially eroded, and site F was gone. Cemetery U had been used as a gravel quarry, and Cemetery R was covered by the factory housing of the nearby Misr Aluminum Factory. The project focused on the previously unexcavated Predynastic settlement remains: one south of modern day Abadiya called HG after the nearby village of el-Halfaya Qibli (pronounced "Gibli" in Upper Egypt), and the other site, labeled SH, south of Semaina and next to Petrie's Cemetery H, but not mentioned by him. At site HG, a 20% surface collection was taken and several test pits of 1 x 1 m were dug in one tenth of the grids. Overwhelmingly, the Predynastic pottery assemblage consisted of black-topped ware and rough ware. No architectural remains were associated with them. The lithics comprised mostly retouched blades and flakes, scrapers, sickle blades, and some fragments of bifacial tools, but no flint projectile points were found. A concentration of finds was discovered near four limestone

blocks, and from a test pit there, two samples for radiocarbon dating were taken, which gave c. 3500 - 3110 cal. BCE and c. 3700 - 3370 cal. BCE, respectively (Hedges et al. 1991). In 1991, several units were excavated at site HG yielding a rich ceramic inventory of rough ware, black-topped, red and black polished ware, and again bifacial stone tools and sickle blades. It also seems that heat treated flint was used. Some of the sickle blades showed the characteristic sickle sheen along their margins. The cereals that were harvested consisted of emmer wheat and barley; for the first time, durum wheat (*Triticum turgidum* ssp. *durum*) could be identified from a Predynastic site in Egypt (Bard 1996: 146; Rosen 1995). Among the other small finds coming from the 1991 excavations at site HG were beads of carnelian and agate, a fragment of a rhomboid slate palette with a polishing stone, and pieces of copper. No architectural remains were discovered, but several hearths were uncovered. An analysis of the ceramic assemblage comprising around 200 diagnostic and approximately 76 kg of non-diagnostic body sherds showed that the assemblage could be dated to late Naqada I to mid Naqada II (Swain 2003). The vessels were coil-built, and overwhelmingly the sherds came from large storage vessels (Swain 2003: fig. 2). Open forms were represented by bowls and dishes (Swain 2003: fig. 1). One piece of white cross-lined ware was identified. Overall the ceramic assemblage shows similarities to inventories from Hammamiya, Armant, and particularly Hierakonpolis (Swain 2003: 163 - 164).

Site SH was located north and east of Petrie's Cemetery H, measured around 80 x 60 m, and is of the same Naqada III date as Cemetery H. Again, the site was gridded, surface samples were taken, and a few test pits excavated. The pottery assemblage was made up mainly of Old Kingdom sherds and a mix of some Predynastic and Old Kingdom pieces (Bard 1996: 145). Radiocarbon dates from site SH gave a rather high Predynastic date of c. 3780 - 3530 cal. BCE and one Old Kingdom date of c. 2860 - 2460 cal. BCE (Hedges et al. 1991). At both sites, HG and SH, tools such

as polishers and hammerstones for ground stoneworking were recovered. The microscopic analysis of the rock types revealed igneous rocks such as rhyolite, basalt, granite, and metamorphic rocks like quartzite and marble (Mahmoud and Bard 1993). These types of rocks are not locally available and had to be brought to the site from Wadi Hammamat in the Eastern Desert and/or the Aswan region.

The Hiw region was a center for craft production, trade, and exchange of commodities from Nubia and the Western and Eastern Deserts, and had links to the Lower Egyptian Buto/Maadi culture. Along with This/Abydos, Naqada, Gebelein, and Hierakonpolis, it has been interpreted as a major center with a powerful elite already in the first half of the 4th millennium, especially expressed through the material wealth shown in Cemetery B (Wilkinson 2000: 378 - 379, fig. 1). In this early Predynastic phase, the graves in the Hiw region show a higher inequality compared to other sites in Upper Egypt (Castillos 1998: 31, and table 3). Hand in hand with a decline of the inequality of tomb equipment during the later part of the 4th millennium BCE goes a decline in average wealth of the tombs (Castillos 1997: 254, table 2b), indicating the diminished importance of the Hiw region during the later phase of state formation in Egypt.

Recently, Hiw has also been linked with the rock carvings at Gebel Tjauti discovered about 20 km northwest of modern day Luxor in Upper Egypt. One of the rock carvings roughly measures 60 x 50 cm and features several antelopes, storks, falcons, and scorpions, but most prominently a scene known as "smiting of the enemies" (Darnell 2002: pl. 11). The scene, which is dated to Naqada IIIA1, was first interpreted as a historical military campaign against Naqada by the ruler of Abydos/This (Hendrickx and Friedman 2002). Based on the depiction of a bucranium on a staff next to the smitten enemy, however, Kahl (2003) has argued that this sign can be linked to a symbol of the goddess Bat and thus to the later 7th nome of

Upper Egypt where Hiw was located. As the rock inscription is located south of the Hiw region, the possibility that it was carved after a victorious campaign of the Abydene ruler was

rejected; instead, it has been suggested that the ruler of Hierakonpolis was responsible for the carvings made on the way back from Hiw to Hierakonpolis (Kahl 2003: 51 - 53).

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The major publication on the Predynastic remains from the Hiw region/Diospolis Parva is still Petrie's (Petrie and Mace 1901); little was added in regards to the material culture by the new expedition under Bard (1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1992, 1996), since most archaeological remains have been destroyed and/or built over. Payne (1993) has published a number of finds from almost 100 tombs that were excavated by Petrie but not published by him; today they are housed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

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Figure 1. Predynastic sites in the Hiw-Abadiya-Semaina (Diospolis Parva) region. (After Bard 1989.)