

ONLINE LECTURE SERIES—15.01.25 10:00 AM CET



CZECH INSTITUTE
OF EGYPTOLOGY
Faculty of Arts
Charles University

*The Impact of Political
and Climate Change on
Women's Agency:
A Social Power
Analysis*
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Wojciech Ejsmond: The overlooked Nubian women of the First Intermediate Period

Various ethnic groups lived under the pharaoh's sceptre, with Nubians being among the most well-documented. They played a prominent role in Egyptian history during certain periods, yet Nubian women of the First Intermediate Period remain significantly understudied.

Previous scholarship on Nubians in Egypt during this time often focused on their roles as mercenaries serving provincial governors amidst the political turmoil of the First Intermediate Period. However, more recent studies suggest a far more complex picture of their presence. Nubians were not merely outsiders; they interacted with local Egyptians and sometimes had offspring with them, leading to their gradual integration. While Nubians are generally thought to have been semi-pastoralists living along the desert margins—evidenced by C-Group pottery found there—they may also have lived in the alluvial plain and used Egyptian pottery while residing temporarily or permanently in Egyptian settlements, thus, being invisible in the archaeological record.

Compared to Nubian men, Nubian women are more challenging to identify in the imagery. Nubian men are distinguished by their characteristic sashes, dark complexions, and bushy hairstyles, which serve as clear ethnic markers. In contrast, Nubian women lack similarly distinctive elements of dress, making their ethnic identities more difficult to discern. When they can be identified, their rare depictions in Egyptian imagery give us a rare glimpse into their lives. Some Nubian women were members of the royal family and held position within the pharaonic court.

This talk aims to explore these themes mostly through a case study from the Gebelein region. The artists of this region grappled with the complex intersections of ethnic identity and gender roles, offering a unique perspective on the nuanced social dynamics of the time.



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