

Abstract:

Archaeological exploration in the Nile Delta has been confined to a handful of expeditions from recent decades. Even fewer have investigated long-term patterns of regional habitation, while subtle, actively destructive, human-borne forces are rapidly destroying its archaeological contexts. Ironically, previous scholars have commented that the Delta suffers from a lack of interest inversely proportional to the contributions it can offer to an authoritative narrative of Egyptian culture. This circumstance relates somewhat to research priorities and how site-centered research is "mapped" within cognitive and legal frameworks.

Recent research by the University of Durham Mission to Sais team has integrated GIS-guided analyses of remote sensing imagery, historical maps, ceramics, and geomorphological data to elicit a history of settlement in the western Delta, specifically in the southwest al Buhayrah governate. Topographic survey and GPS mapping have provided a basis for more in-depth study. Ceramic analysis has offered insight into the character and extent of ancient settlements. Drill auguring was also employed as a technique to reconstruct a paleogeography of the region. One of the exciting, preliminary results of this research is a heretofore unmapped branch of the Nile that appears to have been a distributary of the Canopic. A particular challenge of dealing with such a disparate variety of historic datasets has been amalgamating them within a unified geographic framework while efficiently managing data origins and quality control. Overall, this work has contributed to a greater understanding of this little understood borderland during the mid-late Pharaonic to late antique periods (1250 B.C.E. - 600 C.E.)."

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