



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Unprovenienced in the Provinces: The Unique Challenges and Rewards of Working with Objects from Akhmim, Egypt

JOHNSTON K. ¹*

¹ Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, Chicago, United States

*Corresponding author

Abstract

The city of Akhmim was an important economic and religious center from ancient to modern times. Due to a reputation for having been ransacked in the 1880's, neither the city, which is now under the modern settlement, or its longest-lived cemetery at el-Diyabat, has ever been systematically excavated. Nearly every object from Akhmim came from the art market in the early 20th century, and even those which were officially excavated have no find context.

This talk will discuss the pitfalls of working on a site famous for having been looted, where nothing at all has context. Objects without provenience are often dismissed as useless despite fascinating collection histories. Study of them must rely on art-historical methods considered "unscientific", or on scientific techniques, which can be of limited use, and on the results of modern salvage excavations.

Despite this, the study of unprovenanced Egyptian provincial objects can be rewarding and even paradigm shifting. The study of objects that can be traced to other sites reveals a vibrant patchwork of local funerary customs and beliefs which can no longer be dismissed as derivative of those in the capitals.

Keywords

akhmim, unprovenienced, looting, egypt, provincial

Session

1. Advances in Near Eastern Archaeology

Workshop

A16480SS - Is there really anything to be found there? Researching beyond the Established Frameworks of Near Eastern Archaeology

Type of paper

Oral presentation

